

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

TEACHING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2019

**Present:** John Robinson (Chair)  
Jane Baston  
Mike Bentley  
Ed Braman (M19-20/6 to M19-20/27)  
Wayne Campbell  
Gill Chitty  
Sam Cobb  
Nigel Dandy  
Jen Gibbons  
Claire Hughes  
Steve King  
Barry Lee  
Tracy Lightfoot  
Giang Nguyen  
Mark Nicholson  
Matthew Perry  
Andrew Pickering  
Dave Smith  
Jill Webb

**In Attendance:** Elizabeth Allen (ASO, Minute Secretary) and Jane Iddon (ASO, Secretary).

Apologies were received from Michael Bate, Sabine Clarke, Sinéad McCotter, Lisa O'Malley and Jez Wells.

**CATEGORY I BUSINESS**

**M19-20/30 Minutes and Matters Arising**

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2019 (UTC.19-20/26).

The Committee **considered** an update on matters arising from the minutes (UTC. 19-20/26 **Appendix 1**).

- The revision of the Management Periodic Review Action plan (M18-19/162 refers) was in progress. A meeting had taken place on 25 October (between the York Management School and Academic Support Office) to review the action plan. This action would be carried forward to the next meeting.

*Secretary's post meeting note: the revised action plan was submitted, for review by the Chair of the Panel and the Chair of UTC, on 15 November 2019.*

- It was suggested at the October UTC that the Annual Strategy meeting planned for

December 2019, could be used to reflect in a structured way on Student Voice documents. However, in light of a clash with the Periodic Review of Natural Sciences (for which the Academic Officer is the Student representative) it was agreed that the Student Voice Group would take the structured reflection forward, in the first instance.

- Proposed LLB in Law and Criminology programme (M19-20/13 refers). Supported by the UTC reviewers and the Academic Quality Team, the programme team were working on revisions to address the conditions and recommendations. This action would be carried forward to the next meeting.
- The Department of Politics had revised its Periodic Review action plan to address the comments made by UTC (M19-20/14 refers). Review, by the Chair of the Periodic Review Panel, of the revised action plan was in progress.

#### **M19-20/31 Oral Update from the Chair**

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

- In light of the University Strategy currently being developed the Chair reported that Annual Strategy meeting of UTC (scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> December) had been postponed. The Chair noted that work to develop the new Learning Teaching and Strategy would begin after the approval of the University Strategy.
- The Chair reported that the Access & Participation Plan 2020-25 had been approved (for the full five years). The University was under enhanced monitoring by the Office for Students (OfS) and it was expected that a report on progress to date would be requested after the first year. The Chair reported that the University had approached the OfS for an extension to the 1st August 2020 deadline for submission of its first year progress report. This request had been made on the basis of the Council's meeting taking place on 28 July 2020 and to allow a full year to complete the evaluation required for the report. Council may wish to make amendments to the Report and there would not be sufficient time to do this between end of July and the early August deadline. If the extension request is rejected by the OfS, then the report would need to be considered at the earlier meeting of Council in the Spring.
- The Chair raised to the attention of the Committee a Category II paper: PwC NSS Audit (UTC.19-20/33). The aim of the audit had been to assess the University's procedures for planning for the NSS and acting on the results. The Chair reported that the overall findings from the review were low risk. In summary there were three low risk recommendations (planning, monitoring and communication with students) and two advisory recommendations (early communication, results analysis and visualisation).
- The Chair raised to the attention of the Committee a Category II item, Agendum 20: Exchange Agreement with University College Maastricht. The Chair reported that approval of the proposal with the School of Natural Sciences was pending; consideration would take place at the Natural Sciences Board of Studies on 29 November 2019.
- The Chair noted that, subsequent to the October UTC meeting, the revised programme documentation for the FdSc in Health and Social Care: Nursing Associate (M19-20/5 refers) had now been reviewed and signed-off (on 23 October 2019) by the Chair of the Conjoint Approval Panel.
- The Chair confirmed the membership of the Teaching, Learning and Student Sustainability Working Group as follows: John Robinson (Chair), Andrew Pickering, Stuart Bell, Tracy Lightfoot, Nigel Dandy, Jane Baston (GSA representative), Giang Nguyen (YUSU representative) and Jo Hossell (Group Facilitator). The Chair noted that the aim of the Group would be to consider the student experience and provision of teaching on the subject of sustainability, and ensuring that teaching is undertaken in a sustainable and inclusive manner. The first meeting was scheduled for 5 December 2019.
- The Chair reported that the Master of Laws in Law (Juris Doctor) (M18-19/161 refers) had been approved by the professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (Bar Standards

Board and Solicitors Regulation Authority), within the context of their transitional recognition schemes. The programme had been added to the University's list of Qualifying Law Degree programmes.

- The Chair reported that the timeframe of Subject-Level Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) was still outstanding. In light of the delayed Pearce Review, (which had been expected in the Autumn Term) and the awaited OfS evaluation of the Subject-TEF 2019 pilot, it was deemed impossible that the planned Subject-Level TEF could now take place in 2020.
- The Chair raised to the attention of the Committee that the University currently had six students on study abroad placements in Hong Kong; two at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and four at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). The two students at CUHK were in the process of being repatriated to the UK. The situation with respect to the four students at HKU (which was further away from the protests) was being carefully monitored; the University was in regular contact with these students.
- The Chair reported that the University and College Union (UCU), following ballots on both pensions and pay and conditions, had announced both strike action (eight days) and action short of a strike. The strike dates were Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November to Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December (week 9 and 3 days of week 10). Further industrial action may take place next year. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students was Chairing a Contingency Planning Group which was working closely with academic and support departments to identify ways to minimise the impact on students. The University's Contingency Advice document, to provide guidance on ways to minimise disruption to student learning (as far as possible), had been modified in the light of experience gained during the industrial action of 2017/18, and to take into account the different time of year. The Guidance would be circulated to Departmental Management teams. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students would be chairing three meetings with Heads of Department to discuss the impact of the industrial action, supporting staff as much as possible, whilst maintaining the University's obligations to students.

#### **M19-20/32 Update from the Student Representatives**

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

- Training events had taken place for the recently elected undergraduate course representatives, in weeks 4 and 5. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students had attended the training events, which had gone well and received positive feedback.
- YUSU was working with the Library to explore a communication project regarding study spaces in the CAP for undergraduate students.
- A YUSU open event, *Start the Conversation: Decolonising and Diversifying Curriculum at York*, held on 30 October, had been well attended (30 students and 20 staff). The event was successful, in involving a few different departments, and YUSU would like to host a similar event in the summer.
- The Academic Registrar inquired about YUSU's *Fears for Careers* project. It was **agreed** that the Academic Officer would contact the Director of Employability and Careers for further discussion and follow up, as necessary, with the Academic Registrar.

**Action: Academic Officer**

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

- Course representatives had been elected. The first training event had taken place, and the second training event was taking place the week commencing 18 November. The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students queried whether all roles had been filled. The GSA representative confirmed that 180 roles had been filled so

far, which was a substantial improvement on last year, however there were a few remaining roles to be filled.

#### **M19-20/33 Degree Outcomes**

*Karen Payne, Business Intelligence Unit, attended for this item.*

The Committee **considered** a report of an initial analysis of undergraduate degree classifications for 2018/19 (UTC.19-20/27). The data was available to view on tableau <https://tableau.york.ac.uk/#/views/UGDegreeResultsExplorer/Home>.

The overall percentage of good degrees awarded had increased by 1.9 percentage points to 82.4%. This was the highest level seen over the period of record (since 2010). The percentage of first class degrees had increased by 2.3 percentage points to 27.7%. Likewise, this was the highest level of first class degrees awarded at York for all years covered by the report (from 2010/11 onwards). There was significant variation in the percentage of good degree awards across the three faculties. Overall, Arts and Humanities had the highest percentage of good degrees at 90.7%, whilst Sciences had 82.3% and Social Sciences had 76.5%. Members noted that, as in previous years, there was also considerable variation between departments within faculties.

It was reported that a deeper analysis was being carried out (to include attainment outcomes in relation to student demographics and characteristics) by the Access and Participation Monitoring and Evaluation Team; a degree outcomes and statistical analysis report would be considered by UTC in the Spring term.

During discussion the following points were made:

- Sector-wide concerns about the upward trend in the proportion of first-class and upper second-class degrees awarded were noted (UTC.19-20/17, M19-20/ refers).
- The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework included a supplementary grade inflation metric.
- It would be increasingly important for degree awarding bodies to be able to explain the changes in degree outcomes and any differences that exist across disciplines.
- The Chair of SCA reminded the Committee that a review of the information (including data) provided to external examiners and examination boards formed a priority area of work for the SCA in 2019/20 (M19-20/17 refers).

The Chair noted that a further analysis report, including Postgraduate Taught outcomes and competitor data, would be considered by UTC at its May 2020 meeting.

The Chair thanked Karen Payne for the analysis and tableau workbooks and for attending the meeting to present the report.

#### **M19-20/34 Learning and Teaching Forum**

*Dr Glenn Hurst, Chair of the Learning and Teaching Forum, attended for this item.*

The Committee **received** a report from the Learning and Teaching Forum on planned activities in 2019/20 (UTC.19-20/28).

The Chair of Forum thanked the departing Forum members following the end of their tenure, and welcomed the new Forum members, noting that the Forum comprised of 18 members, with a gender balance of 11 men and 7 women.

The Chair of the Forum summarised the key areas of activity, which included a lunchtime workshop seminar series, the Forum magazine (published biannually), the yorkforum blog (which provided both a repository of information e.g. recorded workshop and conference presentations, and a discussion area), and the annual Learning and Teaching Conference. The date of the Conference was Friday 13 March 2020 and the theme would be 'Inclusive and Engaging Learning'. The keynote speaker had been confirmed as Dr Yota Dimitriadi, University of Reading. In response to feedback, the Conference date had been brought forward to week 10 of the Spring term, to facilitate staff attendance. Members thanked that the Forum Chair for the work undertaken to move the Conference date to the Spring term which, in terms of attendance, was likely to be particularly impactful for Teaching and Scholarship staff (and those with heavy marking loads in the Summer term). A new vice-chair role for the conference had been created to introduce a learning and teaching leadership opportunity within the conference sub-team and to support further enhancement of the event.

The GSA Vice President Academic noted that she would be happy to promote the Conference through GSA newsletters and other media channel.

Members noted that that the lunchtime workshops were scheduled on Mondays and queried whether, for future years, they could be held over different days of the week, to allow more flexibility across the week for staff attendance. The Chair of Forum **agreed** to consider this when developing the 2020/21 workshop series.

**Action: Forum Chair**

The Committee acknowledged the valuable role that the Forum played in championing learning and teaching and in the dissemination of good practice. The Chair thanked Glenn Hurst for presenting the paper.

**M19-20/35 York Experience Survey results**

The Committee **noted** that the report arising from the York Experience Survey results had been deferred to the December meeting.

**M19-20/36 National Student Survey and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2020**

The Committee **considered** proposals regarding the arrangements for the 2020 National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) (UTC.19-20/**30**) and **agreed** that the University should participate in PTES 2020. Members considered proposals relating to the start date, incentives, promotion and additional questions.

*Start Dates*

The NSS would open nationally on 13 January and run until 30 April 2020. It was proposed that the University should open the survey on 3 February 2020 in an attempt to minimise survey fatigue. PTES would run nationally between 4 February and 15 June 2020. It was proposed that the University should open the survey on 14 April 2020 at the start of summer term, so that both surveys can be promoted in a shorter window, similar to previous years. Members **agreed** to the proposed start dates.

### *Incentives*

Members **agreed** the recommendation in the paper that the University should continue not to offer any institutional incentives for either the NSS or the PTES.

### *Promotion*

Members **agreed** that the University should continue to utilise social media to promote both surveys.

During the discussion, the following points were made in relation to promotion of the surveys:

- the Academic Registrar suggested that there was greater scope for a more visible NSS promotion campaign and advised that some funding could be made available to produce extra resources, such as posters, to enhance visibility. Subject to costs the Academic Registrar advised that some funding could be made available for PTES promotion too.
- particular recommendations noted in the PwC NSS Audit report (UTC.19-20/33, M19-20/32 refers) as being advisory and low risk should make a positive impact with respect to improving communication with students
- there was no leeway to change the survey closing dates (these were set by national guidelines)
- departments should be advised of useful practices to enhance NSS promotion, such as organising timetabled sessions to allow students time to complete the survey (it was reported that this practice had been very effective in TFTI)
- it was suggested that more could be done to promote the good work that staff are doing to improve the student experience. For example, to increase the use of 'You Said We Did' to highlight the importance of student feedback and 'to close the feedback loop'. The importance of managing student expectations, in respect of explaining when changes cannot be made (and why), was also noted.
- the Chair noted that it was important to continue the use of 'You Said We Did' messaging throughout the year, however expressed the importance that the University continues to be scrupulous in respect of compliance with sector-wide guidelines on 'inappropriate influence'.
- The Chair reported that research undertaken by Marketing from September 2016 to September 2018 had found no correlation between a departmental 'You Said We Did' campaign and a department's NSS scores for Student Voice.
- the Associate PVC reported that strategies were already in place to promote national surveys to eligible distance-learning students.

### *Additional Questions*

The University had the option of adding up to 6 banks of additional NSS questions and, in addition, could choose to add two provider-specific questions. The Committee **agreed** not to include additional institutional questions. In relation to the additional question banks the Committee **agreed** that continuity should be a primary factor when considering which option banks to choose. The Committee **agreed** to continue to use the question banks for Careers (B3), Social Opportunities (B6), Welfare Resources and Facilities (B9) and Student Safety (B17) in order that trends could be monitored. The Committee also **agreed** to add the question banks on Employability and Skills (B15) and Environmental Sustainability (B16), as these related to University strategic direction. Members also noted that the latter question should assist understanding of baseline sustainability practices, and student awareness and participation in environmental activities, which could consequently inform future impact of University Sustainability initiatives.

Members **agreed** the recommendation to include an additional institution-specific question to the PTES 'I feel part of a community of staff and students'.

#### **M19-20/37 The Department of Archaeology and the Department of Environment and Geography**

The Committee **considered** proposals from the Department of Archaeology and the Department of Environment and Geography for two new postgraduate taught programmes:

- MA Sustainability Studies (UTC.19-20/**31a**)
- MSc Sustainability Science (UTC.19-20/**31b**)

Both proposals were for full time (over one year) or part time (over two or three years) on campus proposals to be introduced in September 2020. Possible exit awards for the MA Sustainability Studies were PG Diploma in Sustainability Studies and PG Certificate in Sustainability Studies. Possible exit awards for the MSc Sustainability Science were PG Diploma in Sustainability Science and PG Certificate in Sustainability Science. The proposals had planning approval from the Faculty Learning and Teaching Group for Arts and Humanities (April 2019).

The proposals had been considered by two external assessors; at the time of the meeting the second external assessor report was awaited. The Committee **noted** that the first external assessor report (UTC.19-20/**31i**) did not adequately provide the UK HE sector wide comparative guidance and knowledge required, due to the assessor not having relevant experience of working in the UK HE sector. It was noted that, whilst the external assessor report form clearly articulated criteria to ensure the independence of the Assessor, it did not specify that knowledge and understanding of UK Higher Education sector-wide reference points was a requirement.

#### **Action: Academic Quality team**

The proposals followed a similar module structure to the structures within the existing suite of Archaeology master's provision. The programmes comprised two core (20 credit) Sustainability Modules (these modules were available in 2019-20, as options, for existing Archaeology programmes) a large number of optional modules (thereby allowing students to tailor their programme of study) and an 80 credit Independent Study Module (ISM). The MSc programme also included a core 20 credit module 'Research Skills and Statistical methods'. It was noted that the MA proposal drew on Archaeology's existing dissertation module and that a new dissertation module had been developed for the MSc. It was reported that the presentation of the ISM on the programme structure tables (full time and part time) of the Programme Design Documents was incorrect.

The programmes had been reviewed in advance by Jez Wells and Ed Braman, the reviewers found the programmes to have significant positives, but with several issues still to be resolved / clarified further:

1. The level of differential between the Programme Learning Outcomes for the MA and the MSc which comprised minor differences:
  - PLO 2 (MSc addition of "including through appropriate statistical techniques")
  - PLO 3 (MA addition of "and professional disciplines)
  - PLO 5 (MSc addition of "using appropriate techniques)
  - PLO 6 (MSc addition of "statistical)

Whilst acknowledging the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability research there was scope to articulate with greater clarity the distinction between the two programmes.

2. The option modules for the part-time versions was unclear.
3. The summative assessment for the teamwork element of PLO7 (“...show a clear contribution to the work of the team”) was not clear and needed to be developed.
4. Differing word lengths for the dissertation element. The assessment for the MA ISM comprised a presentation and a 15,000–20,000 word dissertation. The proposed MSc ISM comprised a presentation and an 8,000 word dissertation. It was reported that the substantial difference with respect to the lengths of the dissertations reflected disciplinary difference (8,000 words was on a par with the science journal papers and followed Environment and Geography’s departmental practice). On the basis of (i) disciplinary difference and (ii) that the ISM modules had distinct module descriptors and learning outcomes, the Committee **agreed** that the differential word length was appropriate

The Faculty Employability Manager: Arts and Humanities had provided some comments on the proposals. The Departments’ response to these comments (submitted on 13 November) would be considered by the UTC reviewers in due course.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- The structure of the programmes was raised as a concern in relation to student workload (delivery of 50 taught credits over a 9-week period in the Autumn and Spring terms). It was noted that the proposed structures were similar to Archaeology’s existing master’s provision.
- The proposals permitted students the choice of up to four 5 credit optional modules. The postgraduate taught framework for programme design permits the inclusion of a maximum of two 5 credit modules. Approval of an exemption to the framework was therefore required.

*Secretary’s post meeting note: Approved exemptions (to include four 5 credit modules) for Archaeology’s current postgraduate taught provision are in place.*

- Members raised concern regarding the relatively large volume of credit (up to 20 credits) that was pass/fail (and therefore high stakes). It was reported that this model already operated successfully in the Department of Archeology (and that it was a rare occurrence for a student to fail a skills module).
- Members noted that the programme leader would deliver the two core sustainability modules and raised concern regarding the reliance on an individual member of staff. The Committee was assured that there were other members of staff that could lead and teach the programme if necessary (section 4 of the Programme Design Documents).

The Committee **agreed to defer** the programme proposal to the December UTC meeting with the following **actions** to be taken prior to the next meeting:

- address issues, as appropriate, raised by the second external assessor;

*Secretary’s post meeting note: The report was received on 18 November.*

- seek a third external assessor (who has experience of the UK HE sector) and respond, as appropriate, to issues raised in the report;
- correct the presentation of the ISM on the programme structure tables of the Programme Design Documents;
- address the outstanding issues (1-3 above) raised by the UTC reviewers

**Action: Programme team**

## CATEGORY II BUSINESS

### **M19-20/38 Modifications and Withdrawals**

The Committee **received** a report on modifications to programmes of study approved by Chair's action between 7 October and 30 October 2019 (UTC.19-20/32).

### **M19-20/39 Internal Audit**

The Committee **received** the report arising from the Internal Audit (conducted by PwC) of processes related to the National Student Survey (UTC.19-20/33).

### **M19-20/40 Annual Assurance report**

The Committee **received** the PVC's executive report to Council, which also serves as the annual assurance report on the quality of the student academic experience (UTC.19-20/34).

### **M19-20/41 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey**

The Committee **received** the report on the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2019 (UTC.19-20/35).

### **M19-20/42 University's policy on the permitted use of calculators in examinations**

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had approved revisions to the University's policy on the permitted use of calculators in examinations (section 5.9 'Materials and resources permitted in examinations' of the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback) (UTC.19-20/36).

### **M19-20/43 Student Engagement Project**

The Committee **received** an update on the Student Engagement Project, including the proposed terms of reference and membership for the Project Steering Group (UTC.19-20/37).

### **M19-20/44 Taught Postgraduate Framework**

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had approved revisions, to accommodate Level 8 modules, to the Taught Postgraduate Framework (UTC.19-20/38).

### **M19-20/45 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies**

The Committee **received** the revised confirmatory approval letter from the NMC for the BSc Nursing and MNursing in Nursing (UTC.19-20/39).

The Committee **received** the confirmatory approval letter from the NMC for the FdSc in Health and Social Care: Nursing Associate (UTC.19-20/40).

### **M19-20/46 Exchange agreements**

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had approved an extension of the exchange agreement between the Department of Sociology and the University of Maastricht, the Netherlands, to include the Department of Politics and University College Maastricht, and the School of Natural Sciences and Maastricht Science Programme.

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had approved an exchange agreement between the Department of Economics and the Lund University School of Economics and Management, Sweden.

**M19-20/47 Periodic Reviews and Other UTC Visits**

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had approved Professor Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (University of Cambridge) and Professor Miri Rubin (Queen Mary University of London) to act as external assessors for the periodic review of the Centre for Medieval Studies (scheduled for 20th April 2020).

**M19-20/48 Sub-committees**

*Standing Committee on Assessment*

The Committee **received** a report on the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on 1 November 2019 (UTC.19-20/41).

*Access and Participation Steering Group*

The Committee **received** the minutes of the meeting of the Access and Participation Steering Group held on 17 October 2019 (UTC.19-20/42).

**M19-20/49 Faculty Learning and Teaching Groups**

The Committee **received** reports of the meetings of the Faculty Learning and Teaching Groups:

- Arts and Humanities meeting held on 15 October 2019 (UTC.19-20/43a)
- Social Sciences meeting held on 15 October 2019 (UTC.19-20/43b)
- Sciences meetings held on 14 October 2019 (UTC.19-20/43c)

**M19-20/50 Graduate Teaching Assistants**

The Committee **noted** that the Chair had approved the use of Graduate Teaching Assistants to support M-level teaching and assessment in Sociology, to support the modules 'Understanding Social Media' and 'Social Media, Data, and Society' within the Department's MAs in Social Media and Social Research, Social Media and Management and Social Media and Interactive Technologies.

**M19-20/51 Dates of 2019/20 meetings**

The Committee **noted** that the dates of future meetings in 2019/20 (all in HG21, 9.30-13.30) were as follows:

- Thursday 12 December 2019
- Thursday 6 February 2020
- Thursday 12 March 2020
- Thursday 14 May 2020
- Thursday 18 June 2020
- *Extraordinary meeting* – Thursday 16 July 2020