# Standing Committee on Assessment

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 22 March 2024 at 10.00am in SLB/204 Spring Lane Building and via Zoom online video conferencing.

**Attendance and apologies for absence:**

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| **Present:** | Dr Patrick Gallimore | York Law School  (Chair) |
| | Dr Jeremy Airey | Education |
| | Dr Daniel Baker | Psychology |
| | Eddie Cowling | IPC |
| | Dr Jasper Heinzen | History |
| | Dr Christian Piller | Philosophy |
| | Dr Alet Roux | Mathematics |
| | Dr Anna Sotiriadou | CITY College |
| | Dr Eytan Zweig | LLS |
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| **In attendance :** | Dr Stephen Gow (Secretary) | Assessment and Academic Integrity |
| | Daisy Bowen | Special Cases |
| | Jan Ball-Smith | Interim Head of Academic Affairs |
| | Jenny Brotherton | Quality Support Officer, Academic Quality |
| | Dr Zara Burford | Online Programmes |
| | Meely Doherty | YUSU |
| | Dr Adrian Lee | Policy Manager, Academic Quality |
| | Angela Lipscomb | DHoFO - Biology |
| | Jenny Matson | SAAS |
| | Sarah Maynard | DHoFO - Social Sciences |
| | Claire Pinder (Minutes) | Academic Support Coordinator |
| | Claire Wilkinson | Disability Services Manager |
| | Dr Jen Wotherspooon | Head of Student Administration |
| | Cytherea Shen | GSA |
| | | |
| **Apologies:** | Prof. Kate Arnold | Dean of York Graduate Research School |
| | Dr Kevin Caraher | SBS |
| | Dr Sue Faulds | Health Sciences |
| | Isabel Jagoe | DHoFO - Arts and Humanities |
| | Nic Streatfield | Student and Academic Services |
| | Prof. Jill Webb | AD Social Sciences |

## m23-24/50 Welcome and apologies for absence

Committee members, and those in attendance were welcomed.

Apologies were received from Kate Arnold, Kevin Caraher, Sue Faulds, Jill Webb, and Nic Streatfield. It was noted that Adrian Lee and Jenny Brotherton were in attendance.

# Standing Committee on Assessment

It was noted that future SCA committee meetings would not be held in HG/21 since Heslington Hall would be closed to committee meetings on Fridays.

**m23-24/51 Minutes of previous meeting**
Minutes of the previous meeting held on Friday 26 January were confirmed as correct.

**M23-24/52 Matters arising from the previous minutes**
Members noted items listed on the Matters arising log

**CLOSED**
- 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.
- m23-24/30 Reports from Students - Meely Doherty and SCA Chair to discuss exam assessment.
- m23-24/32 Exceptional Circumstances Policy Update - SCA Chair will speak to Biology and Natural Sciences students about a new EC process.
- m23-24/32 Exceptional Circumstances Policy Update - SCA Chair to speak to Head of Student Administration about who should own the new EC process and resource implications.
- m23-24/34 Turnitin contingency planning for the assessment period discussion paper - The moderation pack was found by staff to not be supportive enough, it can be used as part of the moderation process in their interaction with Turnitin. To pass to VLE transformation project. To be reviewed in the next meeting

**ONGOING**
- m23-24/31 SCA Priorities - SCA Chair to discuss process improvements for 2024/25 SCA priorities with UTC Chair.
- m23-24/33 YUSU proposals for provision of dictionaries in examinations - SCA Chair and YUSU Student Representative to meet Jenny Matson and Sue Faulds to discuss the implementation of dictionaries in examinations.
- m23-24/44 Summary of Undergraduate External Examiners' Reports 2022-23 - SCA Secretary to canvas SCA member opinions of suitable wording on a feedback specific question for the External Examiner form
- m23-24/44 Summary of Undergraduate External Examiners' Reports 2022-23 - SCA Secretary to share information about this external examiner feedback to SCA Chair who will investigate, and consider a response.
- m23-24/45 YUSU Proposals for SCA: Scaling of assessment marks proposal (NOT PGR) - SCA Secretary to convene a working group.
- m23-24/46 Chairs of Boards of Examiners Handbook - SCA Secretary to respond to feedback and consult CBoE Forum on the Handbook.

**NO LONGER NEEDED**

- m23-24/29 Chairs Report - SCA Chair to discuss the University's strategic vision of exam resourcing with UTC Chair.

**M23-24/53 Chair's Report**

**Progression and Award Rules changes**

SCA **considered** the Chair's report of Progression and Award Rules changes. It was noted that:

1. Stephen Gow would share Guide to Assessment Clarifications CAT ll with SCA members which include: revision of PG modules (resolving inconsistency around assessment limits); Capstones marginal fail (resolving an ambiguous reassessment rule); and best attempt of assessments (degree calculation re-wording) updates.

**Action: Stephen Gow**

**Exceptional Circumstances Update**

SCA **considered** the Chair's report of Exceptional Circumstances Update. It was noted that:

2. Changes were in progress, and a further update would be received at the 19 April SCA meeting.

**Timing of Exam Boards after S2**

SCA **considered** the Chair's report of Timing of Exam Boards after S2. It was noted that:

3. Progression and Awards (P&A) team have announced in the newsletter that PG and UG boards are scheduled in week 3 of the final semester. The implication is that P&A would need ratified results submitted by Wednesday in week 4 of the final semester in order for the resit examination table to be prepared in time. This has caused concern about workload implication for Professional Support Staff in Departments.
4. SCA had been asked to consider moving PG exam board dates. It had been agreed that PG exam board dates could be moved back one week for programmes which do not run exams.

**Abrahart case implications update**

SCA **considered** the Chair's report of Abrahart case implications update. It was noted that:

5. The Abrahart case at the University of Bristol had the implication that UK Universities are required to make reasonable adjustments for students who do not have Student Support Plans (SSP's) in place, and who request alternative assessment arrangements due to potential disability, since institutions will be held legally accountable for their competency standards.
6. The Chair of the SCA has met with several stakeholders, and it has been agreed that the University of York is required to review standards and means of assessment. SCA will be asking Departments for a review of competency standards (which will include PSRB standards) for further discussion. This work fits into the overall University strategy, and within the Assessment and Feedback project.
7. YUSU has met with other institutions and reported that the University of York is widely regarded by other institutions as already having excellent processes which support students, such as the Exceptional Circumstances policy,and that there is a strong case for optionality of assessment.

8. Departments are encouraged to build employability skills into Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO's). This should be considered in the context of optional assessment, so that PLOs can be met.
9. Optionality of assessment can include students taking exams at a later date, and Departments should be able to flexibly decide to use this option.

**Action: Patrick Gallimore (SCA Chair), and Jeremey Airey to discuss implications of Abrahart case.**

**m23-24/54 Report from Students**

YUSU **noted** that:

1. Meely has been working with Cytherea (GSA) in a working group and project board focusing on Student Support Plans.
2. Meely has been a student reviewer for the new BA Architecture programme, in the new York School of Architecture.
3. YUSU and GSA would be known as York SU after 1 August 2024 due to a merger. York SU had had a members meeting.
4. The York SU Election and Debate Team results would be made known from 22 March at 8:00 PM, and would be live-streamed.

GSA **noted** that:

5. Cytherea had shared a survey with University Teaching Committee (UTC), the survey was designed to gather feedback from PG students about their academic experience and how the University could further support their academic experience.
6. Some PGT students have reported that they are struggling to access adequate/ timely support from their dissertation supervisors.

**Action: Cici to email Tracy Lightfoot (UTC Chair)**

**Action: Cici to inform the Departments who have this feedback from their students**

**m23-24/55 Assessment and Feedback Project - Principles and next steps (May have PGR implications)**

SCA **considered** and **endorsed** the principles and next steps of the Assessment and Feedback Project, with conditions which should be addressed (below). The principles and next steps had been **approved** by UTC on 14 March 2024, subject to SCA endorsement on 22 March 2024.

The SCA Committee noted the following conditions which should be addressed in the principles:

1. Two pillars of assessment literacy are validity and reliability, these terms should be mentioned in the document and QAA benchmark statements should be referenced if these are required.

2. Further articulation of maintaining consistency in the assessment process, minimising variability, and providing an equitable experience for students should be made in the principles.

3. Principles should directly reference quality and academic integrity with reference to the

4. Compassionate assessment needs to be clarified. Are Departments/Schools expected to use their own judgement when exercising compassionate assessment, and to build compassionate assessment practices into programme design?

Further comments from SCA related to:

5. There needs to be a clear sense of how resourcing will work to support the next steps with regard to delivering assessments, especially with regard to IT and Timetabling. This forward planning would be supported by work streams.

6. Assessment via presentation method should encourage students to challenge themselves, where appropriate. Optionality should be included in ways that presentation assessments are structured and delivered.

7. The principles make it clear what Departments have discretion to do to resolve conflicting opinions within student cohorts on matters such as assessment dates. Such issues could potentially be resolved using existing policy and within academic quality obligations. However, examples of potential scenarios would be used by workstreams to inform guidance.

8. A wider set of consequences should be used in the guidance, to show how assessment decisions impact academic quality, and Student Support Plans, that are not within the Assessment and Feedback policy.

**Action: Jan Ball-Smith, Apprenticeships and Inclusive Learning**

**m23-24/56 Adjustments for Student Media and Candidates during Elections and Roses (NOT PGR)**

SCA **considered** Adjustments for Student Media and Candidates during Elections and Roses (NOT PGR). The SCA committee **approved** two recommendations, subject to clear definition of point 2:

1. To make running for student elections a permanent category for submission of Exceptional Circumstance claims, and to enable students applying to obtain a free self-certification.

2. To make assisting with student media during Elections and Roses a category for submission of Exceptional Circumstance (EC) claim.

**Action: Meely Doherty (YUSU) to provide clear definition with Patrick Gallimore, SCA Chair.**

**Action: Patrick Gallimore, SCA Chair to share the Roses recommendation approval with Tracy Lightfoot, UTC Chair**

SCA Committee **observed**:
1. The recommendation would not extend to approval of a further adjustment of category of submission of Exceptional Circumstances by students competing in Roses. It was noted that

the current proposed adjustments would have minimal impact as Roses is outside Assessment Period. It was noted that the Roses is reputationally beneficial for the University to support, as it promotes the University of York to a wider audience, and therefore widens admission pipelines.

2. Provision for student media students supporting student Elections and Roses could be included within an existing bullet point on the Exceptional Circumstances form.

**Action: Stephen Gow, SCA Secretary**

3. The next steps would be that the recommendations would be re-drafted for additional clarity, and submitted to YUSU. Once confirmed by YUSU, they would then be circulated to the SCA Committee. Departments would also be informed of the policy change. Finally, UTC would be informed.

**Action: Patrick Gallimore, SCA Chair**

**m23-24/57 Initial analysis of degree outcomes for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision (NOT PGR)**

SCA was asked to **approve** Initial analysis of degree outcomes for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision. The paper was presented by Karen Payne, SIA. SCA was also asked to **consider**:

1. Initial internal degree outcomes for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students.

2. The UTC Minute from February 2024 of Initial analysis of degree outcomes for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision.

SCA Committee **observed**:

3. There had been an overall deflation of good degree outcomes at UG level, which the School of Business and Society (Management School) had a large influence on. PGT outcomes were relatively steady, and now reported distinctions, merit, and pass.

4. A key should be provided on the graph showing UG degree outcomes by ethnic group, which was on page 3 of the paper.

5. A Tableau workbook which focuses on only York data is available, and awaits authorisation by UTC. It is awaiting contextual comment from Tracy Lightfoot, UTC Chair to be added.

6. The UTC Minute noted a correlation between International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores and PG student outcomes. SIA should interrogate this correlation in detail, and could include other language indicators such as previous institution, and Duolingo, which would enrich the data.

**Action: Karen Payne, SIA to inform Gary Hewitt, Strategic Planning**

7. Degree outcomes should be analysed within the context of results at similar UK institutions, since those results follow the same pattern as at the University of York. However, There was no sector level data available for comparison due to delay from Higher Education Statistics

Agency (HESA), and Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) who make the data available.  Once the data is available, a report could be created within a month.

**Action: Karen Payne, SIA to inform Patrick Gallimore (SCA Chair) when the HESA data has been released.**

8. Degree outcomes could be analysed within the context of student intake, since UG students admitted in 2020/21 may have been affected by exam grade inflation at UK schools which occurred in response to measures brought in by the Department of Education to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. There is a Tableau report which links entry tariff to award, which could explore this.

9. It was noted that English Language requirements on entry could be reflected on by the Admissions Team, and that assessment outcomes could be impacted by admissions requirements.

10. Although the entry degree of home PG students could be tracked, it was more difficult to track the entry degree of overseas PG students. It was further noted that some PG students embark on a different disciplinary pathway to that of their UG degree which may to some extent smudge the relationship between level of UG entry degree and PG degree outcomes.

11. Results from graduating CITY College students would be included in a separate part of the report.

**Action: Karen Payne, SIA**

12. It was noted that:
    a) International Pathway College (IPC) students should not be included in calculations with all other students or all overseas students. Students from English speaking territories should be considered separately. IPC students should be compared with students from similar groups and domiciles. IPC students perform comparatively strongly, and have recently often surpassed direct entry students, which should be reflected in the data and report.

    b) IPC should not be calculated with Kaplan International College London (KICL) since programmes taught at IPC and KICL are different and previous data suggests that student performance can also be quite different.

    c) Many Post Graduate Taught Overseas (PGTO) students not attributed to IPC will have completed a Pre-Sessional programme at IPC.

**Action: Stephen Gow, SCA Secretary to share 12a, 12b and 12c with Karen Payne, SIA**

# Standing Committee on Assessment

**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.

### m23-24/58  Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 19 April at 10:00am via Zoom online video conferencing, and in person in SLB/204 Spring Lane Building

**RESERVED BUSINESS**

### m23-24/59 Individual Examination Arrangements

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

### m23-24/60 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.

### m23-24/61 Results Lists

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