

University Education Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 November 2025 at 09:30 in G/N/020, James College and via video conference.

Meeting Attendance

Members present:

Tracy Lightfoot, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students (Chair)
 Steve King, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students; Chair of SCA (Deputy Chair)
 Duncan Jackson, Head of Academic Quality and Development (Secretary)
 David Barrett, Associate Dean for Education and Students (Sciences)
 Jill Webb, Associate Dean for Education and Students (Social Sciences)
 Louise Cook, Interim Associate Dean for Education and Students (Arts and Humanities)
 Louise Thurston, Associate Director for Careers and Employability
 Jan Ball-Smith, Head of Student Success
 Jen Wotherspoon, Deputy Director: Student Services
 Petros Kefalas, Vice-President Learning and Teaching, University of York Europe Campus, CITY U.L.E.
 Tom Banham, Academic Registrar; Director of Student Education and Experience
 Claire Ball-Smith (representing Social Sciences)
 Daniel Keith (representing Social Sciences)
 Michelle Alexander (representing Arts and Humanities)
 Richard McClary (representing Arts and Humanities)
 Paul Bishop (representing Sciences)
 Lucy Ambrose (representing Hull York Medical School)
 Iain Brennan (representing the International Pathway College)
 Zoe Devlin, Head of Online Partnerships
 Aya Haidar, York SU Academic Officer
 Gabby Morgan, York SU Student Voice and Insight Manager

In attendance:

Sally O'Connor, Academic Quality and Development (Assistant Secretary)
 Jillian Barlow, Department of Biology [UEC.25-26/19]
 Sangeeta Chawla, Chair, Biology Department Education Committee [UEC.25-26/19]
 Jennie Batchelor, Head of Department, English and Related Literature [UEC.25-26/20]
 Becky Lloyd-Jones, Academic Quality and Development [UEC.25-26/20]
 Caroline Ollier, Academic Quality and Development [UEC.25-26/21]
 Tom Coward, Faculty Employability Manager (Social Sciences) [UEC.25-26/22]
 Deb Ward, Head of Internal Communications & Engagement [UEC.25-26/23]

Apologies: Michael Bate (representing Sciences); Kirsty Lingstadt, Director of Library, Learning, Archives and Wellbeing

Standing Items

Welcome

25-26/44 The Chair welcomed the Committee and **noted**:

1. Lucy Ambrose was present, attending her first UEC meeting after being welcomed in September. It was also the first meeting for Gabby Morgan, York SU Student Voice and Insight Manager (replacing Kaitlyn Beattie-Zarb, who was thanked for her contributions).

Declarations of interest in items on the agenda [oral report]

- 25-26/45 Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting; none were declared.

Unreserved minutes of the last meeting held on 25 September 2025 [UEC.25-26/17]

- 25-26/46 The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2025 as an accurate record.

Action tracking and matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

- 25-26/47 The Chair reminded members to update the action log upon completion of items.
- 25-26/48 In his capacity as Chair of SCA, Steve King **reported** that SCA priorities for 2025/26 will be:
1. Condonement - including a sector review and impact analysis to consider if condonement differs from, and is required alongside, compensation.
 2. Progression at risk - clarifying the circumstances in which students can progress at risk.
 3. "Fail/Repeat" - including a count of eligible students, consideration of impact on loans, consideration of the possibility of repeating stages 1 and 2, and providing revised guidance to schools/departments.
 4. Grade deflation and outcomes - including investigating outcome reports suggesting we are at the bottom of the RG for 'good' degrees.
 5. OfS compliance, including assessing English language proficiency, and assessment retention.
 6. Award rules and "No Gaps" - including a sector review of how rules might be revised, and consideration of whether our award rules are exacerbating gaps for vulnerable groups.
 7. Assessment scheduling - addressing bunching, confirming assessment times earlier, and supporting information sharing across schools/departments.
- 25-26/49 The following projects were noted as having implications for SCA's work:
- Assessment and Feedback - Further development of policy, procedures and staff/student guidance.
 - Academic Integrity Tutorial - Completion of work commenced in 2024/25 to ensure the tutorial is fit-for-purpose.
 - Mumbai campus - Considering any policy adaptations needed for Indian government inspection, and to facilitate Mumbai programme delivery.
- 25-26/50 The current SCA Chair will be stepping down from the role in 2026, and the process for appointing a new Chair is underway.
- Report of Chair's and Deputy Chair's Action taken since the last meeting [UEC.25-26/18]**
- 25-26/51 The Chair (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students) has taken the following action on behalf of UEC:

1. **Approved** minor changes to the Programme and Module Evaluation Policy.
2. **Approved** updated Institutional, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Design Policies.
3. **Approved** the updated Policy on Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning,

25-26/52 The Deputy Chair (Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students) has taken the following action on behalf of UEC:

1. **Approved** the following CITY U.L.E. programmes for 2025/26, after conditions were met:
 - a. BA Communication and Digital Media;
 - b. BSc Computer Science;
 - c. BSc Psychology;
 - d. BA English Language, Linguistics and Literature;
 - e. BA Business Studies.
2. **Approved** the delivery of BA Communication and Digital Media at New Bulgarian University, Sofia.
3. **Approved** the delivery of MSc Artificial Intelligence and Data Science at the Athens Campus.
4. **Approved** the withdrawal of the MSc Shipping, Port Management and Logistics (full- and part-time), noting this programme was previously approved for delivery in Thessaloniki but has never run.
5. **Approved** a modification of York Online capstone module deadlines due to the additional Christmas closure day. This modification is for one year only and impacts upon the following modules:
 - a. SBS MSc: Independent Research Project MAN00093M
 - b. SBS MBA/MPA: MBA Consultancy Portfolio MAN00129M / Independent Study Project SPY00155M
 - c. CS MSc: Independent Research Project COM00151M

Chair's report [oral report]

25-26/53 The Chair **reported**:

1. There has been a sector-wide delay in the Office for Students releasing the provider-level analysis of degree classifications needed to update the Degree Outcomes Statement, which requires Senate endorsement and Council approval before its publication. UEC members may be asked to review the statement by circulation.
2. The first hour of the December UEC meeting will focus on standard business including programme approvals. The remainder of the meeting will have a strategic focus, including innovation in education. Suggestions for additional topics were invited.

Action: All members

3. Advance HE has launched the CATE (Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence) and NTFS (National Teaching Fellowship Scheme) awards. Enquiries and declarations of interest should be submitted to Cecilia Lowe (CATE) and Duncan Jackson (NTFS) by Monday 8 December. Faculty Deans have been asked to encourage applications.

4. The approval of new programme proposals has returned to the remit of UEC. New elements of the process include inviting programme leads to attend the meeting to facilitate discussion, monitoring the net module count when adding or withdrawing programmes, and seeking cross-faculty collaboration opportunities.
5. Ongoing strategic projects include the launch of a new campus in Mumbai, plus a programme of work related to teaching effectiveness programme. This has four themes: Timetabling (focusing on constraints, block teaching, and optional modules); Assessment and Feedback; Teaching large classes; and Portfolio review (focusing on minimum module student numbers and module sharing).

Deputy Chair's report [oral report]

25-26/54 The Deputy Chair **reported:**

1. The institution-wide module evaluation system (Evasys) launches in Week 9, and orientation sessions have been taking place for SSMs and module leads. Further work is required to finalise how the data is used, particularly concerning performance evaluation, promotion or awards. Heads of Schools/Departments may require guidance on handling modules with very low scores. The question set has been reviewed by Associate Deans and York SU. It will be shared with UEC members who are asked to comment by 4pm on Friday 7 November, before being signed off by Chair's Action by the Evasys deadline of Monday 10 November.

Action: Secretary

2. Work continues on the City University Legal Entity (ULE). Four undergraduate programmes have been approved by the Hellenic Authority on Higher Education, with two others pending.
3. The University is reverting to providing calculators for students in closed exams from January 2026. This will alleviate student cost, administrative workload, and potential confusion over which models are permitted. Library loans will be available for familiarisation.

Student Representative's report [oral report]

25-26/55 Aya Haidar, York SU Academic Officer, **reported:**

1. Issues raised through the York SU Academic Leadership Team included ongoing concerns from Maths students regarding the move to Computer Science, such as incoming first years only being informed after booking Campus West accommodation. The Committee advised reminding students that teaching can occur anywhere on campus.

Action: York SU

2. Students have reported receiving inadequate coding support, especially for niche languages, other than large workshops that have high tutor to student ratios.
3. 74% of academic representation roles have been filled and 70% of reps have been trained. Challenges have included staff changes, a lack of clarity concerning representative recruitment responsibilities, and communication confusion causing capacity issues at training sessions. The Committee suggested a report listing these issues be sent to Associate Deans and Directors of Faculty Operations for follow-up.

Action: York SU

4. Senate has given approval for a university-wide Staff-Student Forum, co-chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students and the York Student Union Affairs Officer, designed to gather input from diverse student groups and communities.

AI update

25-26/56 In his capacity as Chair of the UEC AI Working Group, Steve King, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students, **reported:**

1. A successful mini-conference, *Education in a World with Generative AI*, was held on 15 October, attended by around 200 people. Recordings are available which will be shared with UEC members and published on the university webpages in due course.

Action: Assistant Secretary

2. University AI webpages have been launched, designed for both staff and students. The aim is to improve the search function to direct users to these pages. The Digital Education Team is producing baseline training on AI for staff and students.
3. AI Assessment Integration Framework Pilots are underway, involving three departments in each faculty trialling five levels of AI integration into assessment to clarify acceptable usage for students. Evaluation of the pilots will be undertaken in early 2026.

Update from the NSS Steering Group

25-26/57 David Barrett, as Chair of the NSS Steering Group, **reported:**

1. A key area of action is shaping the communication plan to maintain last year's successful response rate. The group is also preparing a resource pack for schools/departments, including template slides and Ipsos materials.
2. Feedback is sought from Committee members regarding student-focused enhancements that have been implemented as a result of student feedback, so these can be highlighted.

Action: Committee members

3. Enhancement efforts will be focused on four areas: marking criteria, balance of directed/independent study, feedback quality, and acting upon student feedback.
4. Departments will be required to embed an opportunity for NSS completion within a teaching session, and an institutional calendar will track these sessions to allow for institutional support. This focused approach aims for high completion rates within a 2-3 week window.
5. It was noted that embedding other surveys in taught sessions has resulted in high completion rates. Students also reported positive views on having structured time in class to complete surveys. The Committee observed that embedding module evaluation into taught sessions may aid NSS completion later.

Programme Approvals/Modifications

BSc/MSci Immunology and Infectious Disease, Department of Biology [UEC.25-26/19]

25-26/58 The Committee **considered** the BSc/MSci Immunology and Infectious Disease programme, which had been reviewed in advance by Paul Bishop, Michelle Alexander, Sally O'Connor and an external assessor. The proposal was presented by Jillian Barlow and Sangeeta Chawla, who **reported**:

1. The new programme is a degree specialism added to the Biomedical Sciences degree, reflecting the Department's strengths and staffing acquisitions since 2014, particularly relating to the York Biomedical Research Institute and the Centre for Blood Research, and the growth of the existing Biomedical Sciences programme from 30 to 135 students.
2. The programme is distinct from the Biomedical Sciences degrees due to core Stage 2 modules in infection/immunology; a new Stage 3 option, *Global Challengers in Infectious Disease*; and a specialist research project. However, sharing the majority of taught modules enables efficient teaching and allows growth without additional resource requirements.

25-26/59 The Committee **approved** the programme subject to the following condition, to be met before the programme is marketed:

1. Enhance the Statement of Purpose (SoP) to
 - a. Clearly articulate the programme's distinctiveness;
 - b. Clarify that the capstone project is mandatory;
 - c. Highlight that the capstone project is specific to immunology and infectious disease.

25-26/60 The Committee agreed that the Department should submit the revised SoP to the original reviewers Paul Bishop and Michelle Alexander, who will review it and confirm a final decision to the Chair.

25-26/61 The Committee also **recommended**:

1. Marketing should focus on the global challenges element to attract international students and sponsors and highlight the collaboration with Hull York Medical School to appeal to high-tariff applicants.

MA Creative Writing, Department of English and Related Literature and School of Arts and Creative Technologies [UEC.25-26/20]

25-26/62 The Committee **considered** the MA in Creative Writing programme, which had been reviewed in advance by Richard McClary, Daniel Keith, Becky Lloyd-Jones and an external assessor. The proposal was presented by Jennie Batchelor, who **reported**:

1. The programme addresses a key growth area identified for PGT in English. Collaboration with the School of ACT offers a distinctive, pedagogically innovative, and pragmatic approach that includes theatre making and screenwriting.
2. The proposal creates an appealing pathway from the undergraduate curriculum, and does not require intensive resource commitments.

3. The institutional English language entry requirement (IELTS minimum 6 in writing) may not be appropriate for a writing-intensive course; an exemption may be explored in the future if the data supports a need for this.

25-26/63 The Committee **observed** that a “red flag” had been raised by timetabling and suggested a message be sent from UEC to the Estates Utilisation Group (EUG) acknowledging when programmes with timetabling concerns are approved.

Action: Secretary

25-26/64 The Committee **approved** the programme with the following recommendations:

1. The early exit outcomes (PG Cert and PG Dip) should have clearer descriptions.
2. Clarification is sought as to whether an existing exemption allowing the module Collaborative Theatre-Making to be taught to I- and M-level students can also be applied when the module is taught on this new programme.
3. A route into the programme from the International Pathway College should be explored.

Action: Director, IPC; Head of Department, English and Related Literature

Section A

Arrangements for Participation in NSS 2026 [UEC.25-26/21]

25-26/65 Caroline Ollier, Academic Quality and Development, asked the Committee to **approve** the following arrangements for NSS:

1. The launch of the NSS in the week commencing 2nd February 2026.
2. Not including optional question banks.
3. Not including provider-specific questions.
4. The NSS Steering Group monitors response rates and coordinates promotional activity within and across Faculties.
5. Utilising a prize draw incentive through Ipsos (budgeted at £1000 for 22 prizes).
6. The ‘Provider Supportive Text’ on the NSS invite from Ipsos be amended.

25-26/66 The Committee **approved** arrangements 1-4 and 6 and supported efforts to secure resourcing to enable arrangement 5.

Graduate Outcomes Survey results 2025 [UEC.25-26/23]

25-26/67 Tom Coward, Social Sciences Faculty Employability Manager, and Louise Thurston, Associate Director of Careers and Employability, introduced the paper and reported:

1. Results for the 2022/23 cohort were disappointing and represented a concerning decline for York. Fewer graduates are progressing to further study, and more are progressing to medium- and lower-skilled roles. York’s decline is larger than the relative decline observed across the sector and Russell Group (RG). The University’s sector ranking dropped from 22nd to 44th, and the RG ranking fell from 15th to 23rd out of 24. York is now below its TEF

progression benchmark by 1.4 percentage points. Graduate satisfaction has deteriorated across key reflective questions and is now below the RG average.

2. This cohort was impacted by COVID disruption and, specifically for York, the Marking and Assessment Boycott. Further research would be required to determine which factors are unique to York and within institutional control.
3. Actions proposed include developing activities to help students secure positive destinations, promoting employability factors already present in curricula, and optimising survey response rates. A working group within Careers and Placements is considering employers' use of AI and how to support students in navigating this, particularly with regards to recruitment processes.

25-26/68 The Committee **observed**:

1. Scaling back the York Strengths programme (embedded in several schools/departments) risks impacting graduate outcomes.
2. Efforts should be made to understand why drops occurred in traditionally well-performing schools/departments.
3. It would be useful to analyse LEO (Longitudinal Educational Outcomes) data in light of proposed future TEF metrics.
4. It may be useful to consider MOOCs, short courses, and/or external resources to develop content supporting students in the world of work, particularly regarding AI.

25-26/69 The Committee **endorsed** the areas of action identified.

Biannual report to UEC on student communications [UEC.25-26/24]

25-26/70 Deb Ward, Head of Internal Communications and Engagement, introduced the report, requested feedback on the format and content, and **reported**:

1. Students prioritise school/departmental communications over those coming from central sources, therefore work with school/department communications teams is ongoing.
2. The revised *Together York* declaration has been published, and work on embedding it is ongoing. The team has also worked closely with the Conduct and Respect team on the *Respect at York* campaign, in support of the Office for Students Condition E6: Harassment and sexual misconduct.
3. Future priorities include amplifying the *University of Opportunity* campaign, launching the campus-wide *Together York* campaign (promoting Report and Support), supporting NSS/QS work, reviewing communications for a diverse student body, stakeholder consultation on wellbeing webpages, and contingency planning for potential industrial action from multiple unions.

25-26/71 The Committee **observed**:

1. It would be useful for the Internal Communications and Engagement team and the Head of Student Success to discuss how to synthesise content for the Staff Digest.

Action: Head of Student Success

2. Plans for the York Education Academy are underway, which will centralise educational development resources. The Communications team can provide advice regarding user experience.

Action: Head of Academic Quality and Development

3. York SU confirmed their Communications team works closely with Internal Communications and Engagement, though greater integration is possible. The Chair suggested Communications representatives join the monthly meetings of Academic and Student Support Services leaders with SU.

Action: Pro-Vice-Chancellor

25-26/72 The Committee **endorsed** the format and the priorities for the next six months.

Section B

No items to report

Any other business

25-26/73 The Committee **noted** a recent Industrial Action Contingency Planning meeting took place recently, addressing potential strikes from Unison and Unite, in addition to UCU, which would require extensive student communications.

Section C

[Secretary's Note: With regard to its Section C agenda, UEC was provided with the following agenda Items which were provided for: [a] information only, where UEC discussion is not required or anticipated, unless a request is made to escalate an item is from Section C to Section A or B for consideration OR as [b] supplementary information and data for items on the Section A or B agenda.]

25-26/74 Standing Committee on Assessment: Summary of the meeting held on 24 October 2025 [UEC.25-26/24]

25-26/75 Faculty Learning and Teaching Group minutes:

1. Sciences (16 July 2025) [UEC.25-26/25]
2. Social Sciences (22 September 2025) [UEC.25-26/26]

25-26/76 Apprenticeship Monitoring Board minutes (26 June 2025) [UEC.25-26/27]

25-26/77 Careers and Placements Review and Restructure [UEC.25-26/28]

25-26/78 Report on No Gaps Project: 2024-25 Progress and 2025-26 Rollout [UEC.25-26/29]

Sally O'Connor, Academic Quality

November 2025