

University Education Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 January 2026 at 9.30am, online 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 and Chair of SCA (Deputy Chair)
Duncan Jackson, Head of Academic Quality and Development (Secretary)
David Barrett, Associate Dean for Education and Students (Sciences)
Jill Webb, Associate Dean for Education and Students (Social Sciences)
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)
Paul Bishop (representing Sciences)
Michael Bate (representing Sciences)
Iain Brennan (representing the International Pathway College)
Jen Wotherspoon, Deputy Director: Student Services
Aya Haidar, York SU Academic Officer
Gabby Morgan, York SU Student Voice and Insight Manager
Zoe Devlin, Head of Online Partnerships

In attendance:

Sally O'Connor, Academic Quality and Development (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies: Petros Kefalas, Vice-President Learning and Teaching, University of York Europe Campus, CITY U.L.E.; Richard McClary (representing Arts and Humanities); Louise Cook, Interim Associate Dean for Education and Students (Arts and Humanities); Louise Thurston, Associate Director for Careers and Employability; Lucy Ambrose (representing Hull York Medical School)

Standing Items

Welcome

25-26/109 The Chair welcomed the Committee and noted the meeting would focus on a limited number of business items.

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

25-26/110 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 10 December 2025 [UEC.25-26/37]

25-26/111 The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025 as an accurate record.

Section A

Degree Outcomes Statement [UEC.25-26/38]

25-26/112 The Deputy Chair **reported**:

1. Publication has been delayed pending the release of Office for Students (OfS) provider-level analysis; the presented report was informed by a review of internal data and HESA data for 2023/24.
2. "Good degrees" increased by 1.9 percentage points to 80.8%.
3. While York remains below the current and pre-pandemic Russell Group medians, results are now broadly in line with the York pre-pandemic level.
4. Substantial improvement was noted in the awarding gap for Black students; the gap for Asian students is now the primary institutional concern.
5. Data for CITY College students was included for the first time, showing 62% achieved a good degree.

25-26/113 The Committee **observed**:

1. Council members have expressed concern that York's position relative to the Russell Group may impact student recruitment and NSS results.
2. Caution should be exercised regarding Black student data due to small cohort sizes.
3. Work is ongoing via the "No Gaps" project to address the awarding gap for Asian students.
4. A visual representation comparing York to the Russell Group and the wider sector should be included for onward circulation.
5. References to "Changing the Work" and other completed projects should be replaced with specific, ongoing actions.

Action: Deputy Chair

25-26/114 The Chair **recommended** monitoring the release of OfS data and including an acknowledgment of such if published before the Senate deadline, or a note that this will be followed up if not.

Action: Head of Academic Quality & Development; Deputy Chair

25-26/115 The Committee **endorsed** the paper for recommendation to Senate (and onward to Council).

Proposed Changes to Semester Structure [UEC.25-26/39]

25-26/116 Jen Wotherspoon, Deputy Director: Student Services **reported**:

1. Following two years of semesterisation, changes are proposed to address student wellbeing and engagement concerns during the long December/January teaching gap and to alleviate the pressure on marking and administration periods.
2. The proposal includes:
 - i. shortening the December vacation to two weeks, which aligns the student break more closely with the Christmas staff closure, and adding a week in June to provide more time for marking, progression and awards work prior to graduation in July.
 - ii. fixing the Late Summer Assessment period at weeks 9 and 10 of the summer semester to allow more time for marking and assessment and provide clarity of timelines for students.
 - iii. for years with a late Easter, adding a "consolidation week" after week 5 to avoid short blocks of teaching that can lead to student disengagement.

25-26/117 The Committee **observed**:

1. A comprehensive review of assessment scale, volume and scheduling would be useful.
2. Existing caveats around professional programmes and those operating outside the semester system must remain.
3. Operational concerns persist regarding facilities, support, and commercial services when teaching takes place outside standard times.
4. Risks to changing the structure include commercial impacts (particularly with accommodation contracts), international student travel, and impact on students with part-time work or caring responsibilities.
5. Concerns remain for staff and students with childcare responsibilities when Easter breaks do not align with those set by local authorities.
6. Splitting the Easter break may disrupt learning continuity, particularly for lab-based projects.
7. A solution that satisfies staff and student workload and wellbeing concerns, pedagogy, and student engagement simultaneously may not be achievable.

25-26/118 The Committee **endorsed** the general direction of travel, with a recommendation to disaggregate the three proposed changes into separate points for Senate discussion and approval. The priority should be to seek the reduction of the winter vacation to two weeks for the 2026/27 academic year.

Action: Academic Registrar; Deputy Director: Student Services

Sections B and C

No Items to report

Open

UEC.25-26/40

Sally O'Connor, Academic Quality and Development
January 2026