

Standing Committee on Assessment



Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 22 September 2023 at 2.00pm in HG17 Heslington Hall and via Zoom online video conferencing.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present:	Dr Patrick Gallimore	York Law School (Chair)
	Dr Jeremy Airey	Education
	Prof. Kate Arnold	Dean of York Graduate Research School
	Dr Daniel Baker	Psychology
	Dr Jasper Heinzen	History
	Dr Christian Pillier	Philosophy
	Dr Alet Roux	Mathematics
	Dr Eytan Zweig	LLS
	Eddie Cowling	IPC
	Dr Anna Sotiriadou	CITY College
	Meely Doherty	YUSU
	Cyntherea Shen	GSA
In attendance :	Dr Stephen Gow (Secretary)	Assessment and Academic Integrity
	Jan Ball-Smith	Apprenticeships and Inclusive Learning
	Daisy Bowen	Special Cases
	Isabel Jagoe	DHoFO - Arts and Humanities
	Jenny Matson	SAAS
	Claire Pinder (Minutes)	Academic Support Coordinator
	Dr Jen Wotherspoon	Head of Student Administration
	Sue Faulds	Health Sciences
Apologies:	Dr Zara Burford	Online Programmes
	Kevin Caraher	SBS
	Gem Kirk	Progression and Awards
	Jayne Lawrence	DHoFO - Health Sciences
	Sarah Maynard	DHoFO - Social Sciences
	Nic Streatfield	Student and Academic Services
	Jill Webb	AD Social Sciences
	Claire Wilkinson	Disability Services Manager

m23-24/1 Welcome and apologies for absence

Members and those attending were welcomed. Special welcome was given to Sue Faulds, Jill Webb, and Deputy Heads of Faculty Operation (DHoFO) who were now in attendance, representing Professional Support Staff (PSS) colleagues across the University.

Apologies were received from Zara Burford, Kevin Caraher, Gem Kirk, Jayne Lawrence, Sarah Maynard, Pierrick Roger, Nic Streatfield, Jill Webb, and Claire Wilkinson

m23-24/2 Minutes of previous meeting

The SCA Committee **approved** the minutes of the SCA meeting held on **Friday 7 July 2023**.

M23-24/3 Matters arising from the previous minutes

Members noted items listed on the Matters arising log

CLOSED

- m22-23/80 - Secretary to speak to Steve King and Patrick Gallimore about linking with the PGR AI working group.
- m22-23/82 - Consult YUSU about Self-Certification.
- m22-23/82 - Patrick Gallimore to advise the working group to also consider, and include, cross-referenced wording about the impact of SSP's on Exceptional Circumstances and Self Cert in guidance.
- m22-23/84 - Chair and Secretary to check progress of Guide to Assessment
- m22-23/86 - Chair to ensure that the definition of "case to answer" would be clarified in documentation.

ONGOING

- m22-23/80 - Inform PG and the A&H AD to discuss the Board of Examiners meeting for the Languages and Linguistics Department.
- m22-23/83 - York Online Programmes to submit a new Access and Participation plan Report from Computer Science to the future SCA meeting.
- m22-23/86 - Chair to ensure that SBS have assessment processes in place regarding the probationary policy.
- m22-23/86 - Secretary and YUSU/GSA to discuss the wording of guidance around Academic Misconduct to be made available to students.
- m22-23/87 - Chair of SCA to reflect on timings of SCA meetings so that they coordinate with UTC meetings

ACTION: Stephen Gow to ensure SCA dates in 2024 are in calendars, once confirmed as final.

M23-24/4 Chair's Report

VLE transformation project: anonymous assessment update

It was **considered** that:

- Anonymous marking will remain anonymous
- There is guidance for staff around marking and feedback.
- Training has been arranged with short notice, and without sufficient promotion.
- There will be alternatives to Turnitin available for some assessment types, which Departments can consider using, if there is a clear rationale for not using Turnitin

ACTION: Stephen Gow will share slides with members of the SCA

ACTION: Chair will relay feedback to UTC that take up has been lower than expected, and that information has not always been clear.

Industrial Action, External Examiners and Institutional Exam Board Contingency

It was **considered** that:

- The Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB) has been withdrawn but there will be further strikes.
- Marks will now be put through systems, which may take a semester. Departments are working to a 6 November internal deadline for the completion of marking, starting with marking belonging to students at high risk, then moving to students at low risk.
- Ratification Boards for Masters students with a full run of marks was scheduled for 31 October. This has been moved to 13 November to account for the marking deadline.
- The impact of MAB has differed across Departments. There may be points of peak demand. Jen Wotherspoon would produce a contingency processing document.
- There may be an impact on academic misconduct case figures due to the current commencement of marking.

ACTION: Patrick Gallimore and Jen Wotherspoon will consult Chair of Board of Examiners (CBoE)'s on PGT and UG progression due to MAB.

Artificial Intelligence UTC working group

It was **considered** that:

- The University Teaching Committee (UTC) Working Group to discuss Artificial Intelligence (AI) - this group met over the summer, and there will be another meeting soon.
- Stephen will deliver a workshop about AI in November
- The York Group for Generative AI in Research is being set up by Research Committee
- There are different approaches between Russell Group institutions in how they are reacting to generative AI.

Scheduling of exams in 2023-24

It was **considered** that:

- Patrick has met with Jenny Matson to discuss issues around scheduling of exams. A further meeting with Jenny Matson and Tom Banham has been planned to discuss issues. An aspect of semesterisation is that there could be a higher incidence of Departmentally set coursework and exam activities in a tighter period.
- There was a query about if coursework should be kept out of the common assessment period. This is being decided, and should be clearer around May/ June 2024.

SCA Signing

It was **considered** that:

- YUSU will be briefed about signing responsibilities of the Committee.
- Jen Wotherspoon from Progression and Awards would be able to advise about the processing of students with marks outstanding.
- The deadline for PGT awards is the end of November. Departments are encouraged to advise Jen of their plans so that it can be fed into the Progression and Awards timetable.

Action: Chair and Secretary to brief YUSU/GSA on signing responsibilities.

ACTION: Stephen Gow to consult Chairs of Board of Examiners to get an appraisal regarding dates of SCA signing

m23-24/5 Report from Students

YUSU **noted** that:

- Meely Doherty is working on an assessment consultation in YUSU
- There is an issue around a waiver with the year two maths exam - YUSU are working with affected students.
- Meely Doherty had met with colleagues, and forty students across every Department and School to discuss AI group projects, and academic integrity, to collect data about what students want from their assessments, work remains ongoing.
- Meely Doherty has the following objectives for 2023/24: dictionaries; cost of living; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) inclusivity in teaching, learning and assessment; more student representation, and thinking about how student representation is being used; and creating a space for students to design programmes.
- Meely Doherty is involved in an AI working group which she would like more students to attend.

ACTION: Patrick Gallimore to discuss the Maths students, raising MAB contingencies, with Alet Roux as soon as possible.

GSA **noted** that:

- Cytherea Shen noted that international PG students use translation software, which should be considered within the academic integrity policy, and the proofreading policy to avoid accusations of academic misconduct.

m23-24/6 Terms of Reference and membership

This document was **endorsed/ approved**, and it was **noted** that:

- The Terms of Reference and SCA membership are reviewed annually.
- 2023-24 Updates to the Terms of Reference include changed references in ways that the SCA relates to the senate.
- Wording regarding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) will be considered.
- Associate Deans of Faculty should be in attendance at SCA meetings on an annual rotating basis.
- Changes to membership make ex officio members more clear.

Standing Committee on Assessment

- The policy regarding standard progression and appealable decisions would be set by the York Graduate Research School (YGRS).
- PSS colleagues would decide the outcome for most special cases, with oversight from an advisory panel of academics for the more complex cases.
- The Chair of SCA, has decision making power in relation to some specific situations not dealt with by way of appeal to Special Cases.

ACTION: Stephen Gow to send the paper to UTC for approval

m23-24/7 Schedule and priorities

This document was **considered**, and it was **noted** that:

- Priority areas will be sent to UTC for approval.
- Members should reflect, and later communicate to the Chair what area(s) of work they would like to contribute to in the 2023/24 academic year

1. Assessment info and Data review

- A central database resource of what assessments are being run by Departments would be helpful, especially for Departments which run joint programmes. This would be created by Christmas if possible.
- There was a need to be clearer about likely adjustments under exceptional circumstances and support plan claims, especially with regard to interdisciplinary modules.
- UTC would like more data on assessments, and to take a lead on assessment information, so that there can be a more useful review through FLTG groups

ACTION: YUSU to work with SCA on informing students about assessment changes/rules brought about by Modularisation and Semesterisation.

ACTION: Stephen Gow to arrange communications to students and staff about implications of progression and awards, and assessment changes

2. Guide to Assessment

- The Guide to Assessment has been updated and turned into three documents. These separate out rules on progression and awards, policies on assessment, and other types of guidance.
- Some work is still required with regard to disaggregating the parts of the policy which are aspirations or best guidance, and to check the part of the document which explains assessment types.
- There will be a review of the use of dictionaries and calculators in exams.
- There will be checks to ensure that policies work for campus and online programmes
- Non standard programmes are reflected in the assessment policy.

3. Assessment, AI

- An AI group is already working on assessment related AI. The AI Group will work on detection as part of their remit

- What AI can do institutionally and pedagogically is being considered.
- A traffic light system could be used to explain how AI could be used to assist assessments. This could be used to instruct students about how AI can be used in allowed ways. A traffic light system for AI guidance was currently being successfully used at CITY College.
- Eddie Cowling and Eytan Zweig had looked at the proofreading policy with regard to AI.
- The University has access to an AI detection tool, however, the Turnitin AI recognition software is untested and there are concerns about false positives..
- Stephen Gow will consult Departments about local practice with regard to AI guidance for students.

ACTION: Eytan Zweig and Eddie Cowling to provide feedback to Stephen Gow about the proofreading policy with regard to AI to be considered at the next SCA meeting.

ACTION: Anna Sotiriadou to share CITY College AI traffic light guidance with Stephen Gow.

ACTION: Stephen Gow of the AI group will include Juliet James in the development of the traffic light system.

4. Exceptional Circs policy

- Exceptional Circumstances contingencies will continue.
- UTC have asked SCA to continue to explore the way in which the EC process works.
- There was a need to look at the most efficient way of making EC decisions.

5. Academic Misconduct

- The Academic Misconduct policy caps marks at 59 for poor practice will be reviewed.
- The SCA should define a “case to answer” and ensure that Departments are provided with guidance about how to be clearer about what “case to answer” so that the student does not have the burden of proof.
- Students should be supported about how to conduct appropriate record keeping as an evidential trail, which could form part of the academic skills guide package.

ACTION: Stephen Gow to double check the alignment of policy with PGR students.

6. Guidance for CBoE and policy for external examiners

- Look at how Chair of Board of Studies (CBoS) position differs from Chair of Board of Examiners (CBoE), and produce guidance for CBoE’s to outline what happens at different point in the year, and at different meetings, as well as guidance about the function of boards, and the role of External Examiners.

7. Online marking and marking moderation practices

- There has been a move to the Turnitin feedback studio, where Marking and grading of feedback would be entered online.

- Marking and moderation practices - as there is concern that current moderation practices can slow down assessment, a review of current practice and potential improvements is required
- Most marking should be online, and required feedback and grading which would need to come through an online system - the impact of this on anonymity should be considered.

8. Repeat study and progression at risk

- Since SCA is asked about progression at risk scenarios, policy should make it clear if there is leeway for progression at risk, and a review was required, which could consider grounds for leave of absence, etc.
- Progression at risk will be added to a document that Daisy Bowen is working on.

9. OFS English spelling and grammar

- There were concerns from OfS about the sector's usage of policy.
- The University of York is compliant with OfS Guidance in this space. However, expectations could be better articulated to ensure they are not overly rigid.
- A review of policy around inclusion of language, and Spelling and Grammar (SPaG) was required. Meely Doherty and Jan Ban-Smith were involved.
- The SCA needs to get a sense of where the University of York is in relation to the sector.
- Victoria Jack who is an expert in English for academic purposes could be consulted

10. Student support plans

- There is a disability services review which the SCA can coordinate with. More inclusive strategies for assessment and feedback would be considered.
- The SCA should check that the way support plans are put in place is working as well as it could be.
- There was concern that support plans around exams were becoming complicated which caused pressure on exam scheduling. Departments should consider support plans when scheduling exams.
- UTC will review work in this space, and make decisions. SCA will then work out timelines. Patrick was meeting with David Gent and Tracy Lightfoot before the next UTC about coordinating priorities.

m23-24/8 Guide to Assessment and Award and Progression Rules Update

This document was **noted**:

- The SCA would approve changes via chairs action. The SCA had approved changes during 2022-23. Changes which included: two booklets; rules on Progression and Award; and policy on assessment.
- Further guidance for Depts and students would be issued. Communications would be key to address leapfrogging.
- Departments had provided feedback around; principle changes, such as capping at 40 at resits - further guidance would be sent to Departments; good feedback had been received about having two booklets; Departments found that the policy on assessment is clearer, and appendices are clearer.

- The formal policy for Guide to Assessment and Award and Progression Rules will be online.

m23-24/9 Exceptional Circumstances and Self-certification Policy Update

This document was **noted**:

- This document has been approved by the Chair of UTC.
- Significant work had been undertaken over the summer to make a policy which is more compassionate and rigorous. The overall effect should be a more efficient process.
- The basis of claims has been considered. Changes have been made around processes to be followed, which is based around an assumption that processing decisions will be delegated to other academic/PSS colleagues.
- This year, the rule is that the policy is owned by a committee in the department/school, and decision making should be delegated outside that group.
- Departments need to consider their own staffing resources within the implementation of the policy.
- There will be an Exceptional Circumstances Forum with Committee chairs, and PSS colleagues, around expectations, and workload.
- The policy will be redrafted for consistency so that it is shorter and clearer but still detailed. The point that the ECC decision should be delegated will be more emphasised.
- The policy around Self Certification will not be changing.

ACTION: Stephen Gow to circulate the ECA policy to SCA and to staff - sending a summary of the policy and of self-certification changes.

m23-24/10 Academic Misconduct Policy Update

This document was **noted**:

- The policy update regarding changed offence, and the definition of false authorship, have been approved, and endorsed.
- Plagiarism is mentioned and defined in the document.
- Feedback should be provided to Stephen Gow

CATEGORY II

Note: approval of Category II business will be assumed unless a member indicates that they wish to bring forward an item to Category I business.

m23-24/11 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 20 October at 2pm via Zoom online video conferencing, and in person in HG/17 Heslington Hall.

RESERVED BUSINESS

m23-24/12 Individual Examination Arrangements

It was **noted** that individual examination arrangements for students have been approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.

m23-24/13 Appointment of External Examiners

It was **noted** the appointment (or extension to appointment) of external examiners (UG and PGT), approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.

m23-24/14 Results Lists

Notification was **received** of recommendations for the award of degrees approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.