# THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK

## Senate

## TEACHING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the University Teaching Committee held on 11th March 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, Mr R Davis (GSA Representative) Ms K Dodd, Dr S King, Mr G Osborn (YUSU Representative), Dr M Roodhouse, Mr B Saynor (York College), Dr K Selby, Prof L Siciliani, Dr H Smith, Prof C Thompson, Dr R Vann, Prof A Young

*In attendance:* Mr R Gill (Secretary), Dr J Grenville (DVC), Ms E Smith (Careers for Minute 122)

Apologies for absence were received from Dr A Kaloski-Naylor and Dr M White

**Category I**

**12-13/112      Welcome**

The Chair welcomed Mr Robert Davis to the meeting. Mr Davis was the new Academic Affairs Officer in the Graduate Students' Association (GSA).

The Chair noted that two members of the committee were also members of the programme teams for two of the programme proposals due to be considered at the meeting. The Chair noted that normally when speakers were invited to the committee for a particular item they were asked to leave the room when a decision is made on that item. However, the Chair suggested that the UTC members should be allowed to remain in the Committee for the relevant items unless either item proved to be particularly controversial. The Committee **agreed** that this should be the case.

**12-13/113      Minutes**

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2013 (UTC.12-13/72), subject to the addition of Ms K Dodd to those present at the meeting.

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2013 (UTC.12-13/73), subject to the addition of a Secretary's note to Minute 97 (proposal for programmes in Italian), to state that an exception to the assessment rules had been granted for the year abroad modules on the programme, so that these could be assessed as pass/fail.

## 12-13/114       Matters Arising

The Committee **considered** a report on matters arising from the minutes (UTC.12-13/74) and **noted** that most items have been closed. In addition, the following points were **reported:**

- That under Minute 97, the relevant pro-formas had now been used for the Italian programmes and the requested amendments to the modules had been made. As indicated at the previous meeting, the question of the quantity of assessment used would be considered across all language programmes offered by the department over the Summer, and any amendments agreed upon would be proposed through the usual process for amending module and programme content. Some minor amendments still need to be made to the programme specifications, but the Committee expressed its satisfaction that the actions had been met and that finalisation of the documentation could be reported on by the Academic Support Office (ASO).

- That under Minute 100, the Committee had originally agreed that a working group should be established to look at ways of tackling poor teaching performance. The Chair reported that, after further consideration, he had written to Human Resources about this as well as the possible introduction of a workload allocation model, as these matters were within the remit of Human Resources. The Chair suggested that a new action be set for him to report back to the Committee on the outcome of discussions with Human Resources and the Academic Co-ordinators. The Committee **agreed** this new action.

## 12-13/115       Oral Report from the Chair

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

*National Student Survey (NSS)*

It was reported that the NSS response rate was 50.39% on 6th March (51.93% last year) so the response rate was comparable to last year's, although work was still required to improve upon last year's overall response rate of 69%. Most major subject areas were almost at or over 50%. However, several were not and this was being monitored. The Quality Assurance Team and the Chair have been in touch with departments with low response rates. YUSU was undertaking a range of actions to promote the survey; including having Student Ambassadors encourage finalists to complete the survey. Members of UTC were asked to do what they could to encourage promotion/participation. The survey will finish on 30 April (Tuesday of week 2).

*Writing Centre*

The Committee was informed that the pilot Writing Centre would be launched on 22nd April 2013. It does not have a set 'home' as yet and so would be likely to move around the library for the first term. Interviews would be held shortly for the three available PGWT posts. There have not been many applications from the sciences, but it is anticipated that it would still be possible to cover this style of writing.

*E-assignments*

The Chair asked Dr King (Chair of the E-assignment Steering Group) to update the committee. It was reported that the e-assignments project had been underway for several years, but had previously stalled due to a lack of funding. Some funding became available and the project was re-started in October 2012. The aim of the project is to identify a system that will allow for an end-to-end approach to the electronic submission, marking and provision of feedback to students. A number of extant products have been considered and none of these have the required level of functionality. It was anticipated that, in the short term, extant technology will be used as an interim measure, whilst further developments are awaited.

**12-13/116        Oral Report from Student Representatives**

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

- elections for new student officers were held recently. Turnout was good at 32% and Daniel Whitmore was elected as the new YUSU Academic Officer and will take up post in July 2013.

- YUSU has been facilitating the consultation with students on the shape of the academic year and will provide a response to the consultation before 15th March. If semesters were to be recommended to Senate, YUSU would conduct a referendum with students.

- YUSU has been working closely with departments to increase the response rate to the NSS. The Academic Officer promoted the survey at the end of several lectures which seemed to have helped to increase the return rate. Departments were encouraged to contact YUSU if they would like assistance in increasing the response rate.

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

- the new Academic Affairs Officer would be in post until 1st September 2013.

- a report was provided on the election of student course representatives in response to the action from the previous meeting. The conduct of elections was rather varied, with some course representatives elected by a show of hands or via YUSU, rather than the GSA. In December 2012 there were 167 course representatives but this may no longer reflect the current situation. The GSA have introduced a course representative mailing list to replace the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) pages as they no longer have access to this. The reasons for the lack of access were unclear.

*[Secretary's note: the GSA representative has subsequently confirmed that the VLE is no longer used by the GSA to contact course representatives. The GSA is a separate organisation to the University so there are restrictions on the sharing of personal data. As such, it would be inappropriate for GSA permanent staff to have access to student details.]*

**12-13/117        Environment: Integrated Masters programmes in Environment (MEnv)**

The Committee **considered** a proposal from the Department of Environment for an integrated Masters award (titled MEnv) in Environmental Geography, Environmental Science, Environment, Economics & Ecology (with pathways in Marine Conservation, Economics & Policy, Global Change, Ecology & Biodiversity, Corporate Social Responsibility and Contamination) (UTC.12-13/75) to start in October 2014. The proposal had been considered in advance of the meeting by Roddy Vann and Andy Young and had their support and that of the External Assessor. The department had already begun the preparation of three separate programme specifications on the required undergraduate templates to clarify the stages within each programme.

During discussion it was **noted** that:

- the UTC reviewers had had a number of positive discussions with the programme team and raised a number of issues which the programme team had responded to and which are in the process of being resolved.

- the programme would primarily use existing modules, including those from existing MSc programmes offered by the Department. Students on the MSc programmes and the MEnv programmes would share classes. Concerns were expressed about the resulting student experience, but it was reported that shared classes of this sort are delivered in other departments and work well, provided that lecturers are aware of the nature of their cohort. It was noted that all the MEnv modules are at Level 7 but the assessments would be different to the assessments on the MSc programmes.

- appropriate titles, aims and learning outcomes will need to be identified for the undergraduate exit degree awards that students would receive if they failed to achieve the MEnv.

- UCAS codes for the course will need to be identified and the award title of MEnv will need approval from Senate.

- it was confirmed that October 2014 would be the actual start date for new applicants, but that approval had been requested to allow current second year BSc students to transfer into the programme, should they meet the entry requirements for October 2013.

- there was some discussion over what fee would be charged to students transferring into the programme and whether students would be able to access loans. It was reported that this had been considered by the Planning Committee.

- a number of the modular learning outcomes needed revising to Level 7, the aims needed to be extracted from the Learning Outcomes and the assessment lengths confirmed. It was noted that the programme team had contacted the Learning Enhancement Team for support and guidance in these areas.

The Committee **approved** the programme and recommended to Senate the new award title. The Committee **agreed** that the following should be done before the next meeting:

- titles for the exit awards should be identified. **ACTION: Department of Environment**

- the module specifications should be amended to include details of the length of assessments and the learning outcomes should be revised to Level 7. **ACTION: Department of Environment**

The Committee **agreed** that the revised documentation should be considered by the UTC reviewers who would make the recommendation for final approval of the documentation to the Chair.

**12-13/118        Psychology: MSc in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience**

The Committee **considered** a proposal from the Department of Psychology for an MSc in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience (UTC.12-13/76) to start in October 2013. The proposal had been considered in advance of the meeting by Carl Thompson and Katherine Selby and had their support and that of the External Assessor.

During discussion it was **noted** that:

- the UTC reviewers had discussed the proposal with the programme team and had identified several minor typographical issues and omissions which have been resolved. The revised documentation will be sent to the Academic Support Office.
- the reviewers were satisfied that there will be adequate staffing resource and student demand for the programme.
- the programme was focussed on preparing students for doctoral study, and was similar in that regard to programmes at Durham and Birkbeck. 70-80% of students from those programmes typically commenced a doctoral programme following the Masters. Therefore, no reference was made in the documentation to engagement with employers.
- The entry criteria for the programme stated that students must have at least a 2:1. It was suggested that this should be reviewed as a 2:2 threshold may be more appropriate. **ACTION: Department of Psychology**

The Committee **approved** the programme.

*[Secretary's note: the programme team have subsequently reiterated that they believe that a 2:1 would be a more appropriate entry criterion for this programme than a 2:2]*

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**12-13/119          Health Sciences: Integrated Masters in Nursing (MNursing)**

The Committee **considered** a proposal from the Department of Health Sciences for an integrated Masters degree in Nursing (MNursing) (UTC.12-13/77) to start in October 2013. The proposal had been considered in advance of the meeting by Lesley Booth and Tim Clarke and had their support and that of the External Assessor. The programme would be considered for accreditation by the Nursing and Midwifery Council on 8th April 2013.

During discussion it was **noted** that:

- the report from the External Assessor was particularly positive and the UTC reviewers also praised the programme, stating that it was well thought out and would be very attractive to students. All issues raised with the programme team by the reviewers had been resolved swiftly.

- the programme will be able to take 10 students onto the MNursing each year. Stage 3 is based on the existing undergraduate degree in Nursing, but has some differences which are designed to prepare students for Stage 4. An exit award will be available for students who are unable to complete Stage 4, but the exit award will not allow the student to enter practise. The programme team were aware of this and the potential risk is mitigated by the fact that the students entering the MNursing will be amongst the most able.

- the assessment and compensation rules listed in the documentation were different to those in the Guide to Assessment. This was not intentional and will need to be revised. In addition, a Foundation degree in Nursing is erroneously listed as an exit award.

- the number of programme hours listed on the front sheet is different to the number of hours mentioned elsewhere in the document. This is intentional, as the lower figures refer to the minimum number of hours required by the accrediting body.

- the MNursing will be a new award title which will require approval from Senate.

The Committee **approved** the programme and recommended to Senate the new award, subject to the following conditions being met:

- The documentation should be revised to remove reference to a Foundation degree exit award. The assessment and compensation rules should be amended as outlined above.

  **ACTION: Department of Health Sciences**

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**12-13/120        Centre for Lifelong Learning: Certificate in Local Government**

The Committee **considered** a proposal from the Centre for Lifelong Learning for a Certificate in Local Government (UTC.12-13/78) to start in late Summer 2013. The proposal had been considered in advance of the meeting by Werner Bonefeld and Mark Roodhouse and had their support and that of the External Assessor.

During discussion it was **noted** that:

- the UTC reviewers had raised a number of issues with the programme team prior to the meeting and had received satisfactory responses to their queries. These included suggestions for the addition of material about the Rowntree Foundation and poverty in York, which had been passed to the relevant module leader.

- the programme was designed with the input of York Council and is designed for Councillors to take, although it will also be open to the general public. The UTC reviewers expressed their firm support for this initiative. Members suggested that the programme could be amended in the future to extend its appeal to the wider region.

- given the intended audience for the programme, there were some concerns that the use of Postgraduates Who Teach (PGWTs) might not meet the expectations of students. However, it was acknowledged that the Centre has a rigorous recruitment process and that any PGWTs would be capable of delivering the course content.

- there were concerns that the level of summative assessment on the modules might be too high and that the modules might benefit from some of the summative essays becoming formative essays, as some of the students may not have written an essay for many years, if at all.

- the External Assessor had expressed an interest in becoming an External Examiner in their response. Concerns were expressed about whether this was appropriate, as it may give the impression that the External Assessor was being rewarded in some way. **ACTION: ASO to consider whether amendments to the form are necessary.**

The Committee **approved** the programme, subject to the following condition being met:

- the programme team should agree the pattern of assessment for the modules with the UTC reviewers. **ACTION: Centre for Lifelong Learning, WB, MR.**

**12-13/121         Report on 2011-12 Undergraduate Results**

This item was withdrawn.

**12-13/122         Report from the Employability Co-ordinating Group**

The Committee **considered** a report from the Employability Co-ordinating Group (UTC.12-13/80). The Group oversees the Employability Strategy action plan and reports to UTC as required. The Group was originally set up two years ago and made good progress with the original action plan. The Committee was asked to consider a revised action plan for the second phase of implementation and approve a revised membership list for the Group. The Committee **noted** the following points:

- the new action plan placed a greater emphasis on peer support, embedding employability and using the College system differently.

- it is proposed that patterns of unemployment or under-employment be analysed so that appropriate support can be focussed on students who may be most at risk.

- there are some actions that are described as 'mandatory' due to external requirements. It was felt that this language was unduly negative and should be re-phrased to emphasise the fact that the proposed actions would be positive in their own right.

- the University can currently offer 30 internships to unemployed graduates.  This could be increased to between 50-60, but only if the necessary funds were available. There were 160 unemployed graduates last year and it was acknowledged that not every graduate would be able or willing to take up an internship. Students who took internships will be 'tracked' in order to ascertain whether the internship has been successful in increasing their future employment prospects.

- the Careers Service is available to graduates for life, although the Careers Service does not have the resource to actively target this at unemployed graduates. An awareness raising campaign has been launched through the alumni network to highlight the availability of the service. Graduates used to be able to access careers advice from any other university, but this has ceased in many universities due to the introduction of league tables and the measuring of graduate employment within them.

The Committee **agreed** that:

- the proposed action plan should be approved subject to minor amendments (the reference to the QAA Code of Practice should instead refer to the Quality Code). **ACTION: ES, KD**

- the lead owner of actions should be made clearer. **ACTION: ES, KD**

- a second academic member should be asked to join the Group, preferably one who is a Chair of a Graduate Board of Studies. In addition, there were some minor errors in the titles of the members, which should be amended. **ACTION: ES, KD**


**12-13/123      QAA Higher Education Review consultation**

The Committee **considered** the QAA consultation on their proposed new review methodology (UTC.12-13/81). The QAA have asked for responses from institutions by 22nd April 2013 to 22 questions. A set of the questions and some suggested responses were provided to the Committee for discussion.

The Committee heard that in 2012 HEFCE instructed the QAA to introduce a more risk based approach to assessing the quality of higher education providers. A consultation on adopting a risk-based approach was circulated in 2012 which the University responded to. The new consultation took into account some of the feedback from the previous consultation. For example, it is proposed that reviews take place every six years, although the previous proposals suggested that they could take place up to ten years apart.

In addition, in 2012 the UK Border Agency instructed the QAA to start reviewing private HE providers situated within the UK if the providers wished to continue to take international students. This is believed to have placed considerable financial strain on the QAA and this seems to have informed some of the proposals.

During discussion, it was **noted** that:
- the improved guidance for institutions on preparing a Self-evaluation Document (SED) was welcome.
- whilst having a strengthened role for students was positive, there was an imbalance in the provision of information from the institution and the Students' Union which may lead to a danger of the student submission being entirely opinion-based, rather than evidence-based.

However, it was acknowledged that not every Students' Union would have the resources necessary to write an evidence-based report.

- there were concerns that the concept of a risk-based approach could lead to misleading decisions about institutions, unless the definition of risk was clearly understood. Furthermore, the proposed method of determining review intensity was not solely a risk-based approach and care would need to be taken by the QAA in the terminology used when publishing the intensity of each institution's review, as the difference between 'intensity' and 'risk' might not be appreciated by the general public. This could be confused further by the statement that the QAA would also take into account adverse publicity when determining the intensity of the review. Members requested that the proposed response in this area be strengthened accordingly.

- members did not feel that there would be any benefit to having international reviewers and that the University response should state that the introduction of international reviewers could be supplemental, but should not form part of the normal review panel. It was suggested that UK staff with international experience might be a more appropriate alternative.

UTC **approved** the proposed response, subject to the above points being added.

**12-13/124    Standing Committee on Assessment**

The Committee **received** a report on the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on 8 February 2013 (UTC.12-13/82). It was **noted** that the SCA had:

- considered the 2011-12 External Examiners reports for PGT programmes.
- considered the responses to the departmental questionnaire on assessment and feedback.

During discussion it was **noted** that:

- the External Examiner for the MSc in Accounting and Finance had stated that the programme had not met all the required standards. The SCA was investigating this matter. The Chair of UTC will be briefed and will discuss this with the department if necessary, once the investigation has been concluded.

- departments will be sent a memo in response to the External Examiner reports. There were no new emerging themes.

- the SCA will clarify some of the statements from the Assessment and Feedback questionnaire with individual departments. A report has been commissioned into the role of External Examiners in moderation which will be considered by the SCA next term and will then be reported to UTC.

- the question of moderation of student marks arose from both the Assessment and Feedback questionnaire and the recent Annual Programme Review. This is being considered by the SCA. It is unlikely that moderation will be possible at late stages of the process, but it should be possible to look at borderline marks earlier in the process.

- the Mitigating Circumstances policy is being looked at by the SCA with a view to potential refinements.

**Category II**

**12-13/125        Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies**

The Committee **noted** that the new QAA subject benchmark statement for bachelor's degrees with honours and master's degrees in counselling and psychotherapy has been referred to the Department of Health Sciences for their consideration.

The Committee **noted** the report of final approval from the IET for Computer Science accredited programmes (UTC.12-13/83). To note that the next re-accreditation visit will take place in 2015/16. Actions from the March 2012 visit have been completed to the satisfaction of the IET. The interim report and response was acknowledged at the November meeting (UTC.12-13/77). Students who do not meet the rules of assessment set down by the IET will transfer to an unaccredited interim named award.

The Committee **noted** that the British Psychological Society (BPS) conducted a paper-based review of the new BA in Psychology in Education programme in the Department of Education in 2012/2013 leading to accreditation of the programme for the first cohort in 2013. The BPS will visit the Department in 2013/2014.

**12-13/126        Approval of External Assessors**

The Committee **noted** that the Chair has approved Dr Amanda Wilcox (University of Hull) as External Assessor for the Triennial Review of the York International Foundation Programme at York College in April 2013.

**12-13/127 Student Exchanges**

The Committee **noted** that the Chair has approved an Erasmus student exchange between the School of Social and Political Sciences and Universitat Konstanz, Germany.

The Committee **noted** that the Chair has approved an Erasmus student exchange between the Department of Language and Linguistic Science and the Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies, University of Helsinki.

**12-13/128 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.12-13/84) as follows:

**Archaeology:** From Oct 2013, approval of a revised, in-depth version of the M-level module 'Narrating Our Pasts' with a consequent change of credits from 5 to 20.

**Computer Science:** A modification for MSc in Human Centred Interactive Technologies to start Oct 2013: increase from 90-100 credits for the ISM (PRMH) and for Postgraduate Diploma (entry point) - project (CRIT) increase from 30 to 40 credits and approved as non-compensatable and non-re-assessable.

**Economics:** Approval of the re-introduction of the MSc in Econometrics and Economics which was suspended in 2007/08.

**Education:** Approval of two variants of the existing PGCE for the Red Kite school consortium (Harrogate area) and Northern Lights school consortium (Skipton/Bradford area) as part of the government's new Schools Direct Training Programme for initial teaching training (http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/teacher-training-options/school-based-training/school-direct.aspx). The academic content of the two PGCE variants is the same as for the

existing PGCE but the variants are tailored to the needs of the two consortia with respect to, for example, the location and timing of school placements.

Approval of the suspension of the MA in Science Education from October 2013.

**Environment:** Approval of changes to the structure of BSc Environmental Geography degree from Oct 2013. The Stage 2 core 20-credit 'Energy and the Environment' module will be replaced by 10-credit 'Biogeography' module in the Spring Term. 'Energy and the Environment' will be optional. 'Biogeography' will also be an optional 10c module for Environmental Science.

**Language and Linguistic Science:** Approval of the 60 credit module "Semester in a French-speaking country (History) for the BA History and French programme. This module is pass/fail and re-assessable.

Approval of an exceptional modification to the 'Phonetics of Talk in Interaction' module: an in-year change to the assessment deadline for the transcription exercise (worth 20% of the module mark). The deadline was moved from the Summer common assessment period to Week 1 of the Summer term in order to provide important feedback to students before they begin the remainder of their assessment and ensure that they are managing their time effectively over the Easter break. The students were consulted and all agreed to the change.

**The School of Management:** Approval of changes to the first year of the undergraduate programme, including the replacement of *Understanding Arguments in Management* with *Understanding the Context of Business*. Approval of changes to the timing of first year modules for 2013/2014 only.

**PEP:** Approval of a modification to allow current second year PEP students greater freedom in terms of their choice of third year Economics modules.

**Philosophy:** Further to M12-13/110, approval of the level 7 module descriptors for the option modules involving shared teaching between stage 3 and masters' students. In contrast to the stage 3 students, the PGT students will approach the module as an independent research topic, defining

their own essay question and using the taught components as support for their research, rather than having their reading and essay topic defined by the taught syllabus. The options will be available from October 2013.

**Politics:** Approval of a modification so that the online MSc in International Humanitarian Affairs will have a single entry point in October from October 2013.

**Psychology:** A modification to re-name MSc in Developmental Disorders of Language and Cognition to MSc in Development, Disorders, and Clinical Practice, including revised modules, has now been approved by UTC Chair's action to start in October 2013.

### 12-13/129    Dates of Next Meetings

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

- Thursday 25th April 2013, 1.30pm
- Monday 20th May 2013, 1.15pm

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