

University Education Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 June 2026 at 9.30am in Heslington Hall, H/G21 and via Zoom.

Meeting Attendance

Members present:

Steve King, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students (Deputy Chair/Acting Chair)
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)
Jill Webb, Associate Dean for Education and Students (Social Sciences)
Jan Ball-Smith, Head of Student Success
Tom Banham, Academic Registrar; Director of Student Education and Experience
Claire Ball-Smith (representing Social Sciences)
Daniel Keith (representing Social Sciences)
Michael Bate (representing Sciences)
Richard McClary (representing Arts and Humanities)
Michelle Alexander (representing Arts and Humanities)
Jen Wotherspoon, Deputy Director: Student Services
Louise Thurston, Associate Director for Careers and Employability
Kirsty Lingstadt, Director of Library, Learning, Archives and Wellbeing
Petros Kefalas, Vice-President Learning and Teaching, University of York Europe Campus, CITY U.L.E
Amy Creighton, York SU Student Voice and Insight Manager
Abi Harrison, York SU Equality and Inclusion Officer

In attendance:

Sally O'Connor, Academic Quality and Development (Assistant Secretary)
Richard Walker [UEC.25-26/99]
Adrian Lee [UEC.25-26/101]

Apologies: Tracy Lightfoot, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students; Paul Bishop (representing Sciences); Lucy Ambrose (representing Hull York Medical School); Iain Brennan (representing the International Pathway College); Zoe Devlin, Head of Online Partnerships; Aya Haidar, York SU Academic Officer.

Standing Items

Welcome

25-26/247 In the absence of the Chair (Tracy Lightfoot), the Deputy Chair (Steve King) took the chair and welcomed the Committee, noting that Item 12 concerning the ESAY report would be deferred to the July meeting, and welcomed Abi Harrison attending as an alternate student representative for Aya Haidar.

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

25-26/248 Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting; none were declared.

Conferment of degrees in absentia

25-26/249 The Acting Chair noted there were no conferments for this meeting.

Minutes of the meeting of UEC held 21 May 2026 [UEC.25-26/94]

25-26/250 The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting as an accurate record.

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

25-26/251 The actions report was noted and no additional actions or matters were noted.

Report of Chair's and Deputy Chair's Action taken since the last meeting [UEC.25-26/95]

25-26/252 The Acting Chair presented the reports. The Chair (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students) has taken the following action on behalf of UEC:

1. **Approved** in principle for York campus delivery, and for first stage submission to the regional authority of Central South University (CSU) to be delivered as part of a Joint Education Institute (JEI), the following new programme:
 - a. BEng Intelligent Digital Health Engineering (School of PET)

The Committee will consider final approval for this programme for York campus-based delivery at its meeting in July 2026, and subsequently full approval for its delivery as part of the JEI prior to submission to the Chinese Ministry of Education.

2. Approved for first stage submission to the regional authorities of Soochow and Central South Universities, the following existing programmes to be delivered as part of two Joint Education Institutes:
 - a. BSc Accounting, Business Finance and Management (SBS/Soochow)
 - b. MSc Management (SBS/Soochow)
 - c. BSc Chemistry (Chemistry/Soochow)
 - d. MSc Green Chemistry with Sustainable Industrial Technology (Chemistry/Soochow)
 - e. BSc Biomedical Sciences (Biology/CSU)
 - f. BSc Biochemistry (Biology/CSU)
 - g. MSc Biomedical Sciences (Biology/CSU)
 - h. BEng Biomedical Engineering (PET/CSU)
 - i. MSc Biomedical Engineering (PET/CSU)
 - j. MSc Health Research (CSU)

The Committee will consider all JEI programmes for full approval prior to submission to the Chinese Ministry of Education.

25-26/253 The Deputy Chair (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students) has taken the following action on behalf of UEC:

1. Approved the following major modifications in relation to the Computer Science MSc Artificial Intelligence and MSc Data Science for 2026/27 (University of York Mumbai have been informed of the changes):
 - a. Moving delivery of COM00184M: *Deep Learning*, to Semester 1.

- b. Moving delivery of COM00196M: *Foundations of AI and Machine Learning* to Semester 2.
- 2. And for 2027/28:
 - a. Removal of COM00196M *Foundations of AI and Machine Learning* from the MSc Artificial Intelligence (students will select a further 20 credits of optional modules to replace this module).
 - b. Removal of COM00196M *Foundations of AI and Machine Learning* as a core module, and the addition of COM00174M *High Performance Parallel and Distributed Systems* as a core module.
 - c. Adding optionality to Semester 1 by making the new module COM00217M *Artificial Intelligence and Automata*, and the existing core module COM00184M *Deep Learning*, optional.
- 3. Approved the withdrawal of the BA in English Language and Professional Communication at CITY College, New Bulgarian University (Sofia).

Chair's report [oral report]

25-26/254 The Acting Chair presented a combined Chair's and Deputy Chair's report highlighting:

1. Extensive work by schools/departments, the project team, AQ&D and the PVC Education and Students to produce, review and give in-principle approval to 12 programmes that will be delivered as part of two proposed JEIs. Thanks were expressed to all teams and individuals involved for their work under tight timelines. Full approval for these programmes will be finalised over the summer.
2. A new Educational Partnership Manager will join the AQ&D team on 29 June 2026 to manage quality assurance of the University's partnership portfolio. Thanks were noted to Adrian Lee for his significant work on collaborative provision over the past year.
3. Ongoing negotiations to secure a new online partner to succeed HEP are nearing completion.
4. The task and finish group on assessment criteria, chaired by David Barrett in response to NSS results, has held its inaugural meeting and will progress its work over the next 12 months.
5. A Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) symposium is scheduled for 24 June 2026, featuring seven presentations across three themes and a panel discussion.
6. The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) has approved the LLB in Greek Law with Common Law at the Europe Campus (CITY College) for delivery starting October 2026, completing undergraduate approvals for the campus. Thanks to the CITY team were noted.
7. The headline points from newly-released TEF consultation results include:
 - a. Overall institutional ratings will be removed; separate ratings for student outcomes and student experience will be maintained;
 - b. The first reviews of the new TEF will take place from 2027/28. The length of time between reviews will depend upon the rating an institution receives (with Gold-rated institutions having longer cycles);

- c. Ratings of student experience will be based upon expanded consideration of NSS themes; student outcomes will be based upon continuation, completion and an expanded set of post-study indicators;
- d. A risk-monitoring tool will be introduced that will set out the factors associated with increased risks of quality;
- e. A strengthened set of incentives and interventions will be introduced that will vary according to level of risk to quality;
- f. Only 'Requires Improvement' will be used as an indicator that an institution is at risk of breaching B conditions in the first cycle;
- g. Current ratings remain valid until an institution is reviewed under the new scheme.

25-26/255 The Committee **observed**:

1. Concerns have been raised in schools/departments regarding the rapid pace and structural clarity of the JEIs, specifically concerning flying faculty demands and workload pressures. Communications around the scope and expectations of the JEI partnerships would be appreciated.

ACTIONS: PVC (Education and Students); Associate PVC (Education and Students);
Communications team

2. It would be useful to have more information on the TEF data scope, timelines, and whether initial review groupings will be based on current ratings or new datasets. The Committee noted that while structural parameters remain under review, it is expected that lower-rated bronze or improving institutions will face more frequent reviews, with further detail expected from technical consultations this autumn.

Deputy Chair's report [oral report]

25-26/256 No separate updates were raised under this item outside of the details provided within the combined Chair's report.

Student Representatives' report [oral report]

25-26/257 Amy Creighton, York SU Student Voice and Insight Manager, **reported**: .

1. York SU will host a staff networking and showcase event on 9 September 2026 to reintroduce various union teams to university staff and outline support structures.
2. The initial round of student representative recruitment closed in May, successfully filling all departmental positions across faculties with the exceptions of Postgraduate Research Physics and Undergraduate Criminology. General recruitment for remaining academic representative vacancies will reopen in October.
3. A report on the results of the Excellence Awards will be presented to a future UEC meeting.

Update from the AI Working Group [oral report]

25-26/258 In his capacity as Chair of the UEC AI Working Group, Steve King **reported**:

1. Progress has been made in the following areas:

- a. A mandatory student AI tutorial is under development in the VLE for Semester 1 implementation, framing AI proficiency as essential regardless of individual ethical views;
 - b. Work is ongoing on a staff policy and operational guidance regarding the use of AI tools in marking and feedback and will be reviewed by SCA before being presented to a future UEC meeting.
2. A UEB thinktank, "An Institutional Approach to AI", is scheduled for late June to establish high-level strategic alignment.
 3. The AI Working Group is aware of growing operational threats from wearable AI hardware (for example, smart glasses), meaning that closed assessments are not invulnerable to AI-related misconduct.
 4. The AI Working Group heard a report on a project (Exeter/Salford) exploring the use of AI models to audit and test traditional assessment briefs for vulnerabilities to generative AI tools.

Update from NSS Steering Group

25-26/259 David Barrett, Associate Dean (Education and Students) for Sciences and Chair of the NSS Steering Group, gave a brief operational update regarding preparations for handling the upcoming NSS results, scheduled for release on 8 July 2026. A communication and analysis plan has been reviewed and signed off by Tracy Lightfoot. The use of Evasys software to assist in analysing open text comments is being considered.

Section A

Proposed academic representation structure 2027/28 [UEC.25-26/97]

- 25-26/260 Amy Creighton, York SU Academic Officer, **reported** a proposed academic representation model for taught students, highlighting:
1. The proposal is to create two paid roles per school/department to eliminate inequities in which some schools/departments pay their representatives, whereas others do not. These roles would be paid from a central fund.
 2. While the total expenditure from a centralised structure is less than is currently being spent through localised financing, it requires all schools/departments to contribute, including those which do not currently pay their student representatives. If any school/department refuses, the contingency plan will be to withdraw payment for student representation in order to establish institutional equity.
 3. A community remit will be integrated into the role description to cultivate student belonging, utilising funding mechanisms like York SU's 'REPREP' for events and workshops.
 4. A performance and accountability framework will be introduced to manage the quality of student representative work, allowing for role termination in instances of poor performance.
 5. The Department of Architecture and Hull York Medical School are out of scope due to operational differences.

25-26/261 The Committee **observed**:

1. Eliminating payment inequities and transitioning away from fragmented school-/department-specific models is a positive move.
2. A blanket allocation of two representatives is structurally inadequate for exceptionally large or complex schools/departments, such as the School for Business and Society; Health Sciences; and Education, where distinct undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional pathways require specialised advocacy. It would be useful to explore a ratio-based model, adjusted for student headcount or portfolio complexity.
3. It is inappropriate to exclude the Department of Architecture from the model given it will have three active cohorts by the 2027/28 implementation date.
4. Further information would be useful regarding operational and implementation plans, including appointment cycles (ie, if these are annual or for the duration of the post-holder's programme) and if eligibility criteria will be related to levels of study.

25-26/262 The Committee **endorsed** the proposed direction of travel and advised York SU to:

1. Distribute the granular representation data and costings to Faculty Associate Deans and the Associate PVC (Education and Students) to initiate local consultation and seek structural and financial support from faculties.
2. Return a revised proposal detailing job descriptions, performance indices, and funding arrangements to UEC ahead of the proposed 2027/28 launch.

Action: York SU (both items)

School/Department Education Committees update [UEC.25-26/98]

25-26/263 Duncan Jackson, Head of Academic Quality and Development, presented the results of a survey of the School/Department Education Committee (S/DEC) pilot, and **reported:**

1. There was positive feedback regarding operational efficiency, focused agendas, and the ability to engage in agile, proactive decision-making.
2. Data from S/DEC Chairs who had previously served as Chairs of Boards of Studies indicated they had experienced an increase in their workload.
3. Concerns were noted regarding the integration of PGR business within a committee primarily occupied by taught provision, often sidelining research student matters to brief agenda segments.
4. Informal feedback from pilot chairs noted that student representatives found smaller committee environments less intimidating and easier to contribute to than traditional Boards of Studies.
5. The recommended implementation timeline mandates all remaining schools/departments to have fully formalised S/DECs operational by August 2027 for the 2027/28 academic year.

25-26/264 The Committee **observed:**

1. The framework concentrates decision-making power within a small group, risking the loss of democratic voice among the wider school/department staff, who may feel disconnected from teaching governance.

2. As schools/departments self-selected for participation, the survey results may disproportionately reflect the views of those dissatisfied with current arrangements, rather than a broader view inclusive of those schools/departments that feel their existing governance structures function effectively.
3. The survey scope was limited to S/DEC members; as it did not capture the views of other staff members within participating schools/departments, the impact on the school/department as a whole was not fully measured.
4. A mandatory university-wide rollout risks disrupting effective existing governance structures, particularly in the absence of robust evidence of clear efficiency gains from the pilot phase.
5. A transitional semester of preparation, with a full launch in semester two, has worked well in the Department of History. The Committee observed that schools/departments should be supported to make the transition in different ways, appropriate to their specific operational requirements.
6. It would be useful to have further information regarding:
 - a. Operational criteria governing when an S/DEC can form a PGR (or other) subcommittee;
 - b. What structural mechanisms can be put in place to guarantee that wider teaching staff are notified of, and where appropriate can feed into, S/DEC decisions;
7. Senate approval was granted specifically for the pilot phase of the S/DECs, with the expectation that proposals for 2026-27 would be informed by an evaluation of that pilot.

Blackboard Learn VLE and anonymous marking provision [UEC.25-26/99]

25-26/265 Richard Walker, Associate Director (Digital Education), **reported** that an audit of the Blackboard Learn VLE revealed that critical functionality regarding grade processing, reporting, and bulk entry of deadlines remains incomplete, making the September 2027 transition deadline unfeasible. Additionally, Disability Services has raised concerns about potential changes to "flagged marking," noting that alternative requirements could violate the University's obligations under the Equalities Act. Accordingly, the Committee was asked to endorse a 12-month extension to the Turnitin Feedback Studio licence to ensure continuity while Blackboard work to resolve the reported issues.

25-26/266 The Committee **observed**:

1. A system-guided self-flagging tool could satisfy the University's anticipatory duty regarding accessibility requirements, supported by disciplinary procedures to penalise students for any inappropriate use.
2. The lack of an automated migration pathway from Turnitin Feedback Studio to Blackboard Learn may place an operational burden on schools/departments that have anchored their assessment criteria around Turnitin Feedback Studio infrastructure in the future.
3. Structured communications to schools/departments regarding the eventual phase-out of Turnitin Feedback Studio should therefore be initiated via FLTGs and VLE contacts, in order to manage long-term expectations and assist with planning.

Action: Associate Director (Digital Education)

4. It would be useful for the Assessment Criteria Task and Finish Group to absorb Blackboard parameter mapping into their 12-month scope of work.

Action: Chair, Assessment Criteria Task and Finish Group

- 25-26/267 The Committee **endorsed** the recommendation to extend the Turnitin Feedback Studio licence for a further year to August 2028, and **recommended** forwarding specific technical and policy concerns to the Standing Committee on Assessment (SCA).

Action: Associate Director (Digital Education)

Pre-arrival expected training [UEC.25-26/100]

- 25-26/268 Kirsty Lingstadt, Director of Library, Learning, Archives and Wellbeing, **reported** on the proposal to make 'Academic Integrity' and 'Understanding Consent' tutorials, seen as 'mandatory' for all students from a compliance perspective, available to incoming students prior to their arrival from 2026/27. To improve compliance rates, the paper proposed exploring whether training completion could be linked to accommodation key collection from 2027/28, similar to current fire safety training.

- 25-26/269 The Committee **observed:**

1. Operational constraints dictate that all materials and VLE pathways must be fully reviewed and functional in August to accommodate September arrivals.
2. Mandatory pre-arrival tasks may cause incoming students anxiety, at a point where they are not yet able to access institutional support. This may be a risk given the potentially sensitive nature of these tutorials, and this could also inadvertently imply institutional problems in these areas. Communications must clearly frame these tutorials as a proactive commitment to safety and integrity.
3. Linking completion to accommodation key collection is inappropriate given academic integrity and understanding consent are not pre-requisites for taking up accommodation. Further it is inequitable in that it would not affect or incentivise some groups, e.g. commuter, off-campus, or international student cohorts.
4. The operational reality of applying academic or enrolment sanctions for non-compliance poses unfeasible financial and administrative risks; similar sanctions would have impacted approximately 4,000 students last year.

- 25-26/270 The Committee **approved** the launch of the modules for the pre-arrival period of the 2026/27 academic year. The proposal to link completion to accommodation key collection was deferred pending further consideration of the issues raised.

Action: Director, Library, Learning, Archives and Wellbeing

Introduction of Chapter 'UGJ - Undergraduate Joint Education Programme (PET/USTB)' into the Progression and Award Rules 2026/27 [UEC.25-26/101]

- 25-26/271 Adrian Lee, Policy Manager, Academic Quality and Development, presented the paper and **reported:**

1. The addition of a new chapter to the 2026/27 Progression and Award Rules will support the 3+1 dual-award Joint Education Programme (JEP) between the School of Physics,

Engineering and Technology (PET) and the University of Science and Technology Beijing (USTB).

2. This chapter establishes the necessary rules for the atypical credit volume and co-delivery model, while ensuring compliance with Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB/IET) accreditation requirements.
3. Key points of the chapter include:
 - a. Provision for exit awards that require a larger credit volume than usual;
 - b. A bespoke compensation arrangement to meet IET expectations: a maximum of 30 credits may be compensated across the programme. While stage 1 and 2 modules delivered at USTB are generally non-compensatable, the Board of Examiners may exceptionally allow compensation for a single 10-credit marginal fail if it acts as the sole barrier to stage 3 progression, provided the student is counselled on the academic implications;
 - c. Students will have a reassessment attempt in all modules in stages 1 and 2, aligning with USTB rules (which also allow for repeat study beyond York's policy);
 - d. When at York in stage 3, the usual UG reassessment credit limit will apply.
4. Drafting has drawn on the CITY ULE 4 year UG degree rules chapter and kept as close to the standard Bachelors rules as possible.
5. The JEP rules will provide a broad template for progression and award governance of the programmes the University aims to deliver under JEIs from 2027/28, tailored where necessary to the requirements of those programmes.

25-26/272 The Committee **observed**:

1. There is potential for administrative inflation and complexity if the University continues to develop specialised chapters of rules for every future external partnership or joint institute.

25-26/273 The Committee **approved** the integration of Chapter UGJ into the live progression manuals.

Action: Policy Manager, Academic Quality and Development

2024/25 Degree Outcomes Analysis [UEC.25-26/102]

25-26/274 This item was deferred to a future meeting.

Special Cases Annual Service Report [UEC.25-26/103]

25-26/275 Jen Wotherspoon, Deputy Director Student Education and Experience, presented the annual service report detailing the operations of the Special Cases Team from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025 and **reported**:

1. The team resolved a total of 737 cases in 2024-25 compared to 713 in 2023-24.
2. The number of active appeals being processed has been reduced to around 100, which effectively signals a transition to a standard operational baseline.
3. Total appeals fell from 604 to 485, with formal stage appeals demonstrating a substantial 84% rejection or withdrawal rate, demonstrating the efficacy of front-end quality assurance filters implemented by schools/departments.

4. Granular analysis reveals a correlation between recognised access characteristics - including disability, race, and international status - and the likelihood of submitting an appeal.
 - a. The issue around access characteristics is a downstream effect of underlying progression and failure rate gaps that exist outside the operational jurisdiction of the Special Cases team.
5. Operational efficiency has been enhanced by bypassing formal appeal tracks for straightforward internal processing errors.

25-26/276 The Committee **observed**:

1. A previously mandated data reporting task force or subgroup, designed to unify all institutional data reporting streams following the transition of this paper to a pure service report, has not yet been formalised.
2. The service delivery improvements are commendable, and particular thanks were expressed to Daisy Bowen for her pivotal role in clearing the case backlog prior to her departure from the University.
3. While Special Cases cannot resolve systemic awarding gaps, the committee must be able to consider service data in relation to broader institutional failure analysis in order to identify how root causes might be addressed.
4. It would be useful for the incoming reporting cycle to disaggregate demographic data by undergraduate/postgraduate streams, home/overseas statuses, and professional regulatory status outcomes to enhance analytical utility, providing this can be achieved without compromising data anonymity.

Action: Deputy Director, Student Education and Experience

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 is 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.]

25-26/277 FLTG minutes

- a. Sciences 18 May 2026 [UEC.25-26/104]

Sally O'Connor, Academic Quality
June 2026