

# UNIVERSITY OF YORK

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 2 December 2022 at 2.00pm via Zoom online video conferencing.

### Attendance and apologies for absence:

#### Present:

Dr Patrick Gallimore	York Law School (Chair)
Dr Daniel Baker	Psychology
Dr Kevin Caraher	SPSW
Eddie Cowling	International Pathway College
Debayan Dey	YUSU
Dr Jasper Heinzen	History
Dr Alet Roux	Mathematics
Dr Anna Sotiriadou	CITY College
Dr Eytan Zweig	LLS
Dr Jeremy Airey	Education

#### In attendance:

Jan Ball-Smith	Apprenticeships and Inclusive Learning
Dr Zara Burford	Online Programmes
Dr Stephen Gow (Secretary)	Academic Integrity Coordinator
Claire Pinder (Minutes)	Academic Support Coordinator
Jenny Matson	Student Administration Manager (Deputy)
Dr Jen Wotherspoon	Deputy Director SAAA

#### Apologies:

Prof. Kate Arnold	Dean of York Graduate Research School
Dr Katherine Selby	Nat Sci/Env and Geography
Nic Streatfield	Student and Academic Services
Zhang Teng	GSA

### m22-23/30 Welcome & Introductions

Jenny Matson, Deputy Head of Student Administration was welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Professor Kate Arnold, Dr Katherine Selby, Nic Streatfield and Zhang Teng.

### m22-23/31 Minutes of previous meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held **Friday 28 October, 2022.**

### m22-23/32 Matters arising from the previous minutes

## ONGOING

- **28 October m22-23/17 Report from Students**  
SG to meet with The GSA representative to discuss concerns.
- **28 October m22-23/18 PGT External Examiners Report**  
Secretary and Chair to consider how to disseminate issues raised in the report to departments and Chairs of Boards of Examiners.

## CLOSED

- **28 October m22-23/16 Chair's Oral Report**  
Chair of SCA, Secretary, and JW to meet to discuss matters arising from CAP.
- **28 October m22-23/17 Report from Students**  
Chair of SCA to discuss promotion of the Writing Centre with CBoE/CBoS.
- **28 October m22-23/19 SCA Priorities for 22/23**  
Chair to consult with DHoFOs regarding SCA priorities for 22/23.
- **28 October m22-23/20 Lower Exit Awards Awards and Progression Rules - M&S (Draft)**  
Faculty ADs to be consulted on proposal.
- **28 October m22-23/21 Academic Misconduct Penalties - M&S**  
Secretary to add approval to UTC consideration of Award and Progression rules.
- **28 October m22-23/22 Interdisciplinary Modules - M&S**  
Secretary to add approval to UTC consideration of Award and Progression rules.
- **28 October m22-23/19 SCA Priorities for 22/23**  
Secretary to update the right hand column on the document.

## m22-23/33 Chair's Oral Report

- **Publication of data on relative position on progression and award lists (query from Science FLTG)**  
Recruiters frequently asked referees to comment on the cohort placing of applicants. This information was not available on student transcripts. It was noted that:
  - Cohort placement was a subjective metric, and not well defined mathematically.
  - This data could devalue the achievements of some students comparative to different cohorts or programmes at other institutions.
  - Staff could work out the placement value from available SITS data, on a need to know basis.

**ACTION: Guidance on accessing data on relative position on SITS to be shared with Departments, which could be provided to recruiters when requested.**

- **SCA to have hybrid meetings in 2023 query**

A move to hybrid meetings for the SCA for 2023 was agreed.

- **ECA simplified process**

This would be looked at in Spring Term 2023.

- **CBoE Forum update**

The Chair provided an update from the November CBoE Forum meeting. It was noted that:

- There was discussion of the impact of semesterisation on the timing of assessments. Final assessments would generally fall in the assessment period, however, some could be conducted in the teaching period.
- There was discussion about self-certification of the dissertation for UG students, and the impact on lead times for graduation. Departments were advised to consider graduation dates, and associated deadlines when processing claims.

- **Mock assessments update**

Mock assessments had been held and the following feedback was provided:

- There was no negative feedback from students
- There was concern that the assessments were too early.
- Take up was low in Mathematics. Some students were unhappy with the size of the room offered.
- The opportunity to sit a mock assessment was offered to students to mitigate the effect on assessment of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, if students chose not to take the mock assessment opportunity, there was no need to continue with the offer.

**ACTION: SCA to consider further Mock assessment period prior to Spring/ Summer Common Assessment Period.**

- **Institutional Examiner**

The appointment of an Institutional Examiner was going to be advertised. The Institutional Examiner would look at the Degree Outcome Statement and could be consulted on matters relating to Assessment. They would be invited to attend some SCA meetings.

- **M&S Progression and Award rules - results of consultancy**

The proposed Awards and Progression rules for modularisation and semesterisation have been subject to the review of an external consultant with expertise in the student records system, Tribal. The consultant has noted that capping resits at the compensatable fail may not be possible.

### **m22-23/34 Report from Students**

The YUSU representative noted that:

- A meeting was being scheduled with with Pierrick, Debayan Dey, Tracy Lightfoot and Chair of SCA to discuss self certifications. YUSU officers had been invited to share their concerns and student feedback. Nic Streatfield would also be consulted for input regarding students with support plans in place

- YUSU supported automatically approved applications for extension deadlines for students who were also candidates in the Spring Term YUSU elections . This accommodation had been in place in the 2021/22 YUSU election cycle.

**ACTION: YUSU to work with GSA to submit a joint paper requesting automatically approved applications for extension deadlines for students who were also candidates in the Spring Term YUSU elections, and GSA elections.**

### **m22-23/35 UG External Examiners Report**

The Committee was asked to **consider** the report and suggest any further action. It was noted that:

- 129 2021/22 UG External Examiner Reports had been submitted and assessed for the report.
- The AQ team had summarised the contents of the 2021/22 UG External Examiner Reports on the Table of Issues.
- All 2021/22 UG External Examiners had confirmed that all three standards had been met. It was noted that the reports contained lots of positive feedback about: inspiring practice; innovative variety of assessments; good interdisciplinarity; good inclusivity and internationalism.
- Issues which had been raised in the 2021/22 UG External Examiner Reports included:
  - ❖ There was a post-covid evolving nature of assessment, preference between online, and closed exams was split.
  - ❖ There was a preference to move away from 24 hour exams, in line with the sector.
  - ❖ The impact of the Self-Certification policy was that External Examiners frequently had a short window to do their assessment, however, there was no impact on standards.
  - ❖ External Examiners who had resigned were only able to answer that they were partially happy, since they had not completed their tenure.
  - ❖ Many External Examiners wished to visit campus in person once a year, the timing of which may, or may not coincide with the dates of the final boards.
- There was a concern about the time available for EEs to review scripts. That short time frame came about due to the need for progression decisions to be made so that students had 5 weeks' notice to resit their assessments. The suggestion of relaxation of notice to 3 weeks was made, to allow later boards to allow more time for External Examiner comments. One approach in future could be that students are conferred their degrees on an online monthly ceremony, and be invited to attend a physical ceremony at a later date.
- There is an expectation that Departments review assessment topics annually.
- SCA Secretary was thanked for compiling the UG External Examiners Report.
- The 22/23 External Examiner Report Form template could include a space for comments about inclusivity/ internationalism/ decolonisation of the curriculum, and decolonisation of the curriculum could link into the Assessment and Feedback project.
- There were often inconsistencies between Examiners' verbal and written reports.

**ACTION: Chair to check reference in the Guide to Assessment about External Examiner attendance, and date of attendance on campus.**

## **m22-23/36 M&S - Proposed Guide to Assessment Review to include new Award and Progression Rules**

The paper M&S - Proposed Guide to Assessment Review to include new Award and Progression Rules was considered and approved by the Committee.

SCA was asked to consider the proposed Drafts of award rules Appendix Folder 1 written by Professor Mike Bentley, these are in a new format.

SCA is also asked to consider the proposed restructuring and reformatting of the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback. The proposed draft rules apply only to award and progression rules. If used in this form, this involves replacing the current award and progressions rules while reviewing the Guide to Assessment and ensuring there is a generic set of UoY assessment rules that applies to all programmes (e.g. submission rules, handling of assessments, feedback, penalties, mark scales, scaling etc etc). The proposed new structure and format is included in the paper, it is proposed that:

1. Certain appendices are moved into the relevant section of the guide.
2. The Guide will no longer be a single PDF.
3. The new format of the guide will be on a website with several different sections, as listed below.
4. The working group will discuss the format with (examples include the tabbed like the ECA webpage, text links to different sections like the Policy of Research Degrees and headed boxes for each section like the Learning and Teaching webpages.)

It was noted that:

- The Proposed Guide to Assessment was in draft form in the SCA folder and would be scrutinised, so that rules could be circulated in a simpler format.
- Consistency of versions should be maintained, and the document could be made more navigable over time.

In terms of the Award Rules, the Committee approved these to be included in the Guide to Assessment, however a more fundamental problem was noted which had arisen during a consultation with an expert in the student systems. It was noted that it might not be possible to implement the proposal in the award and progression rules relating to allow students resit marks capped at the compensation grade due to adjustments to the York version of SITS. It was agreed that the Progression and Awards Team should consult directly with Tribal Group (who have been responsible for the design and delivery of the York SITS system) to find out exactly what is possible in the system in response to the consultation.

SCA approved the proposal for 'big bang' implementation of the classification rules, and to note the caveat with regards to the risks associated with capping resit marks at the compensatable pass level.

**ACTION: Jen Wotherspoon to establish in March 2023 which common assessment period to use, and also establish what other Universities were doing, before submitting an**

## **application to change current rules on Progression and Award to SCA.**

### **m22-23/37 Exam Boards - Current guidance and implication of semesterisation**

The proposal for a semester 1 scrutiny panel to formally review results prior to release of marks was approved. It was noted that:

- It would be sensible to have formal scrutiny of marks at the end of the January Common Assessment Period.
- SCA Chair and UTC Chair are considering replacing the 25-day feedback policy with a 'timely' feedback policy
- Modular boards which ratify marks in each Semester would be favourable, so that students have good time to prepare for resits - although that is not possible at the current time. However, it could be possible to settle policy so that students have notice of Semester 1 subjects they may need to resit ahead of the Semester 2 board. This will allow them to have sufficient notice of the need to resit an assessment in the summer.
- The exam board at the end of the year would remain the main progression point for most Programmes. Programmes which have an alternative structure to the standard semesterised structure would be able to ratify marks sooner.
- UG Examiners would spread their workload between boards in January and June. This structure had been proven to work in the Maths, Education, and Psychology Departments.

**ACTION: CBoE's to be consulted on provisionally approved proposal.**

### **m22-23/38 OFS - Retention of papers and spelling, grammar and punctuation**

The Committee noted OFS - Retention of papers and spelling, grammar and punctuation. It was further noted that:

#### **Spelling, punctuation, and grammar**

- There was new guidance from the OfS regarding spelling, punctuation and grammar which had not been well received by the University sector where it was largely perceived as breaching equity protocols, since it called for technical proficiency in written English.
- The UofY was not out of line with the new OfS requirement. However, further work to ensure that this was reflected in departmental marking criteria statements would be undertaken.
- There was an expectation that SPaG problems should not affect grades except where the quality and nature of writing was relevant to the assessment task and reflected in module learning outcomes.
- Jan Ball-Smith had met with VLE project managers and would meet with Disability Services, and reflect on new guidance to take SSP SPaG stickering into account, especially with regard to support requirements around Dyslexia which may affect assignment structuring.

#### **Retention schedule of assessments**

- The OFS requires institutions to retain appropriate records of students' assessed work for such regulatory purposes for a period of five years after the end date of a course. This is significantly longer than many institutions' current practice, and the sector is discussing whether this can be reviewed as it has significant resource implications. The SCA secretary is liaising with University and Records Manager and Head of PDLT responsible for VLE on

the resource implications and practicalities of this change. Current VLE practice is to retain records for 5 years from the end of the module. The University Records manager is currently updating the institutional data retention schedule and has prepared a draft proposal to extend data retention to 9 years to cover 5 years from the end of the programme (as most programmes are 3-4 years long). Once it is clear what the institutional approach is we will update the Guide to Assessment - 4.11.1 Assessment contributing to an award linking it to the retention schedule and relevant VLE guidance. We will be careful to coordinate communications with departments/schools to ensure they have time to adjust to the change.

#### **m22-23/39 Removal of 15.7.1 Precautionary measures in case of difficulties accessing the VLE**

The Committee considered and approved removal of 15.7.1 Precautionary measures in case of difficulties accessing the VLE. It was noted that:

- The text would be removed from the Guide to Assessment. This provision would be removed so that it would not continue to burden Departments.

**Action: Secretary to remove section from Guide to Assessment and inform departments.**

#### **CATEGORY II**

Note: approval of Category II business will be assumed unless a member indicates that they wish to bring forward an item to Category I business.

#### **m22-23/40 Date of the next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 27th January, 2023 at 2pm via Zoom online video conferencing, and in person (room TBC).

#### **RESERVED BUSINESS**

##### **m22-23/41 Individual Examination Arrangements**

It was **noted** that individual examination arrangements for students have been approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.

##### **m22-23/42 Appointment of External Examiners**

It was **noted** the appointment (or extension to appointment) of external examiners (UG and PGT), approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.

##### **m22-23/43 Results Lists**

Notification was **received** of recommendations for the award of degrees approved on behalf of the Committee since its last meeting.