

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 3rd March 2023 at 2.00pm via Zoom online video conferencing.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present:

Dr Patrick Gallimore	York Law School (Chair)
Dr Daniel Baker	Psychology
Debayan Dey	YUSU
Dr Jasper Heinzen	History
Dr Alet Roux	Mathematics
Dr Anna Sotiriadou	CITY College
Eddie Cowling	International Pathway College
Dr Eytan Zweig	LLS
Dr Jeremy Airey	Education
Dr Kevin Caraher	SBS
Zhang Teng	GSA

In attendance:

Jan Ball-Smith	Apprenticeships and Inclusive Learning
Dr Zara Burford	Online Programmes
Dr Stephen Gow (Secretary)	Academic Integrity Coordinator
Claire Pinder (Minutes)	Academic Support Coordinator
Angela Ranson (Minutes)	Administration Coordinator
Jenny Matson	Student Administration Manager (Deputy)
Nic Streatfield	Student and Academic Services
Sue Leatt	Department of Politics
Anna Jones	ACT
Craig Adams	Digital Services, Programmes and Projects

Apologies:

Dr Jen Wotherspoon	Deputy Director SAAA
Prof. Kate Arnold	Dean of York Graduate Research School
Dr Christian Pillier	Philosophy

m22-23/55 Welcome & Introductions

Members and those attending were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Dr Jen Wotherspoon, Prof Kate Arnold and Dr Christian Pillier.

m22-23/56 Minutes of previous meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held **Friday 2 December, 2022** and **Friday 27 January, 2023**.

m22-23/57 Matters arising from the previous minutes

ONGOING

- **m22-23/50 Degree Outcomes Data**

Work is ongoing. The Committee is waiting for Karen Payne to share the new cycle of data, via a Tableau data workbook.

- **m22-23/51 York Online - timescale for implementing revised award rules**

The decision from the last meeting has been forwarded to the Head of Online Partnerships. They have developed an in-house tool which is assisting with the technical feasibility of the project, but it has not yet gone to a UTC meeting.

- **m22-23/54 Update of Priority Areas**

1. Consideration of Exam Board timings and Development of tools and guidance - ongoing
2. Progression at Risk - no update from Dr Jen Wotherspoon

CLOSED

- **2 December m22-23/33 Chair's Oral Report**

The SCA Chair and Examinations team considered the Mock assessment period prior to the Spring/ Summer Common Assessment Period and determined that there would not be another mock assessment period due to low uptake.

- **m22-23/54 Update of Priority Areas**

The Chair met with PSS DHoFOs and Assessment Administrators to look at processes to implement in 2023-24.

m22-23/58 Chair's Oral Report

1. Self-certification adjustments

- a. The Chair met with YUSU advisors and others in the working group to discuss the self certification campaign. That revealed a number of areas upon which to take urgent action, one of which arose from different interpretations and implementation of exceptional circumstances policy between departments. Therefore, the Chair issued guidance around the application of EC and SSPs for this year.
 - i. This guidance deals with two main areas: first, self certification claims regarding assessments which land on the same day. The Chair recommended using EC claims to address the problem of only having 3 self certifications available in this circumstance. Second, students in vulnerable categories will be given a letter that they can use as a basis for asking for extensions. The categories include estranged students, those with caring responsibilities, students dealing with the results of sexual violence, students in the process of getting an SSP, and students involved in disciplinary or academic misconduct procedures.
 - ii. The Chair noted that there are resource consequences to this decision, but SCA is in a good position to make decisions on how things are applied. The HoFOs and DHoFOs are still concerned about who sends out the letters, and

there is some confusion about what is going to be communicated to students centrally and what by departments. The Committee discussed this issue and it was noted that members, especially student members, would like to have access to the guidance and communications.

ACTION: the Chair will let departments know what students have been told and talk to Jen Wotherspoon about the implementation of these measures.

ACTION: the Chair will share the documents sent to the departments and the students with SCA members

2. Industrial Action, External Examiners and Institutional Exam Board Contingency

- a. While industrial action is currently paused, future iterations could include a marking and assessment boycott and the further loss of external examiners. The University has a contingency in place from pre-pandemic meetings, which involves setting up faculty exam boards and an institutional exam board.

ACTION: Chair is to continue looking into ways to validate outcomes without external examiners and report back in a future SCA meeting.

- b. Spring CAP: we are having ongoing issues around the conduct of exams. One involves students returning from LoA who would have done their exams online had they taken the exam at the time, but now have to do it in person. Another is the complex requirements for adjustments or provisions which could not be tracked last time. The rise in SSPs is making the scheduling of exams very complicated and there are resource costs and unacceptable problems affecting student assessment which arise.

3. Meeting with HoFOs

- a. Refer to Item 1.ii above; the meeting discussed the self-certification campaign and the guidance put in place to address student concerns.

m22-23/59 Report from Students

The YUSU representative noted that:

- York students recently participated in a Innovation and Creativity Competition
- In the recent YUSU election, three of the current SABBs have been reelected. There are two new incoming for Sports and Activities.
- YUSU's Strictly Dancing competition raised £1700.
- They are working on developing data on international student employability
- They recently met with City College in a Joint Learning and Teaching group.

The GSA representative noted that:

- A concern has been raised regarding the Exceptional Circumstances policy, which does not recognize culture as a good reason for submitting a claim. This is an issue around diversity, for some international students who are LGBTQ+ and come from a country in which this is not recognized could develop particular kinds of issues affecting assessment.
- It was reported that students have passed the recommended language requirements but their language level is inadequate to succeed in their programmes. Students can therefore feel like they have been set-up to fail their

programmes. The GSA rep suggested that the University might want to put further support in place to counter this, and the Committee discussed it.

- It was noted that language requirements are clearly stated, and if students do not have the right level they should address that issue individually ahead of their arrival at York.
- Further education about what support is available for students struggling with language issues was considered.

ACTION: the GSA rep will meet with the Head of Inclusive Learning to discuss how students can be supported in this area.

m22-23/60 PSS working group Exceptional Circumstances progress report

The Committee considered the progress report from the PSS working group on the development of a school/departmental PSS approach to considering Exceptional Circumstances claims.

- a. It was noted that this is just the group is reviewing the process but that it may have policy implications.
- b. Several departments are involved in this initial testing:
 - i. In Politics, 2900 assessments came in during Week 1. There were 286 EC claims, of which 11% were subject to evidence. 4% were rejected and 15% escalated to the ECA chair. Going forward, the department wondered whether an ECA chair is necessary, or if claims could just be escalated to the Student Services Manager.
 - ii. Other departments haven't recorded as great a reduction in workload as Politics did. For several departments, the cases were quite complicated and needed to be screened carefully. Also, there are some issues with consistency. Staff need further training on personalization and safeguarding
- c. The Committee considered why the EC Committee is not made up of PSS staff who do the day to day work. It was noted that academic judgement is required in some more complicated cases where there would be an impact on the pedagogy if an adjustment was made.
- d. The Committee decided to continue this project and increase the scale, but work on ensuring that different deadlines and the length of extensions reflect the expectations of the original assignment.

ACTION: Involve SCC, Disability Services and SLC in the working group.

m22-23/61 Self-Certification data analysis

The Committee considered the analysis of self-certification data. The Chair noted that the UTC Chair wants the final decision on this issue to be at UTC level, so the SCA will only be making recommendations.

- a. This academic year, students are limited to three self-certification claims, while last year it was unlimited. Between the start of Autumn Term 2022 and 15 February 2023, there have been 6000 claims made by 4000 students (out of approximately 20000 number of students at York, not including online students). 407 students have used all their claims so far.
 - i. Numbers on self-certification claims rose until this year, when it started to fall. The limit on self certification has brought overall numbers down
- b. The Committee discussed the desire for more specific categorization, which could lead to more individualised support and advice. However, the technical ability is not currently available; a reporting tool is needed.
 - i. The YUSU rep noted that students would prefer students are not using their

self-certifications because they are saving them, not because they did not need to use them. YUSU is still advocating more self certification, but the rep does think that the measures being introduced, such as the letters to students in vulnerable categories, will prove beneficial.

- ii. It was also noted that more optionality in assessments might help as well
 - iii. It was noted that 407 students having used all self-certification attempts was a small percentage of students.
- c. The Committee decided that the policy will remain at three self certifications and that this what will be recommended to UTC.

ACTION: The Chair will meet with the YUSU rep and other reps to inform them of the decision.

m22-23/62 VLE Transformation Project: Proposals for online assessment

The Committee considered the proposals from the VLE Transformation Project for policy changes and good practice guidance for online assessment. Turnitin needs to be introduced now as Ultra won't be ready for the upcoming academic year

- a. Recommendation one: the addition of submission cover sheet
 - i. The Committee was not in favour; they would prefer an automated system
- b. Recommendation two: similarity review
 - i. Because markers respond well to what they read, the Committee advised a different practice on this
- c. Recommendation three: online marking and annotations
 - i. There were concerns about the anonymity of GTAs online. Further investigation may include creating specialised GTA accounts
- d. Recommendation four: online rubrics and grading forms
 - i. Introducing standardised marking rubrics that apply across departments would be difficult, and would make it more difficult to offer specific feedback
- e. Recommendation five: uploading marks to SITS
 - i. There were no objections to this recommendation.

m22-23/63 Artificial Intelligence, Assessment and Academic Misconduct

The Committee tabled discussion of the proposed approach for assessment and academic misconduct in light of recent developments with artificial intelligence until the next meeting.

ACTION: the Secretary will set up a meeting for the SCA AI working group.

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.

- **Date of the next meeting**

To note the date of the next meeting as Friday 12th May, 2023 at 2pm in HG17 Heslington Hall or via Zoom online video conferencing.

RESERVED BUSINESS

Individual Examination Arrangements

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

- **Appointment of External Examiners**

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

- **Results Lists**

To **receive** notification of recommendations for the award of degrees approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.