Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 1st November 2019 at 2.00pm in HG/17, Heslington Hall.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

**Present:**
- Prof Mike Bentley Physics (Chair)
- Dr Danijela Trenkic Education
- Anita Savage Grainge Health Sciences
- Simon van der Borgh TFTI
- Dr Patrick Gallimore York Law School
- Dr Alet Roux Mathematics
- Dr Jess Wardman Management
- Dr Daniel Baker Psychology
- Dr David Clayton History
- Dr Nicoletta Asciuto English
- Laila Fish Disability Adviser
- Dr Martin Cockett Chair of Special Cases Committee
- Valerie Cotter Dep Academic Registrar/Dir Student Service
- Giang Nguyen YUSU
- Jane Baston GSA

**In attendance:**
- Dr Jen Wotherspoon Deputy Director Student Services
- Cecilia Lowe Head of Learning Enhancement
- Dr Stephen Gow (Secretary) Academic Integrity Coordinator
- Dr Angela Ranson Academic Support Coordinator

**Apologies:**
- Robert Simpson Special Cases Manager
- Kathryn Lucas Special Cases Manager
- Sharmila Gohil Asst Registrar: Student Progress
- Prof Tom Stoneham Dean of Graduate Research School

**Visitors:**
- Karen Payne Business Intelligence Unit

19-20/16 Welcome
The Chair welcomed new members, including the new representative from Disability Services.

19-20/17 Minutes of previous meeting
The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held Monday 30 September 2019, with the note that the Committee also discussed the 20-day feedback issue during the meeting.

19-20/18 Matters Arising from the previous minutes
- 18-19/87 Exceptional Circumstances Review
  The proposed form is on the agenda for this meeting. [CLOSED]
• 18-19/97 Consistency of Marking - responding to student complaints
  This was in regard to inconsistency in marking between departments. YUSU and GSA are working on a survey to get further feedback from students. [OPEN]
  [ACTION: MB, CL, JB, GN]

• 18-19/98 Exam errors - report back to departments
  The Chair reported that this is not yet complete because he was waiting for the data he has now received regarding exam errors. He will now get in touch with departments. [OPEN]
  [ACTION: MB]

• 19-20/04 Chair’s oral report (sticker scheme)
  The Chair has not yet met with Steve King, but will do so as soon as possible. [OPEN]
  [ACTION: MB]

• 19-20/09 Secure Papers
  This will be part of the response to student complaints in 18-19/97 above, so it will no longer be considered as a separate item. [CLOSED]

• 19-20/10 Proposal to cease the provision of calculators in examinations
  The consultation is complete, and it was agreed that the wording in the Guide to Assessment will change to reflect the fact that the University will now allow students to bring their own calculators from an approved list. In this interim period, calculators will still be provided if a student does not bring one. Wording has been approved by the Chair in consultation with the exams team and the PVC for Teaching, Learning and Students. [CLOSED]

• 19-20/12 Requirement by UKSCQA to produce a Degree Outcomes Statement
  This is being considered by UTC. [OPEN]

19-20/19 Chair’s oral report
The Chair thanked Patrick Gallimore, who has agreed to act as Deputy Chair.

The Chair reported that the consultation with departments regarding the cessation of providing calculators in exams is complete. It was agreed that the University would allow students to bring their own calculators (if they are on the list of acceptable calculators). Calculators would no longer be provided, but for this academic year calculators will be made available to students who do not bring one.

The Chair requested support for the following issues:

• how to respond to whistleblowing in relation to academic misconduct. The Committee agreed that this issue will become part of the discussion about academic misconduct penalty tables.

• whether or not SCA should have a view on whether it is appropriate for a pair of markers to be assigned to mark a specific piece of work if the two markers are strongly connected in other ways (e.g. in a relationship). This has come about due to a referral from one of the Faculty Learning and Teaching groups. The Committee agreed to consider the issue.
how to handle penalties regarding group work. TFTI have penalties for a lack of participation in group work; it was approved relatively recently but it might be helpful to review the issue. The Guide is not entirely clear, and the issue has been mentioned in NSS results as well. The Committee agreed to set up a group to consider the issue.

[ACTION: SvdB, PG, JB]

19-20/20 Report from Students

YUSU: CL and GN have been working on clarifying the information students receive regarding assessments at the point they are set. They are currently planning to hold a survey, once the questions are finalized, in consultation with department reps and the Committee. There are two other projects in YUSU regarding assessment: a working group who aim to make the Guide to Assessment more student friendly, and a group (which involves the Library) planning a communication to make students more aware of what study space is available.

GSA: The GSA representative reported that 130 course reps have been elected. Also, they had a Q&A about assessment with students, resulting in a discussion similar to that in YUSU regarding making the Guide more student-friendly, especially regarding internal examiners.

19-20/21 York undergraduate degree classifications 2018-19 - initial analysis

Karen Payne from BIU presented the interim report for 2018-9, which will also be reviewed by UTC. The final report will be received by SCA and UTC later in the year and will be sent to HESA. The 2017/18 data is only for the University as the sector data has not been released yet.

Key points and comments:

- The number of ‘good’ degrees has risen by 1.9%, which is the largest rise since 2010.
- The percentage of first class degrees increased in 2018/9 by 2.3 percentage points to 27.7%.
- The overall increase in the percentage of good degree awards is largely due to the increase in students being awarded a first class degree. The percentage of Upper Second class degrees awarded decreased slightly from 55.1% in 2017/8 to 54.7% in 2018/9.
- Variation in the percentage of good degree awards made in the different faculties, and in the different departments therein, remains marked.
- Sciences shows an increase of 3.2 percentage points from 2017/8 and has the highest percentage of Good Degrees since 2010/11 (earliest data point).
- Using the workbook Departments are encouraged to reflect on their own results and may consider commenting on them in the APR.

The Committee requested further information on progression statistics, particularly the impact of continuation and retention on good degrees. The data for this has a three or four year lag however indicators of movement of data would be appreciated for early identification of potential problems. It was reported that the workbook on withdrawals is being developed.

The Committee also considered the results in the context of the national discourse on perceived (so-called) grade inflation in the sector. In such a context, it is important that we should have an explanation for any significant change (e.g. a rise in good degrees). It was noted that although there has been a small increase this year, the number of good degrees has remained largely flat since 2013/14, against a general backdrop of rising numbers in the sector. Finally the Committee considered whether it be worth SCA viewing comparisons with other non-Russell Group institutions of similar size and status.

The Committee asked for access and participation data and entry tariffs to be included. The Director of
Students Services will liaise with BIU to discuss what data should be included in the final report.  

[**ACTION: KP/VC**]

The Chair noted that the Sciences departments have increased the most. He will bring this to the attention of the FLTG for Sciences.  

[**ACTION: MB**]

19-20/22 Plan for SCA Priorities Areas  
The Committee **considered** the Chair’s plan for completion of SCA priorities areas. It was **approved** with the following amendments:

**A:** Review of the structure of the Guide to Assessment  
The Head of the Learning Enhancement team will be added to the group. The report deadline will change to May, but there will be an interim report presented in February.

**B:** Scoping and production of a university-wide statement on degree outcomes (UKSCQA)  
The group will take preliminary look in preparation for UTC’s decision. The Chair of the Special Cases Committee and SCA member Daniel Baker were added to the group.

**C:** Review of information provided to external examiners and exam boards.  
The YUSU representative was added to the group.

**D:** Review of page/word limits for assessed work and penalties for breaches  
The first step will be to do a google form survey of current actions before the next Chairs of Boards of Examiners forum.

**E:** Consultation and review of guidance on resolving difference between markers  
This item has been removed from the list, since the SCA members allocated to this task all agreed that the Guide had sufficient guidance on this already. The Chair will address it with the Chairs of Boards of Examiners.

**F:** PGR academic misconduct policy (update in light of new OiA guidance)  
No change.

**G:** Review of Academic Misconduct penalty tables  
This group will add information about ethics and whistleblowing to their remit.

**H:** Clarification of information available to students when setting assignments  
No change

**I:** Guidance for staff on occasional extensions and alternative forms of assessment for students with individual arrangements  
This group aims to establish a set of principles regarding individual arrangements, which will focus on students with SSPs that suggest alternative assessments or where occasional extensions are recommended. Meeting to be arranged with the group before Christmas break.  

[**Action: SG**]

**J:** Guide to Assessment: expectations regarding students’ academic work outside of term time  
No change

**K:** Review of Repeat Study Data  
No change
Additional Items:
Members of the Committee will review the questions mentioned in the Chair’s oral report (above) regarding independent markers and participation penalties for group work.

19-20/23 UKSCQA Guidance For Degree Awarding Bodies On Producing Degree Outcomes Statements
The Committee considered the guidance for the Degree Outcomes Statement of Intent, and the report by the Secretary regarding the NUCCAT (Northern Universities Consortium) seminar developing responses to this initiative. The key point was identified in the seminar as whether increased numbers of ‘good’ degrees are due to grade or award inflation, or whether increased funding and improved teaching was improving graduate attainment. Members have volunteered to participate in collecting the information required by the Office for Students, but the Committee decided not to act until the UTC had considered the issue.

19-20/24 UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance: Assessment Theme
The Committee considered the ways in which the guiding principles articulated in the Assessment theme are reflected within the University’s assessment policies and agreed that further action will be taken through the completion of the tasks in the priority areas for 2019-20. Some concern was raised that the 20-day feedback policy was presented, in places, as part of the solution to assessment issues and members felt that its value and execution should be evaluated. It was suggested that, rather than resulting in more timely or efficient feedback, the rule could result in overload on staff if operated as a rule rather than a principle of good practice. Furthermore, it was queried whether students valued this rule and whether it had had a positive impact on student satisfaction. It was agreed that the Chair and Deputy Chair would raise these issues with the PVC for Teaching, Learning and Students, with a view to discussing SCA’s remit in this area.

[ACTION: MB/PG to raise with JR]

19-20/25 Report on exam paper errors reported during the Resit CAP (Examinations Office)
The Committee noted that the number of errors has decreased and there has been a marked improvement in paper setters being available when contacted. However, further efforts to reduce exam errors are still needed, so the Chair will send information about exam errors to departments.

[ACTION: MB]

19-20/26 Summary of assessment issues raised via NSS (ASO/LE)
The Committee considered the summary of the NSS assessment and agreed that most negative comments from students center around marking criteria and the clarity of expectations. Actions are planned through the priority areas to address these comments at the policy level. It was noted that TFTI’s performance in the NSS may have been impacted by the student boycott of the survey due to the perception the results could be used to raise fees.

19-20/27 Exceptional Circumstances form
The Committee considered a revision of the form which health care professionals must fill out to support an exceptional circumstances claim. The revised form aims to provide more clarity to health professionals regarding what evidence is needed to support exceptional circumstances claims. The Committee agreed that the proposed form be put into immediate use with the following minor changes:
- Add a field regarding the long-term impact of the student’s illness
- Add the University of York logo
- Clarify what areas are to be completed by the student and what the health professions
  needs to complete

[ACTION: JW]

**19-20/28 Chair’s Approvals**
The Committee *noted* the Chair’s approvals.

**19-20/29 Individual Examination Arrangements**
The Committee *noted* the number of individual examination arrangements.

**19-20/30 Appointment of External Examiners**
The Committee *noted* the external examiners appointed since the last meeting.