Standing Committee On Assessment: Minutes 27 September 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 27 September 2013 at 2.15 pm in HG17, Heslington Hall

Present: Dr. Steve King, Computer Science (Chair)  
Mr. John Bone, Economics  
Dr. Dominic Watt, Language and Linguistic Science  
Dr. Oliver Craig, Archaeology  
Dr. Geoff Cubitt, History  
Dr. Sandra Pauletto, Theatre Film and Television  
Dan Whitmore, YUSU  
Xiaoyin Yang, GSA

In Attendance: Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar  
Jim Irving, Director: Registry Services  
Dr. Jennifer Wotherspoon, Ass. Registrar: Student Progress  
Dr. Philip Quinlan, Psychology  
Jo Fletcher, Registry Services

Apologies: Cecilia Lowe, Project Leader: Learning Enhancement  
Kathryn Lucas, Special Cases Administrator

13-14/1 Minutes  
The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2013.

13-14/2 Matters arising from the minutes

i. 12-13/80 Clarification on Time Limits to minor corrections of PhD theses  
The Committee confirmed that the deadline for ‘corrections’ is now three months.

ii. 12-13/14i Review of Second Year Marks  
The Committee noted that after the Chair and the PVC for Teaching and Learning agreed to allow departments to review second year marks in light of modularization, only the Philosophy department exercised the option. The Chair reported that in a preliminary analysis of degree classes following modularization that results were much in line with previous year’s results. There was a slight decline in the number of thirds but this may be because resit results had not been taken into account.

iii. 12-13/97 Proposed Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure  
The Committee noted that the new Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure has been returned to the Working Party for further revisions, and was to be resubmitted to
UTC in the Autumn Term. It is hoped that the new policy could be introduced in 2014/15.

13-14/3 **Chair’s Oral Report**
The Chair reported the following developments:

i. **E-Assignment**
The E-Assignment project is hoping to develop a seamless end to end system for submissions, marking and feedback. There is currently a two pronged approach. The first approach is to enhance the existing provision but this is moving along quite slowly. The committee will receive a more detailed progress report later in the Autumn.

The second approach is to keep a watching brief on the JISC funded solution (Northumbria). Unfortunately this initiative has now been shelved at Northumbria due to staffing changes, but the Working Party continues to seek an appropriate end-to-end solution.

ii. **Grade Point Average**
Recent discussions in the press have raised the possibility of UKHEIs introducing a GPA system modelled on that used in the USA. The HEA has put out a call for 20-15 institutions to take part in a pilot scheme of such a model, but York unlikely to become one of the pilot institutions. A report of the HEA pilot is expected in the summer of 2014/15.

iii. **Table representation of Progression and Award Rules**
The Chair of Board of Studies in Environment has produced a simple summary table of the Integrated Masters progression and award rules. The Committee were asked to consider whether producing something similar, representing all undergraduate and taught postgraduate progression and award criteria for the Guide to Assessment was feasible.

(Action: JW)

iv. **Over Recruitment**
JW reported on the impact on assessment of the current over recruitment of students. A modelling exercise was carried out based on 270 additional new students. This revealed that Heslington East campus was going to need to be utilised more as space was too limited on Heslington West to contain all students for the January Common Assessment Period. Off campus provision had been considered but in the current climate, the cost continues to outweigh the advantages, and the difficulties of obtaining suitable space and the risks of transporting students off-site greatly increase the risk of students missing exams or claiming mitigation. The committee were asked to consider whether increasing use of alternate forms of assessment might be a better solution to the overcrowding of the assessment periods, and requested more information on the current ratios of closed to open assessments, as well as a sense of what that ratio is at other institutions.
13-14/5  **Report from Students**
The Graduate Students’ Association reported the following:

i. Some Master’s students receiving a PG Certificate after failing to meet the requirements of a Master’s programme did not understand what the exit award represented, and it was requested that greater attempts were made to explain the nature of exit awards to students.

ii. Due to the timing of resits some students will have already completed their dissertation before they are aware they have failed to meet the progression hurdle. The GSA requested that in these cases, the ISM be marked, and that feedback be given to the student regardless of the fact that the mark would not count towards an award or be included on a transcript. The Committee agreed that this was best practice, and that this should be communicated to departments.

(Action: JW)

The Student Union had no issues to report.

13-14/6  **Terms of Reference**
The Committee agreed to recommend the Terms of Reference to University Teaching Committee with the following corrections: the ‘Board of Studies’ appeared to have been missed from ToR 11, and should be replaced. The Committee also agreed that the Director of Student Services should be invited to be in attendance at the Committee.

13-14/7  **Annual Timeline**
The Committee agreed to the proposed timeline with minor alterations: the review of External Examiners fees should be moved to November for funding reasons, and the receiving of an annual report on complaints should be removed. The Committee enquired when they would see a deep analysis of UG degree results following NMS from the Planning Office, and agreed that this should be included in the timeline of business.

(Action: JW)

13-14/8  **Annual Priorities**
The Committee approved the proposed Annual Priorities.

13-14/9  **Updates to the Guide to Assessment**
The Committee noted the list of changes to the Guide to Assessment.

13-14/10  **Review of the Summer Common Assessment Period 2012-13**
The Committee noted the report and agreed that further investigation was required into the types of error that were been reported by exam invigilators. They wished to understand whether the queries were the result of actual
errors on the paper or students misunderstanding questions before making any recommendation as to appropriate remedies.

The issue of paper setters not been available during their exams was discussed and this needs further investigation.

(Action: Exams Office)

13-14/11 Guidance on Proofreading
The Committee received the draft and noted that they found it a very useful document. They considered whether it was applicable to all disciplines and all levels, and determined that though it seemed broadly appropriate, it might be necessary to allow exemptions for specific courses or disciplines (such as language courses). The Committee agreed that further clarification was needed regarding support for PhD students, as well as greater clarity on whether academic supervisors and tutors should be subject to the guidance. The committee agreed that the Chair should liaise with the Project Leader: Learning Enhancement to revise the draft for further consideration.

(Action: SK and CL)

13-14/12 Date of the next meeting
The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Friday 1 November 2013 at 2.00 pm in Room HG17- The Dawson Room, Heslington Hall.