

University Education Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 February 2026 at 9.30am in Heslington Hall, H/G21 and via Zoom.

Meeting Attendance

Members present:

Tracy Lightfoot, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students (Chair)
Steve King, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students (Deputy Chair; Acting Chair for items 25-26/122-132; 140-146)
Duncan Jackson, Head of Academic Quality and Development (Secretary)
David Barrett, Associate Dean for Education and Students (Sciences)
Sam Hellmuth, Associate Dean for Education and Students (Arts and Humanities)
Jan Ball-Smith, Head of Student Success
Kirsty Lingstadt, Director of Library, Learning, Archives and Wellbeing
Tom Banham, Academic Registrar; Director of Student Education and Experience
Claire Ball-Smith (representing Social Sciences)
Daniel Keith (representing Social Sciences)
Michelle Alexander (representing Arts and Humanities)
Michael Bate (representing Sciences)
Paul Bishop (representing Sciences)
Lucy Ambrose (representing Hull York Medical School)
Iain Brennan (representing the International Pathway College)
Jen Wotherspoon, Deputy Director: Student Services
Petros Kefalas, Vice-President Learning and Teaching, University of York Europe Campus, CITY U.L.E
Aya Haidar, York SU Academic Officer
Gabby Morgan, York SU Student Voice and Insight Manager

In attendance:

Sally O'Connor, Academic Quality and Development (Assistant Secretary)
Sarah Farrell [UEC.25-26/136]
Anthony Sinnott [UEC.25-26/134]
Lilian Blot [UEC.25-26/138]
Alan Lewis [UEC.25-26/139]
Bethan Bide [UEC.25-26/140]

Apologies: Louise Thurston, Associate Director for Careers and Employability; Richard McClary (representing Arts and Humanities); Jill Webb, Associate Dean for Education and Students (Social Sciences).

Standing Items**Welcome**

25-26/122 As Acting Chair, Steve King welcomed the Committee and in particular welcomed Sam Hellmuth back from sabbatical.

Declarations of interest in items on the agenda [oral report]

25-26/123 Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting; none were declared.

Minutes of the meeting of UEC held 15 January 2026 [UEC.25-26/40]

25-26/124 The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2026 as an accurate record.

Action tracking and matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

25-26/125 No updates were noted.

Report of Chair's and Deputy Chair's Action taken since the last meeting [UEC.25-26/41]

25-26/126 The Chair (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students) has taken the following action on behalf of UEC:

1. **Approved** proposals for new programmes - MA Music Performance with Management and MA Music Performance: Instrumental Studies - following satisfactory resolution of conditions set at the December UEC
2. **Approved** a major modification to MA Public Policy, Mundus MAPP from 2025/26 onward - the 6-credit internship module (PLO00076M) will be split into 3 components, two of which form part of a 'Winter School'. The new Winter School modules are assessed by an individual poster presentation and a group reflective presentation (both pass/fail).
3. **Approved** a modification to 'progress at risk' rules for students progressing from Stage 3 to Stage 4 of the MMid programme to allow for likely outstanding births requirement to be met in Stage 4.

25-26/127 The Deputy Chair (Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students) has taken the following action on behalf of UEC:

1. **Approved** a list of teaching staff for CITY U.L.E and CITY College.

Chair's report [oral report presented by the Deputy Chair]

25-26/128 On behalf of the Chair, the Deputy Chair reported:

1. An initial outline for a Joint Education Programme with the University of Science and Technology Beijing (USTB) will be submitted to the Chinese Ministry of Education. Further work to define and approve the Engineering programme will be undertaken in due course with a planned start 2026/27. The partnership will involve students coming to York for the final year of their studies.
2. The NSS was launched for York students on 5 February 2026.

3. Carol Robinson has succeeded Sally Quinn as Chair of the Interdisciplinary Studies Education Committee. UEC noted thanks for Sally Quinn's three years of service.

Deputy Chair's report [oral report]

25-26/129 The Deputy Chair reported:

1. The Evasys module evaluation system was successfully launched, achieving a 37% institutional response rate, which is above the sector average for Evasys users. Rates by Faculty included Arts and Humanities: 46.4%; Sciences: 37.4%; Social Sciences: 30.1%; and IPC: 84.7%. A feedback closure rate of 82% was also achieved.
2. Work is ongoing to address anomalies in SITS regarding module types, to ensure the correct surveys for different module types (eg, placement, dissertation) are automatically generated.
3. Preparations are underway for the semester 2 module evaluations, (including improving the system for modules outside of the semester pattern) and for stage- and programme-level evaluations at the end of the year.

Student Representative's report [oral report]

25-26/130 Aya Haidar, York SU Academic Officer, reported:

1. Issues have been raised regarding the VLE, including self-certifications and extensions not being acknowledged, and students being logged out during exams.

Action: Chair of SCA

2. The upcoming "Big Academic Meeting Part 2" will be considering the student consultation framework and Access and Participation Plan (APP) work.
3. Nominations for the Excellence Awards open on 23 March 2026.

AI update

25-26/131 In his capacity as Chair of the UEC AI Working Group, Steve King, reported:

1. The UEC AI Working Group is drafting an AI literacy syllabus for staff and students, alongside guidance for AI use in marking and feedback. The Student Expert Panel will be consulted, and proposals will be presented to the Committee for approval in due course.

25-26/132 The Committee **observed:**

1. The Working Group should include consideration of potential biases in AI marking and feedback tools.
2. Use of AI can be highly beneficial to students with neurodiversity.

Update from the NSS Steering Group

25-26/133 David Barrett, as Chair of the NSS Steering Group, reported:

1. The current NSS response rate is 24%, tracking 2% higher than at the same time last year.

2. Schools/departments implementing "protected time" for survey completion are seeing significant uplifts (eg Psychology of Education at 78%); however, some schools/departments have not yet arranged protected time, or have not shared their plans for such, and this is to be followed up.

Action: Associate Deans

25-26/134 The Committee **observed**:

1. A lack of central oversight on marking release dates complicates arranging the timing of NSS promotion.
2. Scheduling protected time to inform students about the NSS, and provide an opportunity for them to complete the survey, should be determined at local level in schools/departments.

Section A

Assessment Working Group Proposal [UEC.25-26/42]

25-26/135 The Committee considered a proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group to review institutional practice in relation to assessment criteria. The group will review the evidence base, audit current practice, and develop policy and evaluation frameworks.

25-26/136 The Committee **approved** the proposal, noting:

1. External Examiners should be consulted.
2. Undergraduate provision should be prioritised initially due to NSS implications, though the scope should cover all provision types.
3. The Academic Quality and Development team is currently drafting guidance for providing feedback on summative assessment to support the new Feedback on Summative Assessment Policy.
4. Any new policies or guidance arising out of the Task and Finish Group will be presented to the Committee for approval.

University of York Mumbai Initial QA Inspection Approval Process [UEC.25-26/64]

25-26/137 The Committee considered the proposed approach for the initial QA inspection, comprising a desktop review and Zoom meetings, followed by a physical visit in Semester 1 of 2026/27. A provisional inspection report will be submitted to the April 2026 UEC meeting.

25-26/138 The Committee **observed** that it would be useful to have a briefing on the division of responsibilities between University staff and those at partner institutions undertaking collaborative or validated provision.

25-26/139 The Committee **approved** the process subject to the following amendments:

1. Adding an external member to the inspection panel.
2. Adding a student representative to the physical visit panel.
3. Providing further detail on the in-person visit in due course.

4. Ensuring digital infrastructure and digital accessibility are explicitly reviewed.

Summary UG External Examiners' Reports 2024-25 [UEC.25-26/44]

25-26/140 The Committee considered the summary report. Recommendations included developing a strategy for AI in assessment, improving marking calibration (particularly at grade boundaries), and encouraging diversity in assessment methods to address over-reliance on single modes of assessment and to enhance the development of diverse, transferable skills.

25-26/141 The Committee **observed**:

1. There could be a tension between the drive to reduce assessment load and the encouragement of assessment diversity.
2. Offering students a choice of assessment modes within a module could increase diversity without increasing overall volume.
3. The push for assessment diversity can conflict with the practical benefits of closed exams, which remain the most appropriate method of assessment for certain disciplines and additionally are highly resistant to AI-related misconduct.
4. External Examiners have reported dissatisfaction with the amount of information available to them at the Boards of Examiner meetings, for instance, on the relationship between module marks and overall degree results. It would be useful to investigate with Professional Services staff if providing further information would be possible.

Action: Chair of SCA; Deputy Director: Student Services

25-26/142 The Committee **recommended** that External Examiners be explicitly asked to comment on the comparability of degree outcomes, given the discrepancy between their reports confirming standards and the institution's lower proportion of "good degrees" relative to the Russell Group.

Action: Chair of SCA

Academic Misconduct Service Report [UEC.25-26/45]

25-26/143 Aimée Yeoman, Policy Officer, introduced the paper and reported:

1. False authorship, which includes AI-related misconduct, has replaced plagiarism as the most common offence (56.5% of cases).
2. No automated mechanisms or systems for accurate detection of AI use are currently available.
3. The International Pathway College has seen notable reduction in misconduct cases and accordingly may be able to share some good practice.
4. Several large departments reported zero cases; this is likely a data categorisation issue where cases log under the module host department rather than student home department or programme.

25-26/144 The Committee **observed** that the Academic Integrity tutorial could be updated to include more information about appropriate AI use.

Action: Chair of SCA

25-26/145 The Committee noted that an error in York Online population data has been raised with the Strategic Insight and Analysis team.

25-26/146 The Committee endorsed the recommendation for SCA to:

1. Investigate why a number of large departments reported zero cases for the 24-25 academic year.
2. Explore improved tracking and recording mechanisms to ensure that data accurately represents misconduct offence trends across schools/departments, different types of provision, and student demographics.

Reducing the Reliance on E-Textbooks [UEC.25-26/46]

25-26/147 Anthony Sinnott, Access and Procurement Development Manager, presented a paper proposing a shift away from e-textbook models, and noted:

1. The proposal was designed to explore new technologies and opportunities and to minimise external risks to provision.
2. Moving towards Open Educational Resources (OER) can mitigate financial risk and publisher restrictions.
3. OER policies are being developed at comparator institutions and could provide insight into best practice in this area.

25-26/148 The Committee **observed:**

1. Engagement with OER creation should be highlighted as a career-enhancing activity for Teaching and Scholarship staff.
2. Care should be taken to ensure moving away from e-textbooks does not generate costs for students.

25-26/149 The Committee **approved:**

1. Establishing practical projects and pilot schemes that will explore partnerships and systems with the intention of reducing overall reliance on E-Textbook models
2. Participating in content gap analysis work with third-party providers and University of York academic staff. This work will result in the development of proactive tools that will allow us to disengage from and develop alternatives to any essential resource that becomes restricted in the future.
3. Developing a targeted communication strategy to promote adoption.

25-26/150 The Committee **recommended:**

1. Developing, with student input, a formal OER policy offering practical guidance and a clear institutional mandate, aligned with the University's mission for public good.
2. Consulting with York Graduate Research School to explore if there are any implications for postgraduate research materials.

Action: Access and Procurement Development Manager (items 1 & 2)

York SU Academic Representation Report 2025/26 [UEC.25-26/47]

25-26/151 Aya Haidar, York SU Academic Officer, presented the report, highlighting the complexity of operating six different representation systems across the University and noting that no one system appears to be more successful than another.

25-26/152 The Committee **observed:**

1. There are challenges around incentivising representatives (paid vs. voluntary) and possible inequity across schools/departments.
2. Effective role delivery is highly dependent on the engagement and proactivity of individual representatives, qualities that are difficult to dictate.
3. Accrediting the role and including leadership/project management training could increase appeal.
4. Any changes must align with Departmental Education Committees and balance feedback collection, community building, and collaboration between York SU and schools/departments to strengthen engagement and trust.

25-26/153 The Committee **recommended:**

1. Convening a small group to design a unified academic representation model and potentially separating paid student voice activity from the representative role.

Action: Head of Student Success

Apprenticeships - Annual Update 2024-25 [UEC.25-26/48]

25-26/154 Sarah Farrell, Deputy Head of Apprenticeships, presented the annual update and **reported:**

1. The Nursing Associate programme performed well in the NSS and was rated Outstanding by OfS in the EPA monitoring check.
2. Programme-level KPIs for each programme have been RAG rated as green.
3. Ofsted's new inspection framework has altered grading (eg, "Good" is now "Expected Standards").
4. Internal self-assessments rate current provisions as Strong (Achievement; Inclusion; Curriculum, teaching and training), Expected (Leadership and Governance; Participation and Development) or Met (Safeguarding)
5. Increased use of Aptem, the learner management system, has improved efficiency and accuracy.

25-26/155 The Committee **observed:**

1. Reporting should include cohort sizes, not just percentages, to better inform governance and contextualise the student experience.
2. More detailed reporting at all levels will assist in understanding the student experience to ensure the right governance questions are raised.

25-26/156 The Chair requested the establishment of an Apprenticeship Monitoring Board subgroup to support the development of a strategy linking apprenticeships to CPD.

Action: Associate Dean for Education and Students (Sciences)

Teaching Excellence Framework Update 2025-26 [UEC.25-26/43]

25-26/157 Duncan Jackson, Head of Academic Quality and Development, reported:

1. Recent OfS proposals on the future of TEF include:
 - a. Redefining 'Bronze' as meeting (rather than exceeding) baseline requirements;
 - b. Limiting overall institutional rating to the lowest component rating;
 - c. Redefining post-study success indicators;
 - d. Linking TEF outcomes to regulatory/financial controls (eg, fee caps, funding availability, recruitment limits).
2. Based upon the most recent OfS data release, York's position in relation to Student Experience is deteriorating and, generally speaking, stable/improving in regard to Student Outcomes.
3. Current data suggests York would achieve a Bronze overall rating (Silver for Outcomes, Bronze for Experience).
4. Unclear "Student Experience" criteria make it difficult to differentiate between Bronze and Needs Improvement.

25-26/158 The Committee **observed:**

1. An institution-wide survey of postgraduate students may prove useful in advance of the potential inclusion of postgraduate student data.
2. Timings for data collection remain unclear.
3. The proposal for APP to focus on access, and TEF to consider the experience and outcomes of underrepresented groups, threatens to undermine efforts to enhance the whole student journey of such groups.
4. The proposed link between institutional ratings and fee structures is concerning, as frequent adjustments to fees - based on an institution's movement in and out of specific rating tiers - would be administratively impractical and create unpredictable financial environments for both students and the institution.
5. It is unclear how these changes will impact HYMS, given its position as a collaborative entity split across two universities. The Chair noted that this is currently an active point of discussion at the Joint Senate level to investigate how cross-institutional alignment can be ensured.

Section B

York Computer Science Online: update against action plan [oral report]

- 25-26/159 Lilian Blot, Deputy Head of Department for Online Teaching, reported that while most actions on the plan were marked "complete," many had not been achieved due to a lack of resources (eg, inability to recruit for out-of-hours support). The planned training and support for online staff has not been deliverable, however some staff have undertaken the York Professional and Academic Development scheme (YPAD) instead.
- 25-26/160 The Committee expressed disappointment that undeliverable actions were marked as complete and asked that the Department update the action plan to accurately reflect the status of items. This should be returned to the Committee once the new provider is in place.

Action: Deputy Head of Department [Computer Science] for Online Teaching

Programme Approvals/Modifications**Chemistry with Digital Methods [UEC.25-26/49]**

- 25-26/161 The Committee considered a proposal for a new MChem in Chemistry with Digital Methods, which had been reviewed in advance by Jill Webb, Lucy Ambrose, Sally O'Connor and an external assessor. The proposal was presented by Alan Lewis, who reported:
1. The programme addresses a strategic "digital skills" gap in the Department's portfolio, and should prove competitive with programmes at comparator universities.
 2. Student mobility is key, allowing transfer between this and the standard Chemistry degree.
 3. There will be sufficient capacity for specialised projects within the Department and with existing overseas partners; further work is planned with industry partners in this area to expand capacity.
 4. The programme will be open for new entrants from 2027/28, but the new option modules will be made available for students to transfer into from existing Chemistry courses from 2026/27.
- 25-26/162 The Committee **approved** the programme subject to the following conditions, to be met prior to marketing:
1. Removing references to Natural Sciences.
 2. Clarifying Year 2 prerequisites to ensure transfer viability.
- 25-26/163 The Committee also **approved** the extension of the existing exemption regarding M-level core modules in Stage 3 to this programme, ensuring adherence to PSRB requirements.
- 25-26/164 The Committee **recommended**:
1. Reviewing the employability section to explicitly highlight digital skills and sustainability.
 2. The AD E&S (Sciences) and QSO (Sciences) work with Chemistry to ensure they revise Statements of Purpose and Programme Learning Outcomes across the Chemistry portfolio to ensure they highlight the distinctiveness of programmes and are student-facing (phrased as "you will...").

Action: Associate Dean, Education and Students (Sciences)

25-26/165 The Committee noted a planned project for the Associate Dean, Education and Students (Sciences) to review how option modules are chosen Faculty-wide, to ensure the viability of modules for small cohorts.

MSc Digital Design with Fashion History [UEC.25-26/50]

25-26/166 The Committee considered a proposal for a new MSc in Digital Design with Fashion History, which had been reviewed in advance by David Barrett, Michael Bate, Angela Ranson and an external assessor. The proposal was presented by Bethan Bide, who reported:

1. The proposal responds to growing interest from the fashion heritage sector and a need for graduates with combined expertise in digital design and fashion theory.
2. The curriculum utilises existing modules from the School of ACT and the Department of History of Art to create a specialist pathway within the current Digital Design portfolio.
3. There are no resource implications for the Department.

25-26/167 The Committee **approved** the programme, subject to the following conditions being addressed prior to marketing:

1. Amending Programme Learning Outcomes 1 and 5 to explicitly highlight the "fashion history" specialism.
2. Removing references to interim credit completion relating to the part-time capstone project.
3. Remove reference to 'making progress' towards PLOs in the exit awards section, and ensure that all PLOs listed as required for an exit award are able to be achieved regardless of the combination of modules completed.

25-26/168 The Committee **recommended**:

1. Reviewing the wording of Programme Learning Outcome 4 to ensure it can be assessed in an inclusive manner.
2. Exploring opportunities for more innovative assessment types across core modules.
3. Re-evaluating exit awards to determine if *any* 60-credit combination warrants the specialist title of "Digital Design with Fashion History". If not, consider offering two distinct Postgraduate Certificates: one with the same specialist title as the MSc, achieved on completion of specified modules that enable sufficient achievement in both the digital design and fashion history elements, and one with a more generic title for the completion of any 60 credits.

25-26/169 Although certain proposals may appear resource-neutral for individual schools/departments, the addition of any new programme carries broader implications for University-wide resources throughout the student lifecycle. Also, MRAO and Timetabling had raised concerns regarding the programme's delivery and overall viability. As such, the Chair expressed concern that programmes with marginal predicted intakes are receiving approval at the viability and planning stages, prior to submission to UEC for academic approval.

Section C

[Secretary's Note: With regard to its Section C agenda, UEC was provided with the following agenda items which were provided for: [a] information only, where UEC discussion is not required or anticipated, unless a request is made to escalate an item from Section C to Section A or B for consideration OR as [b] supplementary information and data for items on the Section A or B agenda.]

- 25-26/170 Standing Committee on Assessment summary
 - a. 30 January 2026 [UEC.25-26/51]
- 25-26/171 Faculty Learning and Teaching Group minutes:
 - a. Sciences, 10 November 2025 [UEC.25-26/53]
 - b. Social Sciences, 10 November 2025 [UEC.25-26/54]
- 25-26/172 CITY Joint Learning and Teaching Strategy Group minutes
 - a. 13 November 2025 [UEC.25-26/55]
- 25-26/173 Summary of Priorities from Employer Advisory Group [UEC.25-26/56]
- 25-26/174 Advance HE Annual CPD Report [UEC.25-26/57]
- 25-26/175 Approved Teaching staff CITY U.L.E. and CITY College [UEC.25-26/58]
- 25-26/176 TEF Update
 - a. TEF Student Experience Data [UEC.25-26/59]
 - b. TEF Student Outcomes Data [UEC.25-26/60]
 - c. OfS Minimum Student Outcomes Thresholds [UEC.25-26/61]
- 25-26/177 Reducing the Reliance on E-Textbooks [UEC.25-26/62]
- 25-26/178 Apprenticeships Self-Assessment Report 2024-25 UEC.25-26/63

Sally O'Connor, Academic Quality
February 2026