



SENATE

TEACHING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 2 December 2013

Present: Professor J Robinson (Chair), Professor W Bonefeld, Mr T Clarke, Mr N Dandy, Ms C Dantec, Mrs K Dodd, Dr J Hardman, Dr S King, Dr M Roodhouse, Dr K Selby, Professor C Thompson, Dr J Thijssen, Dr R Vann, Dr R Waites, Mr D Whitmore (YUSU Representative), Dr C van Wyhe, Ms X Yang (GSA Representative), Professor A Young

In attendance: Mr D Clarke (ASO), Professor B Fulton (Academic Co-ordinator, Sciences), Dr A Lee (ASO, for M13-14/67), Professor M Ormrod (Academic Co-ordinator, Arts and Humanities), Dr R Walker (ASO, for M13-14/69 and M13-14/70), Dr J Wotherspoon (Assistant Registrar: Student Progress, for M13-14/64)

Apologies: Dr J Grenville, Mr B Saynor (York College), Dr A Shiel, Professor A Webster (Academic Co-ordinator, Social Sciences)

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

M13-14/54 Welcome

M13-14/55 Minutes

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2013 (UTC.13-14/34).

M.13-14/56 Matters arising

The Committee **considered** the matters arising from the minutes (UTC.13-14/34 **Appendix 1**) and **noted** that most items were now **closed**. Of the items that remained ongoing;

- A working group had been identified to discuss potential pedagogic developments (M13-14/9, 34 and 40) and would report back to the Committee at a future meeting. Guidance for part time programme structures and assessment would be produced by the QA Team during the Spring term which that would feed into the working group's activities. This action was now **closed**.
- On the evaluation of UTC effectiveness (M13-14/34) Tim Clarke had agreed to undertake a light-touch review on behalf of the Committee, to trace the effects of

actions and decisions from previous meetings and report on the impact. The results of the review would be reported at the March meeting. This action was now **closed**.

- Further to M13-14/9 and 40, the Committee noted that the Chair and Secretary of SCA had not yet met with the Department of Sociology about how re-assessments would be handled (in particular for students failing in the potentially compensatable band (40-49)).

M13-14/57 Oral report from the Chair

The Committee **received** an oral report from the Chair as follows:

- *Support for Supervisors (taught programmes)*: During the current academic year, Pete Quinn (Director, Student Support Services) and Zoe Devlin (Executive Assistant to the Academic Registrar) would be working on developing a toolkit of resources for supervisors of taught students. The toolkit would consist of a web-based collection of materials to help supervisors in their work. Over December and January, Pete and Zoe would be collecting together existing resources and carrying out research into what additional support is needed. This research would include talking to past winners of Supervisor of the Year and trying to get feedback from other academic staff who might have struggled with the role. YUSU would also carry out focus groups with course reps. Members were asked to contact Zoe if they would like to feed into this work. UTC would receive a short report when the toolkit is ready.
- *APR*: Members were reminded that the deadline for submission of departmental reports to the ASO is 29 November. The ASO would circulate copies to members for review via Google docs on 9 December, and send an email clarifying the process.
- *UTC Strategy Meeting*: Members were reminded that UTC's strategy meeting would take place on 10 December. The area of discussion would be the performance management of teaching staff and potential interventions including support that could be put in place. HR's Performance Excellence project would also cover this topic and the UTC discussion would inform the relevant work-stream within the project.
- *Electronic papers*: Due to printing costs, from February 2014 Category II business would be available on the web only. Members would also be polled via email on whether they would prefer to receive Category I business in paper or electronic copy.

- *Thanks*: The Chair thanked the Committee for its work this term in view of the large amount of new programme proposals and other business for consideration.

M13-14/58 Oral report from Student Representatives

YUSU

Seventeen Departmental Representatives had been appointed, and YUSU was working to recruit Representatives from the remaining departments. Departmental Representatives would form the membership of a Committee which would operate in a similar way to UTC to discuss learning and teaching issues.

GSA

The GSA had established a Facebook group for all Course Representatives to publish news and updates. The GSA was also holding drop-in sessions for Course Representatives across campus, including a weekly drop-in held in the library.

M13-14/59 Theatre, Film and Television: BSc Interactive Media

The Committee **considered** a proposal for a BSc in Interactive Media from the Department of Theatre, Film and Television (UTC.13-14/35) to start in October 2014. The programme had been **considered** in advance of the meeting by Mark Roodhouse and Katherine Selby, and had the support of the external assessor.

The Department had addressed a number of issues raised by the reviewers. It was **noted** that the Department had not described some assessments using the formats in the current version of the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback (noting that the examples in the Guide are not exhaustive), but had stated “media assignment”, leaving the exact nature of assessment unclear.

During the discussion the Committee **noted** that the 40-credit project in stage 3 of the summer term would result in a heavy student workload. There was also a need for clarification regarding reassessment of the group project at Stage 2, and it was felt that assessment formats were still vague in some modules (mainly stage 3 options).

The Committee requested that an updated programme specification and relevant module descriptors be forwarded to the UTC reviewers, Chair of SCA and the ASO for consideration and approval by the Chair.

ACTION: Department, UTC reviewers, Chair of SCA and ASO

M13-14/60 Biology, Integrated Masters: MBiol in Biology, Biotechnology and Microbiology, Ecology, Genetics, Molecular Cell Biology, and MBiochem in Biochemistry (with year-in-Europe and year-in-industry variants)

The Committee **considered** proposals for an MBiol in Biology; MBiol in Biotechnology and Microbiology; MBiol in Ecology; MBiol in Genetics; MBiol in Molecular Cell Biology and an

MBiochem in Biochemistry (with Year in Industry/Year in Europe variants) Stage 3 of the programme will start in October 2015 (UTC.13-14/36). Current stage 1 students will be able to transfer if they meet the requirements and applicants will be made aware of the programme. The proposals had been **considered** in advance by Carl Thompson and Roddy Vann who, in addition to the external assessor, were in strong support.

The proposals requested three exceptions to rules set out in the University's Frameworks for Programme Design, as follows;

- for the 40 credit project/skills module at stage 3 of the M.Biol/M.Biochem and specialisations to be re-assessable if the failing mark was owing to poor quality of the write-up (but not for lack of engagement in the practical work);
- for the 80 credit stage 4 project report to be non re-assessable if the fail was due to lack of engagement in the project activity, but could be resubmitted if poorly written up;
- that the Project director's report element (10% for the M level project and 5% for stage 3 project) be non-reassessable, as it would be based on student performance in the lab. Since the project could not be repeated, there would be no reason for the project director to change their report on the student's abilities.

During the discussion it was **noted** that the external assessor had raised an issue regarding the exit point if failure in Stage 4 of the MBiol/MBiochem occurred. The Committee **agreed** that students failing Stage 4 should be awarded the equivalent BSc, as the learning outcomes would remain the same as the three year award. The programme specification would need amending to clearly state the exit award.

The Committee **approved** the proposals, including the three above exceptions, subject to the update of the programme specification.

ACTION: Department

The approval of Senate would be required for the titles of MBiol and MBiochem.

M13-14/61 Law: LLM Clinical Legal Education

The Committee **considered** a proposal for an LLM in Clinical Legal Education from the York Law School (UTC.13-14/37) to start in October 2014. The proposal had been **considered** in advance of the meeting by Richard Waites and Jan Hardman, and had their support and that of the external assessor.

During the discussion it was **noted** that this unique programme would build on many of the Department's strengths at undergraduate level, such as Problem Based Learning. The Department had met with the UTC reviewers and addressed a number of comments raised. It was **noted** that this proposal was for the full-time route, and that the Department would need to consider the structure if they proposed a part-time route in the future.

Members raised an issue regarding the timing of reassessments for the 'Truth, Justice and Reparations after Violence' module which would appear to run in parallel to some of the assessments and there was a concern that the re-assessment format would be new to students. Members **noted** that the diagrammatic representation of the timing of module assessment/ reassessments and boards and the overview of modules table within the programme specification required more detail and clarification. It was also **noted** that the reference to 'Study Abroad', in the context that work in Clinics abroad may contribute to work within the programme, could be misleading. It may be more appropriately referred to as 'prior experience'.

The Committee **approved** the full time route, subject to:

- modification of the programme specification and module descriptors;
- clarity on reassessment and reassurance that tasks would be familiar to students.

ACTION: Law

M13-14/62 Centre for Lifelong Learning: Postgraduate Diploma in Railways Studies

The Committee **considered** a proposal for a PGDip in Railways Studies from the Centre for Lifelong Learning (UTC.13-14/38) to start in October 2014. The proposal had been **considered** in advance of the meeting by Tim Clarke and Cordula van Wyhe, and had their support and that of the external assessor.

The Department had worked to address a number of issues raised by the reviewers, and it was felt that the proposal would be an interesting and useful addition to the Centre for Lifelong Learning portfolio.

The Committee **approved** the proposal.

M13-14/63 Sociology: MA in Social Media and Social Research

The Committee **considered** a proposal for an MA in Social Media and Social Research from the Department of Sociology (UTC.13-14/39) to start in October 2014 for full, two- year and three-year part time routes. The proposal had been **considered** in advance of the meeting by Lesley Booth and Jacco Thijssen, and had their support and that of the external assessor.

During the discussion it was **noted** that embedding the programme within Sociology would strengthen the Department and encourage undergraduate students to go on to carry out research. The Committee **noted** that the proposal contained no new modules and members felt that it would be of benefit to develop new modules that combined the two themes, to enhance the offering in the future.

Members **noted** that the same potential issues with Part-Time routes that had been highlighted in proposals for the MA in Culture, Society and Globalization (M13-14/40) and

MA in Criminology and Research (M13-14/9 and M13-14/34) applied to this proposal and that the department was aware of this.

The Committee **approved** the proposal.

M13-14/64 Thesis Advisory Panel form

Jen Wotherspoon attended for this item.

The Committee **considered** a revised TAP form (UTC.13-14/41). At its September meeting the Committee had **noted** some areas of concern within the form, as follows;

- issues with data protection, particularly with regards to Section 5;
- concerns about the level of consultation;
- increased workload for supervisors and TAP members.

Members **noted** the efforts of RSAT in addressing the above and the further work on improving the revised form. During the discussion it was **noted** that the TAP form intended to capture minimum standards of good practice occurring in Departments. If existing mechanisms covered the same content Departments could continue with current practice, as long as the minimum standards outlined in the form were captured.

In relation to Section 5, it was **noted** that students needed opportunities to discuss confidentially their experience of supervision, and that the TAP form would be a useful tool for this, although the supervisor would have the right to see any comments if a student decided to take forward an issue concerning their supervision. However if no comments concerned the supervisor the information would remain confidential to the student.

The Committee approved the TAP form, subject to the following;

- section 5 should be a separate document, rather than an appendix to the main form;
- the guidance notes should be incorporated into the Policy on Research Degrees, to consolidate all guidance on PGR student supervision into a single document;
- clarification in the guidance notes on who is responsible for keeping a record of the completed TAP form following the meeting;
- add “.....and how would this inform the thesis?” to 2.4, to further stress thesis objectives.

ACTION: Jen Wotherspoon

M13-14/65 New cycle of Periodic Review visits

The Committee **considered** plans for the new cycle of periodic review visits (UTC.13-14/42) which would start in October 2014. The proposed plans included a number of actions and ways forward which included;

- trialling a student SWOT (or similar) document;

- further consideration of support office input;
- trialling the online provision of some documentation to panels;
- trialling a revised review day timetable;
- revision of the SED guidance and, in due course, other guidance/policy relating to periodic review.

Some of these actions would be piloted in review visits to the School of Social and Political Sciences and the Department of Education in the Spring term. Members **noted** that any changes that foster reflectiveness in Departments would be valuable.

The Committee **approved** the proposed actions and the schedule of visits for the next Periodic Review cycle. The ASO would bring a final set of proposals for the cycle to UTC in the Summer term.

M13-14/66 Review of the Academic Year

The Committee **considered** a report from the working group on the review of the Academic Year (UTC.13-14/43). Consultation and follow-up meetings had been held with departments throughout Spring and Summer 2013, and as a result of those the working group had agreed the following recommendations;

- that the teaching period in the Summer Term be extended to Weeks 1-6 with a clear requirement that these weeks are used for the delivery of new content and not simply for revision activities relating to Spring Term material;
- that the Spring Term be extended to 11 weeks, beginning with a two-week CAP, with an associated shortening of the Easter vacation by one week;
- that the Summer Term be re-shaped for undergraduate programmes to a pattern of six weeks of teaching followed by a three week Common Assessment Period. This would reduce the Summer Term to nine weeks, thus preserving the 30-weeks of term time. Examination board meetings would take place after Week 9.

There was some support for the proposals and recognition that they inevitably incorporated an element of compromise in view of the lack of consensus across the University on any of the possible scenarios on which Departments had been consulted. However, members raised concerns over the proposed CAP in weeks 7-9 of Summer term. Members highlighted the need to ensure that the proposed timing did not delay the release of marks to final year students.

Some members also expressed concerns that moving examination boards beyond the end of term would have a significant negative impact on research, and opposition from Departments was anticipated on these grounds.

There was some support amongst members for extending the Summer CAP for final-year students and starting it earlier. This could possibly negate some of the issues raised. Members also felt that mapping the proposal onto calendar months would better illustrate the structure.

The Committee **recommended** that the proposal be circulated to Department Management Teams for final comment prior to consideration by Senate on 28 January. The Chair undertook to discuss with Senior Managers and report back to the Committee.

ACTION: Chair

M13-14/67 Postgraduate Academic Integrity Tutorial

Adrian Lee attended for this item.

The Committee **considered** a proposal (UTC.13-14/44) for the development of a pilot online tutorial on research integrity and ethics for Postgraduate Research students, to be trialled in 2014/15 with the longer-term aim of introducing a compulsory tutorial relevant to research students in 2015/16.

The proposal outlined the rationale for an online integrity tutorial exclusively for research students, which was informed by feedback from students and the outcomes of discussions with colleagues. It was **noted** that research ethics vary considerably, and consideration would be given to capturing as much as possible into one Tutorial. It was anticipated that further discussion with research students and Graduate Chairs would take place as the content of the pilot developed.

The Committee **approved** the development of a pilot online tutorial for research students. A report would come to a future meeting with a view to a full introduction of the tutorial in 2015/16.

M13-14/68 Standing Committee on Assessment

The Committee **received** a report from SCA on its meeting on 1 November 2013 (UTC.13-14/45).

Members **noted** the high number of queries by students in closed assessments during the Summer Common Assessment Period, the majority of which had been caused by errors in the papers. The Chair of SCA was writing to the Departments concerned in an attempt to drill down into these errors, as it was felt that better processes should be in place to avoid them occurring.

The Committee also **noted** the lack of clarity around long-term mitigating circumstances and the ways they might be dealt with or mitigated against, as highlighted by Undergraduate External Examiners in their reports. SCA was aware that work needed to be done on updating the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and it was on the Committee's agenda for 2013-14.

M13-14/69 VLE retender

FOI EXEMPT

M13-14/70 Annual report on the Virtual Learning Environment

Richard Walker attended for this item.

The Committee **received** the annual report on the VLE from the E-Learning Development Team (UTC.13-14/47). Progress had been made throughout the year in scaling up VLE usage across departments in support of teaching and learning activities, with an increased volume in usage, growth in assignment submission and a number of innovative approaches being taken.

The E-Learning Development Team's priorities for 2014 would be strongly influenced by the outcome of the VLE retender process and improving the user experience of Blackboard.

Members of the Committee **noted** that improvements to the VLE and the Lecture Capture service were making a huge difference, and thanked the E-Learning Development Team for their patience and rapid responses to queries from Departments.

M13-14/71 Periodic Review: Department of Philosophy

The Committee **considered** and **approved** a report, external assessors' reports and action plan arising from the periodic review of the Department of Philosophy (UTC.13-14/48). Members **noted** the Department's impressive pedagogic vision although there were concerns over communication between staff and students, and problems had been experienced in assessment of the 2nd year pathway. It was agreed that Philosophy would be well advised to look at similar sized Departments for good practice in organisation and structures as it continues to grow as a Department.

Members also **noted** concerns over the management of combined degrees and the efficiency of termly Combined Executive Committee meetings for each pathway, for relatively small numbers of students. It was agreed that the Chair would speak to the Department about adopting the single Board of Studies model.

ACTION: Chair

M13-14/72 Periodic Review: Department of Politics

The Committee **considered** and **approved** a report, external examiners' reports and action plan arising from the periodic review of the Department of Politics (UTC.13-14/49). Members **noted** that this had been a successful visit, and that the Department had made great strides in a number of areas including staff collegiality.

It was felt that the Department was in good shape, internal checks and balances were effective and that the high levels of communication between staff and students at all levels should be maintained. The Committee **noted** no actions for the University, as it was felt that central support was working very well for Politics.

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

M13-14/73 HEFCE review of the National Student Survey

The Committee **noted** the University's response to the HEFCE review of the NSS (UTC.13-14/50). Members of UTC and those with an interest in the NSS had provided comments on the review survey questions to the Academic Support Office. The Chair and the ASO had compiled the feedback and submitted the response on 13 November 2013.

M13-14/74 Modifications and Withdrawals of Programmes

The Committee **received** and **noted** a report on modifications to, and withdrawals of, programmes of study approved by Chair's action between October and December 2013 (UTC.13-14/51).

M13-14/75 Register of accredited programmes

The Committee **received** and **noted** an updated register of accredited programmes (UTC.13-14/52).

M13-14/76 Register of collaborative programmes

The Committee **received** and **noted** an updated register of collaborative programmes (UTC.13-14/53).

M13-14/76 Accreditation report from the Society of Biology

The Committee **received** an accreditation report from the Society of Biology (UTC.13-14/54) and **noted** that the following programmes: BSc Biochemistry with a Year in Industry, BSc Biotechnology & Microbiology with a Year in Industry, BSc Genetics with a Year in Industry, and BSc Molecular Cell Biology with a Year in Industry had been accredited from 2013. The Committee also **noted** that the visit was successful and that there were no recommendations from the SoB.

M13-14/77 Undergraduate Supervision Policy

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had **approved** minor revisions to the Undergraduate Supervision Policy 2011-2016. Revisions were made to the presentation and to incorporate references to the University's Attendance Management Policy for Sponsored International Students. The Policy is available at <https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/sources/supervisors/>.

M13-14/78 Exchange agreements

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had **approved** an exchange agreement between the Department of History of Art and Paris 1, Pantheon-Sorbonne.

M13-14/79 External assessors and review panels

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had approved Professor M Humm (University of East London) and Professor L Jamieson (University of Edinburgh) as External Assessors for the Periodic Review of The Centre for Women's Studies on 26th February 2014.

M13-14/80 Dates of next meetings

The Committee **noted** the dates of the next meetings (all at 1.00pm in HG15, Heslington Hall unless otherwise stated):

- Tuesday 10 December 2013 (2.00pm)
- Monday 3 February 2014
- Monday 3 March 2014
- Monday 19 May 2014
- Monday 23 June 2014