

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 28th January 2022 at 2.00pm via Zoom online video conferencing due to Covid-19 lockdown.

Attendance and apologies for absence:

Present:	Dr Patrick Gallimore	York Law School (Chair)
	Prof. Kate Arnold	Dean of York Graduate Research School
	Dr Daniel Baker	Psychology
	Dr Jim Buller	Politics
	Dr Kevin Caraher	SPSW
	Eddie Cowling	International Pathway College
	Matt Johnstone	YUSU
	Ekansh Kapoor	GSA
	Dr Alet Roux	Mathematics
	Dr Katherine Selby	Natural Sciences/Environment and Geography

In attendance:

Prof Michael Bentley	Physics (SCA21-22/22 & 23)
Dr Martin Cockett	Chair of Special Cases Committee
Zara Burford	Representing Online Programmes
Dr Stephen Gow (Secretary)	Academic Integrity Coordinator
Cecilia Lowe	Head of Learning Enhancement
Claire Pinder (Mins)	Academic Support Coordinator
Dr Jen Wotherspoon	Deputy Director SAAA

Apologies:

Dr Nicoletta Asciuto	English (on Maternity Leave)
Laila Fish	Disability Services
Robert Simpson	Special Cases Manager

SCA 21-22/30 Welcome

Apologies were received from Laila Fish, and Robert Simpson. It was further noted that Nicoletta Asciuto was on maternity leave, and Mike Bentley would be present to report items 6 (SCA21-22/22) and 7 (SCA21-22/23).

SCA21-22/31 Minutes of previous meeting

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2021.

SCA21-22/32 Matters Arising from the previous minutes

- **21-22/18 Parameters for Sign off for PGR Examinations.**

It was **reported** that this item was closed/approved. The Committee would be informed of this item's ongoing progress if required.

- **21-22/19 ECA Policy Proposal**

It was **reported** that 11.7% of students submitted self-certification requests in the January 2022 assessment submission period. Further data regarding self-certification requests would soon be available from Departments for **review**. **[OPEN]**

- **21-22/26 UG Degree Outcomes Report**

Data regarding the degree outcomes statement, and 19/20 safety net, was being **considered** with relation to usage. **[OPEN]**

- **21-22/27 IPC Academic Misconduct**

Data from the IPC Faculty was available for **review**. **[OPEN]**

- **21-22/26 Degree Outcome Statement**

It was **reported** this item was now due to go to Senate. **[CLOSED]**

ACTION: SG get departmental data on self-certification

SCA21-22/33 Chair's Oral Report

The Chair **reported** that:

- The University had been notified of strike dates for two courses of industrial action. This committee would **consider** the impact of industrial action upon assessment.
- The Digital Assessment Project had concluded. The Chair would remain involved in VLE aspects of the project.
- The impact of semesterisation upon assessment and compensation should be **considered**, particularly where faculties wish to compensate small parts of modules.

ACTION: Table an item regarding rules regarding non-compensatable modules for discussion at the 4 March SCA Committee meeting - SG.

SCA21-22/34 Report from Students

The GSA representative **reported** that:

- Although Computer Science students had previously held complaints about the EC Policy, they were uniformly positive about the new self-cert process.
- More than 800 students had contracted Covid. The GSA and the University were working collaboratively to support those students.
- Computer Science Welcome Week had been rearranged due to Covid.

- There had been group and individual complaints from Computer Science students about failures, and Academic Misconduct cases. These complaints would be addressed via the Department Student Reps.

The YUSU representative **reported** that:

- The YUSU election process was ramping up, voting would commence in week 7.
- YUSU were planning a response to industrial action.
- According to data from Advice and Support Centre (ASC), there were 159 cases of Appeals: Academic Misconduct; Wellbeing; and EC Rejections, between 1 September and 31 December 2021 - which was similar to previous years
- Students had provided good feedback about Department support from assigned Wellbeing Officers.
- Students had provided highly favourable feedback about the new self-cert policy.

ACTION: GSA to report back on Computer Science issue.

SCA21-22/35 Proposed Revisions to Modular Scheme Award Rules 2021 (Mike Bentley)

The Committee **considered** this summary of the status of work and direction of travel of the group. There were workstreams under review. Proposals would come to the SCA in a few months. The following points were noted:

- *Workstream 1 - Resit Limits and ISM Assessment Rules (UG Programmes)*
Resit Limits had not been agreed. The total number of resits allowed should be simplified. A proposal was expected to come forward soon.
- *Workstream 2 - Compensation and Capping of Resit Marks*
The working group was considering the need to remove the 10% compensation rule, which was out of line with the sector. The working group suggested it would go back to 30% for UG and 40% for PGT students.
- *Workstream 3 - Updated Rules in PGT Progression*
The working group was considering allowing resit marks to be capped rather than first sit marks. A likely outcome would be that a cap would be at compensatable pass level which would allow students to recover from a bad first fail.
- *Workstream 4 - Timing and Purpose of Exam Boards*
The purpose and timing of exam boards was under review. There was a recommendation to have some form of formal scrutiny of marks at the end of each Semester, which would require scaling decisions to take place at the end of Semester 1. Concerns were raised by the Committee that the aims of semesterisation was to reduce workload and having a further scrutiny panel in Semester 1 could add to the workload. It was noted, however, that this would ease the workload in Semester 2 and would be possible as most modules would be finished and ready for scrutiny at the end of each semester.

- *Workstream 5.3 - Interdisciplinary Teaching (IDT)*

The application of pass/fail marks was being considered in relation to IDT modules and student progression by a subgroup. UTC had recommended that IDT modules could be derisked - but serious concerns were raised by SCA about this approach.

Feedback about this report was **noted** by the SCA Committee, as follows:

- 4.1 - Transparent communication strategy with teaching colleagues about all workload implications would be required.
- 5.3 - Pass/fail marks may be more popular to Arts and Humanities students than Science students.
- 5.3 - Derisking or Pass/fail marks could undermine the sense of challenge of IDT modules, however if modules are too difficult, this could disincentivise students from pursuing IDM if they are concerned about degree average.
- 5.3 - Concerns were raised about using the assessment and progression rules to address matters that might be better engaged with through design and delivery of the modules.

SCA21-22/36 Exceptional Circumstances Review (Mike Bentley)

The Committee **considered** this summary of the status of work and direction of travel of the group. Proposals would come to the SCA in a few months. The following points were **noted**:

- *Policy area B(i) Self-Certification (SC)*

The group is considering whether the new Self-Certification policy should remain in place, in-line with the HE sector. The Self-Cert policy was uniformly popular with students. Limits to the Self-Cert policy were review to ensure that the policy worked appropriately.

- *Policy area B (ii) York Online and Distance Learning Programmes*

There was recognition that online learning programmes bring challenges and a high level policy approach for York Online programmes was being drafted.

- *Policy area C Proposed Areas for Investigation regarding ECA Implementation and Processes*

The pandemic had challenged existing EC Policy. Improvement to the EC policy, and centralising some EC decision-making to be under the remit of Professional Support Services was under consideration, to ensure greater equitability across Departments, in-line with other institutions in the HE sector.

Feedback about this report was **noted** by the SCA Committee, as follows:

- *Policy area B (i)*

Disability Team/ Open Door colleagues/ Ann Haversham should be invited to working group discussions.

- *Policy area B (ii)*

Overseas students should be made familiar with York assessment policies as soon as possible after enrolment.

- *Policy Area B(iii) Other Policy Considerations*

The mechanics of granting extensions to students on the basis of caring responsibility was under consideration.

- *Policy area C*

A centralised or faculty based approach to processing exceptional circumstances claims is being considered. If such a process is to be introduced, it was noted that it is important for Department to be informed about students experiencing difficulties so that pastoral support could be provided, with PSS doing manual sense checks to assess each EC Claim for potential referral to Department. The OIA is keen for Departments to also monitor EC claims.

ACTION: Anne Haversham to become involved with the working group -MB

ACTION: YOP to update on Business Analysis looking at ECA Claims

SCA21-22/37 Proposal to switch from 24 hour recommended timeframe examinations to specific timeframe for online examinations (Jen Wotherspoon)

The Committee **considered** this proposal of switching 24 hour recommended timeframe examinations to specific timeframe for online examinations with regard to:

- Specific Timeframe* examinations becoming default for online examinations in academic year 2022/23.
- The standard, nominal and extra time allowances for the *specific timeframe* examinations in section 5.
- 24hr recommended Timeframe* examinations remain in the Guide to assessment and;
- If *Restricted Timeframe* examinations remain in the Guide to Assessment, should they require approval from SCA?

The following points were **noted**:

- 24 hour assessment windows to complete exams adversely affected student wellbeing and students with disabilities such as ASD/Anxiety, who reported working for disproportionately long periods of time.
- 24 hour assessment windows to complete exams were difficult to schedule, and some overlap between exams was impossible to avoid in some cases. Shorter

(specific timeframe) assessment windows were therefore proposed - with standard, nominal and extra timeframe allowances- as indicated in table 5 of the paper.

- The Disability Team had been consulted, and had confirmed their support of the specific timeframe with extra time allowances.
- Most students would continue to be on campus/ in GMT Timezone, and the requirement for online provision of exams would remain.

Feedback about this report was **noted** by the SCA Committee, as follows:

- Blackboard VLE allows a flexible timeframe. A Cloud based system may better support specific timeframes for exams.
- Academic Committee Members were uniformly in favour of specific timeframes becoming default for online examinations in academic year 2022/23 due to consideration of both academic integrity, and providing sustainable outcomes for students with ASD/ Anxiety disabilities/ caring responsibilities.
- Student Representatives from GSA and YUSU were in favour of retaining the 24 hour recommended timeframe as default. A small sample of Maths 4th year students have expressed dissatisfaction at switching back to shorter timeframes and were concerned about their outcomes. It was acknowledged that a minority of students do have significant trouble with the 24hr timeframe, as noted in the report.

The Committee voted to not make a decision on this matter and to reconsider it at the next meeting.

ACTION: GSA and YUSU to canvas a wider cross-section of student opinion.

ACTION: The proposal will be reviewed and put to the Committee again in March - SG.

SCA21-22/38 YUSU proposal exceptional circumstances for YUSU reps (Matt Johnstone)

The Committee **considered** the proposal of whether YUSU reps running for election may claim exceptional circumstances due to the impact of campaigning on their assessments.

The proposal was:

- (II): Running a pilot of the policy proposal below in the election cycle this term
- (II): *Amending the published [EC Annex](#) to the Guide to Assessment to include;*
 - A. *Candidacy in the YUSU Spring Elections in Table EC2.1, with more details around timings in the notes section*
 - B. *Further information and clarification under Section EC4, ideally added in between EC4.1 and EC4.2 as a new subsection*
- (III) Review the effectiveness of the pilot (if approved) at a later meeting, with a view to implementing this policy permanently

The following points were **noted**:

- YUSU believed that were candidates allowed the opportunity to claim extensions for coursework assessment by up to two weeks, or defer examinations, via ECA in weeks 6 and 7 of Term 2, due to their participation in the YUSU election cycle, there would be more candidates from lower income backgrounds/with caring responsibilities/ mature students, and the move would benefit the wellbeing of all candidates, by easing the academic burden on them.
- University of Edinburgh and University of Birmingham make similar exceptions for their students.
- The election cycle will end in week 8 term 2, and there are usually around 50 candidates in the YUSU elections.
- There is concern that students who are candidates in other elections may also wish to apply for EC on that basis. Guidance needs to state that only YUSU candidates are eligible.
- YUSU to make Department management teams and SCA aware of candidates (whose candidacy is confirmed after the withdrawal deadline -Friday Week 5) who are studying in their Department.

Committee members **agreed** this proposal as a pilot, which would be reviewed by the SCA as soon as data was available.

ACTION: Secretary to liaise with YUSU to get candidate information and inform departments of the policy trial.

SCA21-22/39 Academic Misconduct Data (Stephen Gow)

This item was **tabled** for the next meeting Friday 4th March 2022 at 2pm via Zoom online video conferencing.

SCA21-22/40 Updates on priority areas and Chairs of Boards of Examiners Survey (Stephen Gow)

This item was **tabled** for the next meeting Friday 4th March 2022 at 2pm via Zoom online video conferencing.

CATEGORY II

Chair's Approvals:

This item was **tabled** for the next meeting Friday 4th March 2022 at 2pm via Zoom online video conferencing.

21-2/41: Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 4th March 2022 at 2pm via Zoom online video conferencing.