

THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

TEACHING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the University Teaching Committee held on 4th February 2013

Present: the PVC for Learning and Teaching (Chair), Dr I Abrahams, Prof W Bonefeld, Mrs L Booth, Dr A Carpenter, Mr T Clarke, Mr N Dandy, Ms K Dodd, Dr S King, Mr G Osborn (YUSU Representative), Dr M Roodhouse, Dr K Selby, Prof L Siciliani, Prof C Thompson, Dr R Vann, Dr M White, Prof A Young

In attendance: Mr R Gill (Secretary), Dr J Grenville (DVC), Ms Kirstyn Radford (Library)

Apologies for absence were received from Dr A Kaloski-Naylor, Mr K Zu (GSA Representative) and Dr H Smith

Category I

12-13/91 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Ms Kirstyn Radford to the meeting as an observer.

12-13/92 Minutes

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2012 (UTC.12-13/56) as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 17 December 2012 (UTC.12-13/57), subject to the following changes to the attendance list; Prof C Thompson should have been recorded as having sent his apologies and Prof L Siciliani should have been given the title of Professor rather than Doctor.

12-13/93 Matters Arising

The Committee **considered** a report on matters arising from the minutes (UTC.12-13/58) and **noted** that most items have been closed. The following amendments to the report were **noted**:

- on M12-13/66 (The York Management School: MSc in Global Marketing), it was **noted** that, whilst the action could be closed, a response about the teaching hours on the 20 and 10 credit modules was awaited and would be discussed at the meeting that had been scheduled between the Chair and members of the School.
- on M12-13/71 (QAA UK Quality Code Draft Chapter B4), there was some confusion about whether Chapter B9 had been circulated to Committee members, as was recorded in the action from the minutes. It was **agreed** that the Secretary should investigate this. **ACTION: Secretary**

[Secretary's note: Feedback on Chapter B9 was obtained from various interested parties across the University and this informed the response to the QAA. However, due to an oversight on the part of the Secretary, this was not circulated to the Committee prior to the feedback being given to the QAA.]

12-13/94 Oral Report from the Chair

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

Teaching Building

- A paper had been submitted to the Senior Management Group (SMG) about the proposed new teaching building. SMG had approved a sum of c.£8 million for the new building and had set up a steering group which will be chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Estates). The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Information had been identified as the chief client for the project and there would also be representation from Estates and IT Services.
- A working group would also be set up which would include members of the UTC.
- An estimate of the basic specification for the building, to deliver facilities identified in the initial consultations, suggested that the cost would be c.£15 million, so options for using fund-raising to 'top-up' the available funds were being explored and a more modest specification for the building will be taken as the starting point for the Steering Group.

- An architect would be engaged by the Steering Group and progress would be reported both at the UTC and the working group.

Consultation on the Academic Year

- An extraordinary meeting of the UTC would be arranged for the first week of the Summer Term to consider the outcome of the consultation on the shape of the academic year.

PGWT and Demonstrators Teaching Award

- At the recent meeting of Chairs of Boards of Studies, it was noted that it is difficult for postgraduate demonstrators to provide sufficient evidence to qualify for Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards, but that they should nevertheless have an opportunity for their good practice in teaching and learning to be recognised. The Learning and Teaching Forum Administrator in the ASO would convene a group to look at setting up a new award for demonstrators and a proposal will be brought to the Committee.

National Student Survey (NSS)

- The ninth NSS started on 21 January 2013 and would end on 30 April 2013. After a week and a half the University response rate was 14% which is down from 17% at the equivalent time last year. Some of the response rates in bigger departments were down on last year, which may account for the overall reduction. The situation was being monitored but was not thought to be concerning at this point.

12-13/95 Oral Report from Student Representatives

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

- YUSU had provided a briefing session for student course representatives on the academic year consultation to ensure that students are able to participate fully in discussions at Boards of Studies meetings. YUSU would also conduct a wide-ranging consultation with the student body to inform their response to the consultation.

The Committee **received** a written report from the GSA representative as follows:

- The GSA had recently employed a new Advice, Representation and Welfare Co-ordinator. The new member of staff started with the GSA just before Christmas, had met key

individuals within the University and had prioritised training and communications with course reps. To that end, the GSA had established a regular newsletter for course representatives in which they are asked to provide information and feedback on macro postgraduate student issues. They were also working hard with YUSU to ensure that there are no duplicated efforts surrounding the training of course representatives.

- Due to the resignation of the Academic Affairs Officer this post was currently vacant. Nominations for a by-election were underway and the GSA hoped to have someone in post by the end of February.
- The GSA were actively engaged with the University in promoting the 2013 PRES survey and would assist in providing incentives for students to complete the survey.

12-13/96 Centre for Applied Human Rights: PG Cert in Defending Human Rights

The Committee **considered** a proposal from the Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR) for a PG Cert in Defending Human Rights (UTC.12-13/59) to start in September 2013. It was noted that the Programme had not yet been approved by Planning Committee as there were some outstanding issues with the business case. However, the academic rationale for the programme would not change, so it was felt appropriate for the proposal to be considered by the UTC. The proposal had been considered in advance of the meeting by Ian Abrahams and Helen Smith and had their support and that of the External Assessor.

During discussion it was **noted** that:

- The entry requirements stated that students with an appropriate background could take the course if they did not have the relevant academic qualifications. This was to ensure that practitioners who had worked in the field for several years could take the course and would be assessed by members of CAHR. CAHR had previous experience of doing this and it should not present a problem.
- The programme would run concurrently as a PG Cert and as CPD. Both groups of students would interact and discussion would be facilitated carefully to ensure that no division developed within the cohort. An option to change from the CPD to PG Cert was offered but would require students to re-take modules, top-up their hours and submit assessment. It was noted that this would need to be carefully managed to ensure that student records were maintained correctly.

- Most students would take the programme through distance learning. Minimum specifications for computer equipment would be checked before students are admitted.
- The proposed schedule for the programme would make it difficult to mark all assessed work before an examination board and would make it hard to get feedback to students from the Autumn term assessments before the Spring term. The chair of the SCA agreed to discuss this further with the programme team.

The Committee **approved** the programme subject to it obtaining approval from the Planning Committee. The programme cannot be marketed until approval is granted by the Planning Committee.

12-13/97 Language and Linguistic Science: BA Italian and Linguistics, BA Linguistics with Italian, BA French and Italian Language, BA German and Italian Language and BA Italian and Spanish Language

The Committee **considered** a proposal from the Department of Language and Linguistic Science for a BA in Italian and Linguistics (with a year abroad), BA Linguistics with Italian (three year programme), BA French and Italian Language (with a year abroad), BA German and Italian Language and BA Italian and Spanish Language (with a year abroad) (UTC.12-13/60) to start in September 2014. The proposal had been considered in advance of the meeting by Michael White and Amber Carpenter and had their support and that of the External Assessor.

During discussion it was **noted** that:

- The two nominated members had raised a number of issues in advance of the meeting, for example in relation to arrangements for student support and admissions criteria, and had received a response from the programme team.
- The proposal did not use the usual programme proposal or External Assessor pro-formas and concerns were raised that this could lead to information being missed.
- The module proposals contain a number of typos and lacks detail on assessment. This had been raised with the programme team and further information had been provided, but the module proposals would need to be amended.
- Due to the timing of meetings, the proposal had not been to the relevant Board of Studies, but did have the backing of the Head of Department.

- The programme followed the structure and assessment patterns of the existing German, French and Spanish degrees.
- Students with A-level Italian would not be able to take the degree. An alternate first year for students with A-level Italian may be introduced in the future, but there would be resource implications for this which mean that it cannot be done now.
- A second member of staff will be recruited to teach on the programme in the third year of operation.

The Committee **approved** the programme, subject to the following conditions being met and to approval being obtained from the Board of Studies:

- i. The proposal should be revised to ensure that it covers the information requested on the programme proposal pro-formas. **ACTION: Language and Linguistic Science with the support of the ASO.**
- ii. The module proposals should be revised to eliminate errors and provide additional information in line with comments provided by the nominated members prior to the meeting. **ACTION: Language and Linguistic Science with the support of the ASO.**
- iii. The programme aims and learning outcomes should be refined to ensure that programmes with a year abroad were sufficiently distinct from those without.

[Secretary's note: The Committee also granted an exemption to the standard assessment rules for the year abroad modules on the programmes, so that these modules could be assessed as pass/fail.]

12-13/98 KIS Data Analysis

The Committee **received** a presentation on the impact of the Key Information Sets (KIS) and the results of an analysis of the available information conducted by the Planning Office.

During discussion it was **noted** that:

- The Planning Office have prepared comparator analyses of each undergraduate programme using the KIS data, so that departments can see if their programmes are outliers in any of the areas covered by the KIS. For each programme the competitor universities most commonly selected by students via UCAS were identified and York programmes were mapped against these.

- It seemed that the impact of the KIS was limited this year, with only 843 users arriving at the University website from Unistats as compared to over 10,000 from UCAS. The most common way to access programme websites remained via Google. However, it was not possible to check the number of users who clicked on the 'widget' which provides information about the course drawn from the Unistats website as this data is held by Unistats. Awareness of the KIS and the Unistats website may increase over time.
- Concerns have been raised that York lost out in comparison to other Universities through the provision of precise information about teaching time (50 minute hours instead of rounding up to 60 minutes as anecdotal evidence would suggest is done at other institutions). A watching brief is being kept on the situation by the Planning Office and departments will be informed if the situation changes.

12-13/99 Summary report on outcomes from the Annual Programme Review (APR) process

The Committee **considered** a summary paper on the outcomes of the Annual Programme Review process for the 2011-12 academic year (UTC.12-13/62). This was the first year that members have considered APR reports electronically rather than at a meeting. The paper reflected the content of the reports and the input provided by UTC members.

The Committee **approved** the paper for distribution, subject to the following amendments:

- Under 6.6. a note should be added to state that additional resource has been added to the Open Door team, so this issue has already been resolved.
- Under 7.3. a supplementary note should be included to state that staff workload on combined programmes is equitably accounted for in many departments.

Members stated that, as the process of UTC scrutiny of departmental reports is now predominantly electronic, greater support and guidance should be provided for new UTC members so that they have a better idea of what to look for in the APRs. It was reported that many of the reports had varied considerably in their length and that guidance should be provided to departments on the typical length of a report.

The Committee **noted** the comments on the process and **agreed** that the ASO should review the way the Committee and the ASO handle the APR forms once they have been completed. The

Committee also **agreed** that guidance on the typical length of an APR should be provided and that the ASO should further refine the template APR form. **ACTION: ASO**

12-13/100 **Standardisation of Teaching and Learning Policies and Structures**

The Committee **considered** a summary report of the outcomes of the extraordinary UTC meeting on 17th December 2012 (UTC.12-13/63). The paper identified a number of actions from the meeting and had also assigned each a level of priority. Where work was already underway, this had also been noted. The Committee **noted** that the following actions were proposed (numbers refer to paragraphs in the report):

- (4a) UTC Chair to write to Human Resources about the Committee's interest in the introduction of a workload allocation model.
- (4c) That a working group be established to investigate the scope for introducing a more consistent approach to identifying and addressing poor teaching performance.
- (4d) The Chair, ASO and IT services to investigate the scope for greater standardisation of module and programme evaluation, including whether greater support can be provided centrally.
- (5a) UTC to consider whether there should be a University policy on contact hours.
- (5c) SCA to consider how the role of External Examiners can be strengthened.
- (5d) The review of the University's Code of Practice on research degrees should include the establishment of minimum expectations for PGR milestones, minimum standards for supervisory sessions and greater consistency in the organisation and monitoring of Thesis Advisory Panels.
- (5e) That UTC should ensure that discussions about the new teaching building should consider how there could be a move towards greater centralisation of the management of learning spaces and owned teaching rooms.

It was agreed that the section on a workload allocation model needed to be re-worded; there had been support at the meeting for *exploring* the introduction of a workload allocation model, not for the *introduction* of a workload allocation model.

Members also stated that the section on contact hours was worded too strongly. There was a desire for guidance on contact hours, but not for a policy. It was **agreed** that the subject of contact hours should be discussed at a future meeting.

[Secretary's note: The Chair has requested that the Secretary should develop a discussion paper on contact hours to inform debate.]

The Committee **approved** the actions outlined in the paper, subject to the amendments detailed above and **noted** the information provided on the other priorities identified at the meeting.

ACTION: Chair, ASO and SCA to take forward the relevant action above and ASO to ensure that 5d and 5e are included in the relevant pieces of work.

12-13/101 Report on Teaching Space and Timetabling

The Committee **considered** a paper on Teaching Space and Timetabling (UTC.12-13/64).

The Committee **noted** that:

- There was unprecedented pressure on teaching space on the Heslington West campus, particularly in relation to smaller group seminar rooms. The Timetabling Unit took action to address this as best they could and have held positive discussions with departments to make departmental rooms available for general use.
- There was a 500 hour deficit in the availability of seminar rooms on Heslington West. Some departments intend to increase the number of contact hours they provide next year which may create additional demand.
- The audits conducted on room usage helped to reduce the rate of 'no-shows' from 24% to 10%.
- The half-hour difference in the start of the teaching day between Heslington East and Heslington West may open up more space on Heslington East for use, although care will be taken to try to timetable sessions considerately and as close to the home department as possible.
- Work is underway to introduce additional functionality which will allow staff to look at any student's timetable and to look at any combination of modules.

There was some discussion of whether the teaching day should be extended further, given the pressures on the timetable. Members expressed concerns about the impact that this would have on attendance and student satisfaction, as it could interfere with extra-curricular pursuits. It might also have a negative impact on the availability of space to offer supplementary programmes and on the work-life balance of staff.

A small increase of one additional hour in the teaching day had been modelled originally, but this only reduced the hour deficit from 500 to 450 in the most pressured spaces. Increasing the teaching week to 49 hours would result in more significant reductions and might allow time for the layout of rooms to be altered.

The Committee **agreed** the following:

- i. That it strongly supported the Timetabling Officer's policy on requiring staff to check the draft timetables in a timely fashion;
- ii. that the suggested Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be revised to ensure that they can all be measured with hard data. In that context, measurements should be taken to identify the number of students who do not have a break during their day and how many students have four or more consecutive teaching sessions, with the intention of measuring the success of the timetable in minimising each eventuality. **ACTION: Timetabling**
- iii. that, further to the point above, the revised Timetabling principles proposed in the paper be **approved**, subject to number 11 being changed to state that 'timetabling will provide a break between...' rather than 'the timetable will aim to provide suitable lunch and rest breaks.' **ACTION: Timetabling**

12-13/102 YUSU Course Representative Elections

The Committee **considered** a report on the student course representative elections in 2012 (UTC.12-13/65). The Committee **noted** the following points:

- There was a drop in the total number of votes cast, but an increase in the number of candidates standing for election.
- YUSU is grateful to departmental administrative staff who helped promote the elections and pushed for any vacant posts to be filled.
- YUSU support the election and training of PGT students in some departments.

- The handbook produced by Health Sciences for their course representatives was considered to be particularly good and should be added to the ASO website. **ACTION: ASO**

The Committee **agreed** the following:

- i. That the report should be added to the Committee's annual cycle of business.
- ii. That an analysis of elected course representatives by year of study should be provided, including the number of positions available and the number that have been filled.

ACTION: YUSU

- iii. That the GSA should provide a similar report. **ACTION: GSA**

12-13/103 Proposal for the Introduction of a Writing Support Centre

The Committee **considered** a proposal for an 18-month pilot of a Writing Support Centre (UTC.12-13/66). It was reported that the Centre would operate in a similar manner to the existing Maths Skills Centre. A survey of other Russell Group Universities revealed that many of them already have a Writing Skills Centre.

Three PGWTs would be recruited to help staff the centre. Initially it would only be based on the Heslington West campus. Members asked that, as far as possible, the PGWTs should be recruited evenly from across the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences in order to ensure that each distinct style of writing can be covered adequately.

Parameters will be published to highlight the function of the centre. It would be open to all undergraduate and PGT students, including international students and would focus on areas such as structure, content and authorial voice.

The Committee **approved** the proposal.

12-13/104 Interim Report from the Academic Misconduct Working Party

The Committee **considered** an interim report from the Academic Misconduct Working Party (UTC.12-13/67).

The Working Party requested a steer from the Committee on the proposed changes to the way that Academic Misconduct will be handled by the University, which included creating two categories of offence (academic and disciplinary) and establishing committees to consider cases.

The Committee broadly endorsed the draft proposals, but **noted** that:

- Standing Academic Misconduct Panels (StAMPs) were suggested as taking place at cluster level in order to ensure that there is a broadly shared understanding of principles across cognate disciplines. Members stated that this might be problematic for joint honours and combined degree students. It was also suggested that it may be better to have just one StAMP at University level or convene them at departmental level.
- StAMPs should be convened when required rather than taking place regularly.
- The change in the way that penalties would be applied should ensure that the penalty is not applied to a whole degree, but only to the module in which it occurred. The option to withdraw students or refer them to a higher body should also be included for very serious cases of misconduct.
- Members felt that the distinction between disciplinary and academic offences was insufficiently clear as presently worded.
- There were concerns that the introduction of probationary modules could adversely affect progression.

12-13/105 Standing Committee on Assessment

The Committee **received** a report on the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on 11 January 2013 (UTC.12-13/68). It was **noted** that the SCA had:

- received a report on PGT academic misconduct for 2011-12. SCA agreed that the form letters used for academic misconduct should be reviewed and that a survey of students affected in 2011-12 should be conducted.
- received a summary report on misconduct cases that took place between 2007 and 2012.
- received a summary of undergraduate External Examiner reports for 2011-12.
- identified discrepancies in the Guide to Assessment concerning Independent Study Modules worth up to 40 credits in Integrated Masters Programmes. SCA will amend the Guide accordingly.

- continues to work on a set of expectations for Boards of Studies, Boards of Examiners and External Examiners and will bring recommendations to UTC in due course.

Category II

12-13/106 Report on the Project to Introduce a Programme and Module Catalogue

The Committee **noted** the report on the project to create an electronic programme and module catalogue (UTC.12-13/69).

12-13/107 Proposal for Monitoring University-level Actions Arising from Periodic Review

The Committee **noted** the new approach to recording University-level actions arising from Periodic Review (UTC.12-13/70).

12-13/108 Student Exchanges

The Committee **noted** that the Chair has approved an Erasmus exchange between the Department of Computer Science and Aarhus University, Denmark.

12-13/109 Appointment of External Assessors for Periodic Review

The Committee **noted** that the Chair has approved the appointment of external assessors for the forthcoming Periodic Review of the Department of Archaeology: Professor Ian Armit (University of Bradford) and Professor Alan Outram (University of Exeter)

12-13/110 Modifications to, and Withdrawals of, Programmes of Study

The Committee **noted** that the Chair, acting on behalf of the Committee, had approved modifications to, and withdrawals of, programmes of study (UTC.12-13/71) as follows:

Biology: Approval of a decrease in credits for modules: Cell Biology from 20 to 10 credits over term 2/3 and a decrease from 40 to 30 credits for the Scientific Skills module from Oct 2013.

Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies: Approval of the suspension of the MA in Eighteenth Century Studies: the Global Eighteenth Century for the academic years 2013-14 and 2014-15 due to

staff research leave. This was also approved on behalf of Planning Committee by Deputy Chair's Action.

Economics: Approval to allow students to study six modules in parallel in stage 3 of BSc Economics and Finance and BSc Economics, Econometrics and Finance from 2013/14.

[Secretary's note: Since the meeting, the Department have confirmed that this affects six programmes rather than the two stated above, including the BSc Economics, BSc Economics and Econometrics, BSc Economics and Mathematics and BSc Mathematics and Finance. This has been approved by the Chair. All of the above details also apply to these programmes.]

Electronics: Approval of a change to the timing of modules for October 2013: Embedded Computer Systems (ELE00019M) will be replaced as a core module (MEng UMETESETE4, UMETESIND5, UMETCSIND5) or option module (most other MEng EE programmes) by Systems Programming for ARM (ELE00062M). The same module, ELE00019M, will be replaced as a core module for the MSc Autonomous Robotics, MSc Digital Systems Engineering, and MSc Internet and Wireless Computing programmes by Systems Programming for Embedded Devices (ELE00063M).

Approval of exchange of teaching of C Programming (currently taught in the Spring and Summer Terms within ELE00005C Digital Electronics) with Java Programming (currently taught in the Autumn within ELE00002C Maths and Programming) modules from 2013/14.

Approval of a change to the credit unit weighting for Audio Algorithm Design and Implementation (ELE00028H) from 20 to 10 credit units and the introduction of the module Project Management (10 credits) to the BSc syllabus as a core module for 2013/14.

Approval of changes to BSc Music Technology modules for 2013/14:

- Audio Algorithm Design and Implementation to become optional for BSc students in Stage 3 and available as an option to Stage 3 B/MEng students;
- iOS Programming for Music Technology (10 credits) to be included as an option;

- iOS Audio Programming included for Stage 4 MEng students and as a core module for Music Technology students at Stage 4. This module replaces Advanced Music Technology Systems (16H).
- Audio Processing Techniques and Environments (11M) to be replaced with Music Performance Analysis Systems.

History of Art: Approval of a change to the assessment of stage 3 modules: from an assessed essay and a 48-hour (two-essay) exam to a 48-hour (two-essay) exam only. The 48-hour exam will now consist of two 2000-word essays. Given the specialised nature of the stage 3 programme, the department is asked to review any cases where only two markers will be responsible for the stage 3 marks and appoint a third, independent marker to ensure fairness and rigour.

In addition, approval of a change to the assessment of stage 2 and 3 modules so that 10% of each module mark is from seminar contributions (excluding the stage 2 dissertation preparation module and the stage 3 dissertation).

Language and Linguistic Science: Approval of an exceptional modification to the 'Phonological Development' module: to extend the deadline for the submission of the summative assessment in the current academic year to the Tuesday after the end of term in compensation for staff absence.

Norwegian Study Centre: For the Fordyning programme, approval of a new module, 'The ELF in the room', (for the current academic year) and of a change to the assessment of the 'Cultural History of the English Language' module (from 2 seminar exercises (40%) + 2500 word essay (60%) to an on-going dossier of exercises (50%) + 2500 word essay (50%)).

Philosophy: Approval of the following programme withdrawals: the MA in Practical Ethics and the MA in Philosophical Theology and Ethics (also approved on behalf of Planning Committee by Deputy Chair's action).

Approval of a major modification to the MA in Philosophy, from Oct 2013: replacing the old structure with two new core modules (Topics in Theoretical Philosophy; Topics in Practical Philosophy), a new Dissemination Practice module and two options. The optional modules will

share teaching with the third-year undergraduates. The existing 90 credit dissertation will change to a 20 credit dissertation preparation module and a 60 credit dissertation.

Theatre, Film and Television: Approval of a change of programme title: from BA in Writing, Directing and Performance to BA in Theatre: Writing, Directing and Performance. This change will apply for those students entering in October 2013.

12-13/111 Dates of Next Meetings

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

- Monday 11th March 2013
- April meeting, tbc