<div align="center">**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT**</div>

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 7 May 2021 at 2.00pm via Zoom online video conferencing due to Covid-19 lockdown.

**Attendance and apologies for absence:**

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| **Present:** | Prof Mike Bentley | Physics (Chair) |
| | Dr Nicoletta Asciuto | English |
| | Dr Daniel Baker | Psychology |
| | Dr Jim Buller | Politics |
| | Dr Kevin Caraher | SPSW |
| | Dr David Clayton | History |
| | Dr Patrick Gallimore | York Law School |
| | Dr Alet Roux | Mathematics |
| | Dr Katherine Selby | Natural Sciences/Environment and Geography |
| | Simon van der Borgh | TFTI |
| | Matt Johnstone | YUSU |
| | Jane Baston | GSA |
| | | |
| **In attendance:** | Dr Martin Cockett | Chair of Special Cases Committee |
| | Valerie Cotter | Dep Academic Registrar/Dir Student Services |
| | Dr Zoe Devlin | Acting Head of Online Partnerships |
| | Laila Fish | Disability Services |
| | Dr Stephen Gow (Secretary) | Academic Integrity Coordinator |
| | Cecilia Lowe | Head of Learning Enhancement |
| | Jessica Roehricht (Minutes) | Academic Support Administrator |
| | Dr Jen Wotherspoon | Deputy Director, Student Services |
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| **Apologies:** | Dr Kate Arnold | Dean of YGRS |
| | Robert Simpson | Special Cases Manager |
| | | |
| **Visitors:** | Andrea Boam | Academic Quality [M20-21/67] |

**20-21/62 Welcome**
The Chair **welcomed** the Committee.

**20-21/63 Minutes of previous meeting**
The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2021.

**20-21/64 Matters Arising from the previous minutes**

- **20-21/20 Review of limits for assessed work and penalties for breaches - Hierarchy of penalties.**
  The Chair **reported** that this would be considered by the Committee at its meeting in July 2021. **[OPEN]**

- **20-21/33 Annual Report – Undergraduate External Examiners 2019/20 (ASO)**
  The Chair **reported** that he had written to all Chairs of Boards of Examiners regarding marking and moderation practice. **[CLOSED]**

- **20-21/42 Chair's Report - Summary of Covid-19 Policy changes to SCC**
  The Secretary **reported** that this was ongoing. **[OPEN]**

- **20-21/44 Report on the impact of the safety net - data on students who had not met the progression criteria**
  The Secretary had asked BIU to include non-progression students in future analysis by BIU and more details of widening participation groups. **[CLOSED]**

- **20-21/54 Chair's Report: Members reaching end of their terms**
  The Chair **noted** that there would be more information on this topic in his oral report regarding this [M20-21/65 refers]. **[OPEN]**

- **20-21/57 Extra-time allowance for students with SSPs**
  The Chair **reported** that a meeting had taken place and there would be more information in his oral report [M20-21/65 refers]. **[CLOSED]**

- **20-21/58 Communication relating to Board-of-Examiners practices during Covid-19**
  The Chair **reported** that he had discussed this matter with the Chairs of Boards of Examiners Forum, including the advice of complete transparency in relation to Exam Board practices. **[CLOSED]**

**20-21/65 Chair's Report**
The Chair **reported** ongoing discussions outside of the Committee regarding SSPs for online exams, including a focus on encouraging students who were struggling to contact Disability Services and update their SSPs. However, experience from the Summer CAP would be reported at the July meeting of SCA to ensure this was being handled correctly. Laila Fish (Disability Services) and the YUSU representative would record discussions about SSPs for online exams for this agenda item, and the Chair would consult with Chairs of Boards of Examiners.

The Chair **noted** that there would be an agenda item at the July meeting to review the ECA policy and Covid-19 pandemic adjustments, in particular the requirement for evidence and if the process could be modified to help departments with high workloads. However, this final decision would be taken in September.

The Chair **noted** that the role of Chair of SCA would shortly be advertised, as he was coming to the end of the three year term. However, the Chair also **noted** he would likely be involved with the Change Programme in relation to award and progression rules and possibly exceptional circumstances, for the following 12 months, subject to agreement by the incoming Chair of SCA. The Committee **noted** their appreciation for the Chair.

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**ACTION[SG/MB/LF/MJ]**

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**20-21/66 Report from Students**
- **YUSU** representative **noted** that nominations were open for Excellence Awards, and that they had released a grade estimator in the form of a Google Sheet for students, the link for which was shared with the Committee.
- **GSA** representative **noted** that the GSA Leadership elections were underway for Sabbatical Officer and student trustee roles, with nominations open until 10th May 2021, and the inclusion of a new 'refer a friend' form. There were currently 20 candidates for the four positions. The #BetterByU campaign was launched by the Academic Integrity Collective to raise awareness and put pressure on numerous bodies (quality assurance bodies, HE institutions and government) to protect students from being exploited by essay mills. The GSA representative had presented to the QAA presentation on academic integrity and postgraduates and had been involved in other work they've been doing on this topic. The GSA representative also **reported** that after talking with GSA advisors after the rise in academic misconduct cases they had identified a lack of engagement with the academic integrity tutorial as a potential reason for this. The GSA representative was also working on an academic representation strategy for how academic representation was developed at the GSA over the next three years. The Student Voice Group had started looking at student partnership, looking to re-develop Together York into a partnership framework. Finally, the GSA representative **noted** some staffing updates, including a new advisor who had recently begun in the role and would be interested in observing a future SCA meeting, and upcoming recruitment for a Representation & Democracy coordinator.

**20-21/67 PGT External Examiner Summary report**
Andrea Boam from the Academic Quality Team in the Academic Support Office attended for this item and presented the paper. It was confirmed that the paper was in a new format, and highlighted University level issues and good practice. Additionally, that nothing had changed in relation to outstanding reports since the paper had been circulated.

The GSA representative **noted** that it would be useful to have more information on good practice in dissertation support for an ongoing UTC project in this area. Andrea **reported** that these comments had been regarding general pastoral care and supervisor flexibility on topics during Covid-19, particularly noting Archaeology and PGCE History. The Committee **noted** that it was positive to see these comments, and there had been high levels of student anxiety around PGT dissertations in 2020, in particular due to the timings of the Covid-19 lockdown.

The Chair highlighted the comments around award criteria, and the change in Merit / Distinction criteria for 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to Covid-19. SCA **endorsed** using the feedback from External Examiners in the Change Programme review of all award criteria.

External Examiner comments in relation to online exams were **noted**, however practical limitations were also highlighted. The Committee **noted** that information available to External Examiners and Exam Boards would be discussed later in the meeting [M20-21/69 refers]. SCA **agreed** that Chairs of Board of Examiners should have more formal training, to include the expectations of interactions with External Examiners.

Overall, the Chair **noted** the positive comments in the report, and confirmed he would report this to UTC. SCA **agreed** that it was content with the new format of this report.

**ACTION [MB]**

**20-21/68 Working Group: Information available to students for assessment**
The working group presented their proposal for a Module/Assessment level checklist for Specific Individual Assessment Information and a Department/Programme level checklist for General Assessment Information.

SCA **agreed** that this work was progressing in the right direction, and should be continued in 2021/22, starting at the Chairs of Boards of Examiners Forum. Included in this work should be information about clarity and accessibility of language used around assessments, and guidance on secure exam papers. It was **noted** that this would tie in well with the software being trialled in the Digital Assessment and Feedback Project. The Chair **thanked** the working group for their work on this.

**20-21/69 Working Group: Information available to External Examiners and Exam Boards**
The Committee received a report on the survey of Chairs of Boards of Examiner carried out from January to February 2021. The survey aimed to get a better understanding of what forms of data Exam Boards considered, such as how marks were presented, whether additional data was calculated from that provided centrally, and the scaling, and various types of in-year/across-years/module/cohort comparison.

The findings of the report were accompanied by recommendations from the working group which was considering the information which Exam Boards and external examiners require to effectively scrutinize the data. In response to an extended discussion of the report and recommendations it was **agreed** that while it may be useful in some limited circumstances for the Ratification panel to consider final degree outcomes, this was not essential and, furthermore, would require a significant amount of work or a new system which was not possible at present.

It was **agreed** that the working group, lead by Daniel Baker, would investigate developing a tool (similar to the rescaling tool he had previously developed) which Boards could use to carry out cohort level comparison of data to help ensure the Vice Chancellor's commitment to ensuring the

results following the start of the pandemic were in line with previous cohorts. Guidance, developed by the working group, would be provided to exam boards on using the tool and also on other aspects.

It was also **agreed** that Exams Boards should be made aware of the Tableau workbooks available showing historical degree outcomes for each department and in comparison with the sector. The Committee **agreed** that work should start this Summer on developing a guide for new Chairs of Boards of Examiners, which would help to make them aware of best practice and the types of analysis which can be carried out.

**ACTION [SG/DB]**

### 20-21/70 Working Group: Assessment and Attainment of Minority Groups
The working group provided the Committee with an update of the work to date, which included a wide range of topics. It was acknowledged that there was a lot of work going on currently in the institution and that it was not necessarily the time to devise policy, but certainly positive that SCA had started looking at this area.

The working group was waiting for more data to be released to proceed with further investigation. The Chair **reported** that with open assessments, as necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, attainment gaps had narrowed, indicating that closed exams were a more exclusive form of assessment, which should be considered in this work.

### 20-21/71 Guide to Assessment change: Friday deadlines
The Chair presented the Committee with a proposed change to the Guide to Assessment in relation to Friday deadlines for the submission of assessed work, which were currently not allowed. It was understood that this rule was introduced to avoid the possibility of excessive late penalties should a student miss a Friday deadline and be unable to hand in until the following Monday.

The Committee **noted** that there would not be this issue for online submissions, and as such allowing Friday deadlines provided more time for students to submit work. However, there were concerns raised over some departments who relied on administrators to email reminders to students who had not submitted work by the deadline, as allowing Friday deadlines could put a high workload on these administrators, or result in students not being notified of missing a submission until the following Monday. The Committee **noted** that the Digital Assessment and Feedback Project may provide more automation for reminders around assessment submission, which would mitigate this issue raised around Friday deadlines.

It was **noted** that even with the proposed changes, departments would still be able to choose not to set Friday deadlines if they wished. It was **agreed** that this caveat would be added to the proposal, which was **approved** by the Committee.

**ACTION [SG/MB]**

**20-21/72 UUK Degree classification 2019-20**

The Chair **reported** that across the UK, there was a six-percentage point increase of upper awards (first-class and 2:1 awards) in 2019–20. The proportion of first-class awards rose to over a third (35%) (HESA, 2021a). The University of York was at the lower end of the increase, which was positive. It was believed that the increase in upper awards across the sector was more likely attributed to the open nature of assessments, rather than no detriment measures such as safety nets. It was **noted** that attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented groups had narrowed across the sector. The Chair encouraged other members of the Committee to read the report in full, which was positive overall.

**20-21/73 AOB - Committee membership**

The Committee **noted** that this had been the last meeting attended by Valerie Cotter (Deputy Academic Registrar and Director of Student Services). Valerie shared her positive experience of the Committee, and the Chair and Committee **recorded** their thanks for her contributions.

**20-21/74 Individual Examination Arrangements**

The Committee **noted** the number of individual examination arrangements.

**20-21/75 Date of the next meeting**

The Committee **noted** the date of the next meeting as Friday 9 July 2021 at 2pm via Zoom online video conferencing.