

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

TEACHING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held 12 November 2015

Present: Professor J Robinson (Chair), Mrs L Booth, Dr G Cubitt, Mr N Dandy, Ms C Dantec, Mrs K Dodd, Professor C Fewster, Dr J Hardman, Professor J Hudson, Ms R Ibrahim (GSA representative), Dr S King, Mr T Ron (YUSU representative), Dr K Selby, Dr Á Sheil, Professor J Thijssen, Dr R Vann, Professor R Waites, Dr L Waldorf and Dr C van Wyhe.

In attendance: Mr M Cornock and Dr R Walker (ASO, for M15-16/37), Mrs J Fox (ASO, Secretary), Dr D Gent (ASO, Minute Secretary), Mr S Gow (observer), Mr D Lean (Planning Office, for M15-16/44), Professor M Ormrod (Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities) and Dr J Wotherspoon (Registry Services, for M15-16/36).

Apologies: Professor S Bell (Dean, Social Sciences), Professor B Fulton (Dean, Sciences) and Dr T Lightfoot.

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

M15-16/31 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Professor John Hudson to the Committee as a new member, and further welcomed Mr Stephen Gow, who was attending the meeting as an observer.

M15-16/32 Minutes of the October Meeting

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held 8 October 2015 (UTC.15-16/23), subject to the following corrections:

- The phrase 'responsibility for governance of active pre-sessionals' in M15-16/8 on the International Pathway College should be replaced by 'responsibility for governance of existing pre-sessionals'.
- The details for the modification to the dissertation on the BA Midwifery Practice within M15-16/22 should be amended to read that the deadline was 'brought forward to allow students a more usable block of dedicated time for the dissertation' rather than to 'allow more time'.

M15-16/33 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Committee **considered** the matters arising from previous meetings (UTC.15-16/23 **Appendix 1**). It was **reported** that the following items had been closed subsequent to the circulation of papers to UTC:

- M14-15/175 Annual Programme Review 2013/14: SCA had considered the matter of repeat years of study and had set up a working group to examine this issue.
- M15-16/10 Mathematics, Modifications to Stages 1 and 2: SCA was supportive of the specific proposal from the Department of Mathematics for multiple submissions for

- competency tests. SCA planned to develop principles relating to this issue.
- M15-16/19 Revalidation of NSLC programme: having considered the issue, SCA had decided not to support the proposal to operate the University Certificate in Science Education (Science Technicians) programme on a classified basis. SCA noted that transcripts provided an alternative means of demonstrating attainment. This decision would be presented to UTC formally in SCA's minutes.

It was accordingly **noted** that all items had been closed, with the exception of the following:

- M14-15/122 Review of Health Economics for Health Care Professionals and MSc in Economic Evaluation for HTA: as reported at the October meeting, work on this issue was ongoing.
- M15-16/10 and M15-16/11, Mathematics and Electronics Modifications: the restructure of Natural Sciences, which was the result of restructures of partner departments, would be presented for approval via Chair's action.

M15-16/34 Oral Report from the Chair

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

- A paper on the implications of the Higher Education Green Paper would be submitted to the Strategy Meeting of UTC in December 2015. The York pedagogy appeared to align well with the plans for the Teaching Excellence Framework outlined in the Green Paper.
- The *Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-2020* had been approved by Senate. An implementation plan for the Strategy would be presented to UTC's Strategy Meeting.
- The Chair planned to establish a working group to develop the Student Partnership Agreement. Owing to the connection between the issues involved, the work and membership of this group would overlap with the working group on Attendance Monitoring led by Dr Lightfoot. Members interested in being part of the working group were asked to contact the Chair.
- The Chair had been to the majority of departments to discuss the York pedagogy. The roll-out of the pedagogy was also being progressed through workshops and via the work of the ProPEL implementation team. Discussions regarding the programme specification, programme module catalogue and student facing information were ongoing and would be considered by the Committee in due course.

M15-16/35 Oral Report from the Student Representatives

YUSU

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

- Department representatives had been elected from every department. The representatives were engaging with YUSU on considering various aspects of policy. Representatives had found the York pedagogy workshops to be helpful.
- YUSU had been encouraged to learn that three further departments had moved to an 'opt-out' system for lecture capture, and that more departments were considering such a system.
- YUSU reported a view from some students that the appointment of additional academic staff would be beneficial.
- Students from the Departments of Mathematics and Physics had raised issues of space.

GSA

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

- Alongside YUSU, the GSA was running a survey of taught postgraduate students on their non-academic experience. The survey, which at the time of the meeting had received a relatively low number of respondents, would be followed up by interviews. This work had been requested by Planning Committee to feed into a Planning working group on taught postgraduate issues.
- As a result of elections, the GSA now had representatives in all key positions.

M15-16/36 QAA Mid-Cycle Review

The Committee **considered** a proposed mid-cycle report to the QAA (UTC.15-16/24). The QAA required an update by exception, covering any issues raised in the 2012 Institutional Review that had not been fully addressed. As the University had already addressed all the QAA's recommendations, the proposed mid-cycle report instead focused on highlighting how themes noted in the Review continued to receive attention and improvement.

In discussion, it was **noted** that:

- the recommendation in the 2012 Institutional Review that the University should improve the provision of information to students had been addressed. This nevertheless continued to be an important area of ongoing work, particularly given that the accuracy of information provided by the University would now be subject to audit by the Competition and Markets Authority;
- the relevant section of the mid-cycle report on the provision of information to students should be amended to add information about the planned Programme and Module Catalogue, which would make an important contribution in this area;
- the references to 'Board for Graduate Schools' should be amended to read 'York Graduate Research School'.

The Committee **approved** the proposed mid-cycle report for submission to the QAA, subject to the minor amendments noted above.

Action: Nigel Dandy

M15-16/37 Programme Information for the York Pedagogy

This item was withdrawn, and would be submitted to a future meeting.

M15-16/38 Review of Compensation, Condonement and Reassessment

The Committee **considered** a paper from the SCA on assessment rules relating to final year undergraduate and integrated masters students (UTC.15-16/26). Dr Jen Wotherspoon (Registry Services) attended the meeting to present this item. The Committee thanked Dr Wotherspoon for her work on this issue and the considerable effort that had gone into producing the report.

The paper had been prepared in response to concerns raised by the Departments of Mathematics and Physics that the University's assessment rules might have a disproportionately adverse impact on final year students in STEM disciplines, specifically that finalists might either fail to gain an award or experience a delay in graduation due to the need to resit failed modules. This concern

had been raised in the context of the view (expressed in the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Mathematics) that STEM subjects were likely to have large variation in marks for given assessments, and that the performance of a given student could vary between different areas of the subject without comprising their overall standard or achievement of programme learning outcomes.

In discussion, it was **noted** that:

- subsequent to the report being produced and considered at SCA, the Departments of Mathematics and Physics had generated new data which had not yet been incorporated into the report's findings;
- the report noted that the University was not out of line with other Russell Group institutions with respect to not permitting condonement of failure for marks lower than 30 (subject to conditions), noting some exceptions. Committee members highlighted two other exceptions within the Russell Group. The University's policy of permitting compensation up to 10 marks below the pass-mark was relatively generous for Russell Group institutions;
- whilst the focus of the report was on finalists, the Departments of Mathematics and Physics were also concerned about the impact of progression rules on students at earlier stages. If this reduced the population of students who were more likely to fail modules in the final stage, then this would produce a bias in the figures within the report;
- the report examined whether assessment rules caused a delay in graduation by enforcing reassessments for students who had failed 20 credits or fewer: of these students, those from Mathematics and Physics had averages which were broadly consistent with other disciplines, and were generally not 'good' students in terms of their overall average;
- from the perspective of the Departments of Mathematics and Physics, a negative impact of assessment rules on any 'good' student would be a concern: however, the departments felt that the issue was a broader one that could not be reduced to those students with 'good' averages;
- the report found evidence of finalists whose graduation had been delayed because of taking 'sits as if for the first time' due to mitigating circumstances claims. However, such students had typically chosen to take up this opportunity, and performed better than their original module mark. It was noted that, at some other universities, mitigating circumstances claims operated differently to the University's rules in respect of finalists (for instance, being taken into account in classification decisions). SCA and SCC were reviewing the University's mitigating circumstances policy;
- student representatives had indicated to YUSU that they would be supportive of a system of progressive compensation (i.e., whereby a higher overall average would allow a student to receive compensation at a lower rate);
- it was important that the University maintained its academic standards and did not encourage a 'tactical' approach to assessment;
- failure for individual students could be caused by particular circumstances, for instance use of elective modules, which was not evident in the data;
- the assessment rules were adopted at the same time as the programme frameworks introduced with the 'New Modular Scheme', and designed to work together. Exceptions to those frameworks (such as large numbers of 10-credit modules) might have an impact on the operation of the assessment rules;
- the issue was one of principles lying behind any rules, as much as of their operation;
- the capacity within Student and Academic Services to conduct further research into this issue was limited;

- University systems should allow analysis of this kind to be undertaken more easily.

The Committee **decided**:

- (a) to refer this issue back to the SCA for additional work. The paper should be resubmitted to the Committee at a future date, informed by the comments above and views and data from relevant departments. The Committee entrusted SCA to scope the work so as to be manageable within available resource.

It was **noted** that this decision meant that there would be no change in assessment rules for 2015/16 finalists.

- (b) that departments that had raised issues with the assessment rules should be invited to provide a concise summary of their concerns.

**Action: Chair of SCA and Jen Wotherspoon,
(to liaise with the Chair of UTC and relevant departments)**

M15-16/39 Institutional Lecture Capture System

Freedom of Information Act Exempt: Minute Commercial in Confidence

M15-16/40 Higher Education Achievement Report Protocol and Procedure

The Committee **considered** a report on the protocol and procedure for recording of extra-curricula achievements within the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) (UTC.15-16/28). In discussion, it was **noted** that:

- the proposed protocol for deciding what might be recorded in the HEA focused on verifiable achievements as opposed to more generic activities;
- it was proposed to establish a HEAR Advisory Board, to report to UTC. This Board would, among other things, have responsibility for approving proposals to record new types of achievements within the HEAR;
- it was anticipated that some achievements within the HEAR would be easily translatable from current processes. For others, the proposer would need to consider how achievements could be verified and converted into an easily upload-able list, whilst also taking account of staff time required to verify achievements;
- the importance of achievements within the HEAR, in principle, being open to all students in a given cohort, without artificially excluding achievements that the University might wish to record such as departmental or college prizes.

The Committee **decided** to approve the proposed protocol and procedure, subject to the following minor amendments:

- the wording of Protocol 1 should be suitably amended so as not to appear to exclude the recording of departmental and college prizes, for instance by clarification of the word 'cohort';
- protocol 7 within the proposals should be amended to read 'take place within the student's period of enrolment' rather than 'relate to the student's enrolment';
- protocols 5 and 8 should be amended to remove the apparent contradiction as to the role of YUSU in verifying activities;
- protocol 9 should be amended to read 'achievements must be distinct from' rather than

- 'achievements must not overlap';
- the membership of the HEAR Advisory Board should be amended to read that the representative from YUSU should be a student representative.
 - the terms of reference of the HEAR Advisory Board should be amended to make clear that it had responsibility for complaints and appeals only if these related to the HEAR.

Action: Kate Dodd

[**Secretary's note:** the protocol and procedure have been edited as above].

M15-16/41 Option Module Transfers

The Committee **considered** a paper on the timeframes in which students could change option module choices (UTC.15-16/29). During discussion, it was **noted** that:

- the paper had been brought to the Committee following a query from the Department of Chemistry, which had highlighted there was no written policy regarding module change timeframes;
- the paper proposed endorsing current (unwritten) practices;
- since the report was written it had been noted that SCA approved that changes should normally be made by week 3 in 2007 (SCA M07/125 refers). Current practice and the proposal in the paper went slightly further in stating that week 3 should be an absolute requirement;
- departments running programmes together should be communicating about timeframes and protocols for changes to module choices (this was current practice) ;
- it was important that departments provided accurate and detailed information on modules before students' initial choices were made, to reduce the likelihood of transfers.

The Committee **decided** to:

- (a) approve current unwritten practice that the very latest option module transfers should take place was week 3 of the module;
- (b) endorse continuation of current practice that allowed departments to specify their own change/transfer practices (before week 3).

M15-16/42 National Student Survey Results 2015

The Committee **considered** a report on the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) 2015 (UTC.15-16/30). The report had previously been considered at Senate. During discussion, it was **noted** that:

- whilst there were a small number of departmental exceptions, the results were positive for the University as a whole. Institution-wide scores had improved across all dimensions of the survey. The University was within the top 10 institutions for 'teaching on my course', reflecting good teaching across departments;
- departmental-level NSS results were reported in a new format, with an initial analysis from the Chair and ASO, followed by a departmental commentary and action plan and then a further response from the Chair. Members found this format helpful and informative, noting that it allowed departments to view the actions planned in other departments and share good practice;
- Senate had retained the target that, by NSS 2016, departments should achieve 95% overall

satisfaction or, for those with less than 90% overall satisfaction in NSS 2014, to halve the number of dissatisfied students from the 2014 results. In response to a query, it was clarified that, where a department had a target for 2016 ending in .5, in practice the department would be expected to achieve the integer above this target.

M15-16/43 UK Engagement Survey 2015

The Committee **considered** a report on the results of the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) 2015 (UTC.15-16/31). Mr Stephen Gow (Academic Support Office) presented this item. During discussion, it was **noted** that:

- the University response rate for UKES was 15.6%, based on 1387 respondents (the majority first and second year undergraduates). This was much higher than the overall Russell Group response rate;
- the qualitative open comments would help departments to interpret the quantitative results;
- compared to the sector as a whole and the Russell Group, the University had lower results for the section of the survey on 'learning with others'. However, the rating system and questions used led to ambiguity as to whether responses to questions within this section were positive or negative;
- open comments suggested that students had a fear and misunderstanding of collusion, which led to lower participation in group-work and collaboration. The ASO was already working on refinements to departmental 'Preparing to Study' sites to emphasise the benefits of collaboration.

The Committee **decided** to approve the next steps in the report, as follows:

- (a) that the University should not take part in UKES 2015/16;
- (b) that the University should incorporate UKES questions into its own institution-wide surveys;
- (c) that departmental statistical and open comment data should be made available to departments.

[**Secretary's note:** the UKES data has now been circulated to departments]

M15-16/44 Survey Arrangements 2016

The Committee **considered** arrangements for the 2016 National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) (UTC.15-16/32). The proposed arrangements mirrored those for the most recent iterations of the surveys.

It was proposed that, as the University response rate was high, there should be no institutional incentives to complete the NSS: departments were, however, free to offer their own incentives within certain parameters. Ipsos-MORI had reported that there was little evidence that institutional incentives generated a significant increase in NSS response rates. It was **noted** that departments should be informed of the evidence on efficacy of incentives in central communications informing them of the survey arrangements.

The Committee **decided** to approve the following:

NSS:

- the start date of the NSS: 18 January 2016 (to 30 April 2016);
- the inclusion of additional banks of questions: B1. Careers and B6. Feedback from Students;
- the recommendation not to include any institutional questions;
- the recommendation not to offer incentives or prizes.

PTES:

- that the University would take part in PTES 2016;
- the dates of the survey: 11 April to 16 June 2016;
- the recommendation not to offer incentives or prizes;
- the recommendation that institution-specific questions should not be added.

M15-16/45 Undergraduate External Examiners' Reports 2014/15

The Committee **considered** a summary report of undergraduate external examiners' reports for the 2014/15 academic year (UTC.15-16/33). The report had previously been considered by SCA. During discussion, it was **noted** that:

- external examiners had noted some lack of clarity about the new framework for the operation of Boards of Examiners. SCA was addressing this issue through clarification of guidance, and would review the restructure of Boards of Examiners as one of its priorities for the 2015/16 academic year;
- some external examiners had noted concerns about the examination timetable. The timetable operated under significant constraints. Registry Services planned to introduce a 'hypothetical timetable' from 2016/17, which would allow modelling of potential changes to the timetable. Departments were being asked to review summative assessment as part of the implementation of the York pedagogy, and it was noted that a reduction in examinations may ease the constraints on the timetable. Members noted that there were some resource costs to alternative forms of assessment: these barriers had been overcome in some departments. The Committee also discussed the potential merits and disadvantages of 'compendium' papers or other forms of synoptic assessment in the context of this issue;
- some reports from external examiners were relatively brief. Whilst many examiners also gave oral feedback to Boards of Examiners, the written record was important for University oversight. SCA intended to address this issue through amendments to the guidance and / or form for external examiners;
- SCA planned to discuss the University's rule that feedback should be returned within six weeks as one of its annual priorities. Some external examiners had noted that the University was out of line with sector practice on this issue. Members noted that many departments had policies for shorter turnaround times and that work marked within the Summer CAP was returned in a shorter period than six weeks;
- the Chair of SCA reported that, in considering the report and table of issues, SCA had also identified issues around checking of examination papers and examination paper errors, which required further consideration by SCA.

M15-16/46 Postgraduate Support Scheme

The Committee **considered** a report on the HEFCE-funded Postgraduate Support Scheme project (UTC.15-16/34). Mr Duncan Lean (Planning Office) attended the meeting to present this item.

The report summarised the findings of the project, which the University participated in as part of a consortium alongside the universities of Sheffield, Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester and Warwick. The project was split into four thematic areas: academic innovation; understanding the student; information, advice and guidance and finance. The paper summarised a number of findings; those highlighted to the Committee in discussion included:

- There was a latent demand for taught postgraduate study among non-traditional postgraduate student groups, most successfully taken-up when provision was flexible and met the learning needs of these groups.
- The cost of taught postgraduate study was a barrier to participation.
- Improving information, advice and guidance for prospective students would help recruitment to taught postgraduate study.
- The importance of departments, centres and supplementary programme teams inputting into discussions about the future of postgraduate taught provision and existing barriers to postgraduate taught study.

The findings of the project would be reported to a Planning Committee working group on taught postgraduate provision, which had a wide-ranging remit, and included membership from the PGT Special Interest Group. Relevant issues would be brought to UTC for discussion in due course.

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

M15-16/47 Standing Committee on Assessment

The Committee **received** a report on the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment (SCA) held 25 September 2015 (UTC.15-16/35a), and **approved** proposals for SCA's terms of reference, membership and priorities for 2015/16 (UTC.15-16/35b).

M15-16/48 Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice Exemption Guidance

The Committee **approved** proposed guidance on exemptions from the requirement that new staff undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (UTC.15-16/36).

M15-16/49 Learning and Teaching Forum Activities for 2015/16

The Committee **received** a report outlining activities planned by the Learning and Teaching Forum for the 2015/16 academic year (UTC.15-16/37).

M15-16/50 Modifications and Withdrawals

The Committee **received** a report on modifications to, and withdrawals of, programmes of study approved by Chair's action in October 2015 (UTC.15-16/38), as follows:

CELT: approval of the introduction of a new 20credit level 6 module in Transcultural Communication to add to the suite of in-sessional modules.

Economics: approval to make permanent an exception, granted in 2011, to the modular scheme for taught postgraduate programmes, allowing students to take more modules simultaneously than normally permitted under the scheme's rules.

Education: approval for the permanent withdrawal of all Red Kite and Pinnacle School Direct

PGCE programmes from 2016 following the ending of the consortia's partnerships with the University in July 2016.

Electronics: approval for the pass-mark for Maths I and Physics I within the Foundation Year to be 50% rather than the standard 40%, with immediate effect. This modification was in-line with the information advertised to students.

History: approval for the 20 credit core module 'Perspectives on Medieval History' on the MA in Medieval History to change from an Autumn/Spring module, to being delivered entirely in the Autumn Term from 2015/16.

Language and Linguistic Science: approval to increase the length of the exam for the Stage 2 'Teaching English as a Foreign Language' module from 2 to 2.5 hours from 2015/16.

Approval of a part-time route for the MA in Comparative Syntax & Semantics to be implemented with immediate effect from 2015/16.

Music: approval of part-time MA and Postgraduate Diploma routes for the MA in Music Education, to be implemented with effect from 2015/16.

Theatre, Film and Television: approval of the following changes to assessment, to take effect from 2015/16:

- TFT00004I - Political Theatres: Change from a 4000 word essay (100%) to 2500 word essay (60%), 750 word Playscript (25%), 750 word Presentation Notes (25%)
- TFT00020I - Theatre Design & Production: Removal of the work placement as places could no longer be guaranteed. Assessment tasks changed to: Portfolio of work (60%), Presentation on portfolio and viva examination (40%)
- TFT00021C - Principles of Interactive Media: Addition of a presentation of the summative assessment tasks.
- TFT00014I - App Design & Development: Summative assessment components changed to Web Design & Report (30% - due Spring term Week 6) and App Design & Development task (70% - due Summer term Week 2)
- TFT00017I - Interactive Media Design & Development: Summative assessment components changed to Interactive Media Assignment and/or prototype, with 1000 word Design Report (30% - due Spring term Week 5), and Interactive Media Assignment and/or prototype, with 2500 word Design Report (70% - due Summer term Week 1).

Approval to change assessment of the Stage 3, 10-credit 'Directing for Theatre, Film and TV' module to a written Director's Plan (2000 words, 80%) and observation of practical work undertaken during the module (20%), to be implemented from 2015/16.

M15-16/51 Periodic Reviews

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had approved the following external assessors for Periodic Reviews:

- Professor Simon Dobson (St. Andrews) and Professor David Duke (Leeds), for the Periodic Review of the Department of Computer Science.
- Professor Kirstein Rummery (Stirling) and Professor Hugh Bochel (Lincoln) for the Periodic Review of the Department of SPSW.

M15-16/52 York International Foundation Programmes

The Committee **noted** that 2015/16 would be the final year of the York International Foundation Programme delivered in partnership with York College.

M15-16/53 Double Degrees: Beijing Jiaotong and Xidian Universities, China

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had approved collaborations between the Department of Computer Science and Beijing Jiaotong and Xidian Universities, China, involving concurrent masters' awards/double degrees, and **received** an update on the development of University guidance on such arrangements (UTC.15-16/39).

M15-16/54 Registers for 2015/16

The Committee **received** the registers for 2015/16 for distance learning programmes; accreditation by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, and collaborations involving taught programmes (UTC.15-16/40).

M15-16/55 QAA Subject Benchmark Statements

The Committee **received** an update from Boards of Studies on revised QAA subject benchmark statements (UTC.15-16/41). These could be summarised as follows:

Archaeology: the changes to the subject benchmark statement were minor and the Department confirmed that it fully aligned to the statement. The Department had been proactive in key areas that underpinned the statement, and in communicating skills development to students.

English: the Department confirmed that the revision to the subject benchmark statement did not necessitate any changes to current provision. The revised statement would inform future changes.

History: the Department had worked closely with those involved in revising the subject benchmark statement for History, and were confident that no changes were required, except for a need to place greater emphasis on issues of digital literacy. This would be addressed via the Department's forthcoming curriculum review and implementation of the York pedagogy.

Language and Linguistics: the Department had considered the revised benchmark statement for Linguistics and was confident that its programmes covered the full range of linguistic analysis and domains of linguistic study outlined in the statement.

Philosophy: the Department had considered the revisions to the subject benchmark statement, which were relatively minor. The Department was thus confident that it remained aligned to the statement. The changes largely related to the use of Information Technology: the

Department already used Information Technology in some of the ways outlined in the statement.

M15-16/56 Dates of Next Meetings

The Committee **noted** that the dates of next meetings (all at 1.00pm in HG21, Heslington Hall except where stated below) were as follows:

Thursday 3 December 2015, 10am-12pm, Treehouse, Berrick Saul (Strategy meeting)

Thursday 10 December 2015

Thursday 4 February 2016

Thursday 10 March 2016

Thursday 12 May 2016

Thursday 16 June 2016.