Approved

UTC.12-13/72

THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

TEACHING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Teaching Committee held on 17 January 2013

Present: the PVC for Learning and Teaching (Chair), the Head of the Academic Support Office (ASO), the Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment (SCA), Dr I Abrahams, Mr T Clarke, Ms K Dodd, Professor P Drew, Dr J Grenville (DVC), Mr G Osborn (YUSU Representative), Mr K Zu (GSA Representative), Dr K Selby, Professor L Siciliani, Professor A Young

In attendance: Mr R Gill (Secretary), Mrs J Fox (Academic Support Office)

Apologies for absence were received from the Academic Registrar, Prof W Bonefeld, Mrs L Booth, Dr A Carpenter, Dr A Kaloski-Naylor, Dr H Smith, Professor C Thompson, Dr R Vann and Dr M White.

12-13/88 Welcome
The Chair welcomed Mr Keke Zu as a new member of the Committee. Mr Zu had replaced Mr Taha Rajab as the GSA representative. The Chair welcomed members to the extraordinary meeting of UTC and thanked them for attending despite the relatively short notice for the meeting. The meeting had been called to consider one item; the proposed consultation paper on the structure and schedule of the academic year.

12-13/89 Consultation on the Structure and Schedule of the Academic Year
The Committee received a draft paper from the Academic Year Working Group on the structure and schedule of the academic year. The Committee heard that the paper set out what the Working Group perceived to be the available options for resolving a number of issues with the structure of the existing academic year. These options are:
1. Retain the status quo;
2. Implement equal-length semesters of twelve weeks teaching and three weeks common assessment period (CAP) scheduled across three blocks;
3. Adopt semesters where there are two contiguous blocks of fifteen weeks of teaching, three weeks of CAP in the Autumn and Spring.

The Committee heard that it had been asked to provide feedback on the paper and, subject to any amendments identified by the Committee, approve it for circulation.

Concerns were raised that the way that the first option was presented made it sound as though retaining terms would not be a viable option and, therefore, provided a natural steer towards picking either of the semester-based alternatives. It was suggested that the first option should be strengthened to state that the issues identified with the existing structure would be further explored if it is retained. It was reported that the issues with the existing structure had been discussed by the working group and that it had been unable to find solutions for all of the problems identified, so there should be an acknowledgement that retaining a term-based structure might mean that some of the existing issues could not be resolved. It was also acknowledged that resolving some of the existing issues might involve quite a substantial amount of work. Members felt that any solutions to widespread issues would need to be universal and should not be limited to only one department.

There was some discussion of whether option one should be sub-divided into two options; retaining the status quo without any further changes and retaining the status quo with changes to address existing issues. However, it was felt that having no change at all was not a realistic option as some of the existing issues would certainly need to be addressed. There was also some discussion about the presentation of options two and three, with a suggestion that they might become one option but be sub-divided and presented as options 2a and 2b.

There was some discussion about whether the options for module sizes should be reduced and whether there should be a steer towards some principles of module design. For example, if semesters were to be introduced, whether all modules should be one semester long. The Chair stated that the working group had not wanted to be too restrictive or appear to be forcing departments towards a particular option, as these matters would need to be discussed once feedback from departments had been received.
It was agreed:

- That only one option for retaining the status quo should be included and it should be explicit that the modifications required would need to adhere to the principles of the New Modular Scheme and be University wide.
- That there should be one option for introducing semesters in the paper and that this should be sub-divided into two further options which detail ways that semesters might be introduced.

Next steps

The edited paper would be circulated to the Committee for information prior to circulation to Chairs of Boards of Studies, student groups and other interested parties (e.g. Conference Office, Study Abroad office). The deadline for responses will be 15th March 2013.

[Secretary's note: Amendments were made to the paper and it was circulated to the Committee members who stated that they were content with the revised version.]

The Committee will consider the responses at an extraordinary meeting in April 2013 with a view to providing a final paper, if approved, to Senate on 1st May 2013.

12-13/90 Dates of next meetings

The Committee noted the dates of the next meetings in HG15, Heslington Hall:

- Monday 4 February 2013 (1.15 pm)
- Monday 11 March 2013 (1.15pm)