University Teaching Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 March 2024, 09.30-12.30, in HG/21, Heslington Hall and via video conference.

Meeting Attendance
Members present:

Steve King, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Students) (Deputy Chair)
Duncan Jackson, Head of Academic Quality and Development (Secretary)
Jan Ball-Smith, Interim Head of Academic Affairs
Claire Hughes, Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students (Sciences)
Jill Webb, Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students (Social Sciences)
Tom Cantrell, Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students (Arts and Humanities)
Patrick Gallimore, Chair of Standing Committee on Assessment
Meely Doherty, YUSU Academic Officer
Cytherea Shen, GSA Vice-President, Academic
Tom Banham, Director of Student Administration and Academic Affairs
Jen Wotherspoon, Deputy Director, Student Services
Zoe Devlin, Head of Online Partnerships
Kirsty Lingstadt, Director of Library, Archives and Learning Services
Petros Kefalas, Vice-President Learning and Teaching, CITY College
Louise Thurston, Associate Director for Careers and Employability
Michael Bate (representing Sciences)
Paul Bishop (representing Sciences)
Simon O'Keefe (representing Sciences)
Claire Ball-Smith (representing Social Sciences)
Matthew Perry (co-opted member, Director of the International Pathway College)

In attendance:
Claire Pinder, S&AS Admin Team (interim Assistant Secretary)
Caroline Ollier, Academic Quality (Assistant Secretary)
Jess Penn, Apprenticeships and Inclusive Learning Team, M23-24/117
Polly Sykes, SBS, M23-24/119
Daisy Bowen, Special Cases, M23-24/121
Amy Muckersie, AQ, M23-24/125
Ehab Kamel, York School of Architecture, M23-24/125
Lorraine Farrelly, Department of Architecture and the Built Environment, M23-24/125
Sally Quinn, Department of Psychology, M23-24/127

Apologies: Tracy Lightfoot, Janine Bradbury, Lisa O'Malley, Richard McClary, Scott Slorach

Section 1: Standing Items

Welcome

23-24/108   The Chair welcomed members to the Committee and noted apologies as recorded above.

The Committee **noted** that:

1. Janine Bradbury, from Arts and Humanities, who had sent apologies, would be Michelle Alexander's replacement for the duration of her maternity leave.

2. Caroline Ollier, new Quality Support Officer in Academic Quality would be the new Assistant Secretary, and was observing the meeting. Caroline Ollier would replace Claire Pinder Student and Academic Services (S&AS) Admin Team, interim Assistant Secretary.

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

23-24/109   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 15 February 2024 [UTC.23-24/65, Open]

23-24/110   The Committee **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023 as an accurate record, subject to the following amendments:

1. 23-/24/95.3 Inclusion of wording "Computer Science online were not included in SIA's report on degree outcomes."

2. 23-24/96.1 Replace the word 'faculty' with 'academic'

3. 23-24/96.2 Replace 'YUSU' with 'GSA'

4. 23-24/99.1 Replace Ofsted 'report' with 'review'.

Action: Claire Pinder (Assistant Secretary)

Action tracking and matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda [UTC.23-24/66, Open]

23-24/111   The Committee **noted** that:

1. A meeting had been planned to follow up a number of outstanding actions. The meeting would be attended by Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Assistant Secretary and interim Assistant Secretary.

2. The action log would move to a more accessible spreadsheet format, editable by members, for the recording and monitoring of actions from the next academic year.

3. A guide for staff from students: How to support students across multiple departments, presented at this meeting as a Category 2 item, should be submitted for consideration to Faculty Learning and Teaching Groups (FLTGs).
Action: Meely Doherty, YUSU

An update on actions taken since the last meeting was **reported**.

Report of Chair's action taken since the last meeting

23-24/112   There was nothing to report against this item.

Chair's report [oral report]

23-24/113   The Deputy Chair **reported** the following on behalf of the Chair:

1. To **note**, the Access and Participation Plan will be circulated by email on Tuesday 2 April 2024. The deadline for comments will be 12:00 pm Monday 8 April 2024.
Action: Caroline Ollier, shadowing Assistant Secretary

2. To **note**, the UTC meeting on 11 July 2024 has been moved to Thursday 4 July 2024, to be held from 9.30-12.30pm in room HG/21.

3. Update on February 2024 Weald and Downland visit.
    a. A full report and action plan will be drafted and shared with the UTC committee in due course.
    b. It was agreed that validation will continue until 2032, subject to conditions.
    c. Conditions included: ensuring programmes are on a financially sustainable footing; ensuring succession planning for key staff; efficient use of facilities and staff; aligning learning and teaching policies and assessments with those at the University of York; development of the alumni network.

Deputy Chair's report [oral report]

23-23/114   The Deputy Chair **reported** that the UTC AI working group was creating webpage guidance on AI, which would be published as soon as possible

Student Representatives' reports [oral reports]

23-24/115   Meely Doherty, the YUSU Academic Officer, **reported** that:
1. Meely had visited Dublin to gather insight as part of her work exploring PGR representation.

2. SU officers from CITY College, Thessaloniki, Greece had visited the University of York.

3. Student Mental Health Week had involved working with student groups.

4. Student elections were making good progress.

5. At a recent AGM, new Union articles had been approved, along with YUSU's financial accounts. YUSU and GSA would merge into one union from 1 August 2024.

23-24/116   Cytherea Shen, the GSA Vice-President (Academic), **reported** that:
1. The PG Student Survey on Academic Experience and Student Life would be communicated to students in the GSA newsletter.

2. GSA is researching how to better support students, and would share findings in the GSA newsletter after the GSA elections were finished.

Section 2: Strategic Development, Performance Monitoring and Student Insight– items for consideration and/or decision

23-24/117   **Assessment and Feedback project: update and key principles [UTC.23-24/67, Open]**

The Committee considered a paper from Jan Ball-Smith (Interim Head of Academic Affairs) and Jess Penn (Interim Head of Inclusive Education), and was asked **to approve** six principles of assessment and five principles of feedback, together with a proposed plan of next steps for the project.

23-24/118   It was **reported** that:

1. The principles align with York values, have been informed by sector benchmarking, and have been developed through consultation with university colleagues and student partners. The principles have been considered by the Social Science Teaching and Learning Strategy Group, the Arts and Humanities Faculty Learning and Teaching Group, and the Science Faculty Learning and Teaching Group.

2. The principles as described in the paper are supplemented by examples of practice that are intended to illustrate how the principles might be enacted. The examples do not represent requirements in themselves. Execution of the principles through policy, process and guidance, will need to align with the expectations of the Institutional Policy Framework.

3. Further work will now need to be undertaken to ensure clear liaison and communication between the Assessment and Feedback project and its subgroups, and the ongoing review of the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback.

23-24/119 The Committee **observed** that:

1. There was overlap between some of the principles - at least in how they were described in the *Explanation and Examples* column - which could be rationalised. Further, it should be ensured that the language used in the principles and accompanying explanatory text is accessible and inclusive to staff and students from all disciplines.

2. The principles could more clearly acknowledge that assessment should be intellectually stretching and challenging. It was also observed that the characteristic of 'quality' could feature more explicitly.

3. Clear direction will need to be provided in regard to expectations of *how*, and at what level, the principles are to be implemented (for example, should the principles apply across a programme of assessment as a whole, or within each modular assessment?). Moreover, guidance will need to explicate terms such as dialogic feedback, and what this may look like in practice, for example with very large cohorts where scalability' at the level of individual students will be challenging.

4. It will be important that future work to support the implementation of the principles takes into account the specific requirements of professional programmes, other programmes with PSRB and standards-based competencies, and online programmes. Representation of these groups where appropriate should be considered.
Action: Jan Ball-Smith to consider points 1 to 4 above in progressing the Assessment and Feedback Project.

5. The project plan and timelines (section 2.6 of the paper) should include details of which committees need to be reported to, for what purpose, and by when.
Action: Jan Ball-Smith to add details of committee reporting to the project plan.

6. After UTC approval of the principles, and the project plan and timelines, thought would be given to how to implement changes and the systems and processes that sit behind them.

23-24/120 The Committee:
1. **Approved** the Principles of Assessment and Feedback, subject to consultation with SCA, the results of which would be considered by Chair's action.
2. **Approved** the next steps as set out in the project plan and timelines.

Update from Professional Programmes Forum (Presentation) [UTC.23-24/68, Open]

23-24/121 The Committee considered a presentation by Claire Ball-Smith (Chair Of Professional Programmes Forum) and Polly Sykes (Deputy Chair of Professional Programmes Forum): Update from Professional Programmes Forum (PPF). The report contained three recommendations that UTC was asked **to approve**.

23-24/122 The Committee **observed** that:
1. Despite best efforts, securing consistent student representation on the forum was challenging since many professional programme students are on placement for significant periods of time, making attendance (even given the Forum conducts its business online) problematic. The Forum may benefit from working more closely with the students' union to secure student

representation; in particular it would be useful if the Chair of PPF could be informed of who is elected to the new Apprenticeship Officer role.

Action: Meely Doherty (YUSU)

2. The Terms of Reference for the Professional Programmes Forum should be amended to update reference to ASO (Academic Support Office) and terms.

Action: Claire Ball-Smith (Chair PPF)

3. Teaching and supporting learning on professional programmes presents unique opportunities and challenges for staff which don't necessarily map onto existing recognition and reward structures such as academic promotion. It would be beneficial to explore whether the university's new promotions criteria could include criteria that align with the particular context of teaching on professional programmes.

Action: Claire Hughes (Associate Dean TLS Sciences) and Claire Ball-Smith (Chair PPF).

4. Remote invigilation is required by some Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). The university's capacity to enable and facilitate this from a technological standpoint therefore needs to be assured, and it was noted that the Educational Technology Steering Group might usefully be consulted in regard to this.

Action: Claire Ball-Smith (Chair PPF)

23-24/123   The Committee **approved** the following recommendations:
1. That an annual report from the Professional Programmes Forum be submitted to UTC
2. That UTC continues to consider the impact of decisions on professional programmes
3. That UTC continues to act as the senior governance body for professional programmes with specific external PSRB requirements.

Action: Duncan Jackson (Head AQ&D) to review UTC Terms of Reference in light of the approved recommendations

Section 3: Policy and Regulatory Matters

Annual report on Special Cases, Academic Appeals and Complaints [UTC.23-24/69, Open]

23-24/124   The Committee **considered** a report by Daisy Bowen (Student Admin Manager Special Cases) and Jen Wotherspoon (Deputy Director, Student Services) on Special Cases, Academic Appeals and Complaints.

23-24/125   The Committee **observed** that:

1. There has been a 31% increase in complaints in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. It was noted that, although the pandemic may be a contributing factor, another possible explanation is that students are increasingly aware of their rights as consumers. It was noted that the increase in complaints has resulted in a backlog and that this presents a potential institutional risk because the most significant reason for the OIA upholding complaints is that the university has not addressed the issue locally in a sufficiently timely manner. In light of this issue, the committee supported the efforts made to introduce the innovative strategy of recruiting internal volunteers on fractional contracts to triage new complaints.

2. The biggest predictor of complaints is academic failure (although there is insufficient data to determine whether this is also the biggest predictor of academic appeals). Moving forward, it will be important to reach a more sophisticated understanding of how complaints and appeals relate to different demographic characteristics (including entry grades and, for example, the nationality rather than/as well as, ethnicity of students), and the journey of students who make appeals and complaints. This may help us to improve understanding of the reasons for complaints and appeals, and how to put in place preventative action. It would also be beneficial to nuance reporting relating to complaints received from students on professional programmes. In particular, it would be useful to be able to understand the

pattern of complaints as they relate to academic issues versus those that relate to placement issues.

Action: Charlotte Monk (Manager, Complaints Team)

3. Moreover, in further consideration of preventative action, it was noted that it is important that students fully understand, and properly use, the Exceptional Circumstances process. Additionally, it was noted that where individual appeals are upheld, the reasons are fed back to departments/schools, with a request for action to be taken when appropriate. However, it might also be useful if departments/schools could be provided with a periodic summary of why appeals have been successful across the Institution to help them plan and pre-empt issues, rather than responding on an individual basis and in a reactive way. Where procedural issues are identified as the reason for a successful appeal, it is important that the quality officer in the department is copied into any communications.

Action: Daisy Bowen (Manager, Special Cases Team)

4. Where students access support and advice provided by the students unions they are able to have their case properly assessed before accessing the appeals and complaints procedures. There is therefore potential to work more closely with the students unions to make students aware of, and to promote, this support.

Action: Meely Doherty (YUSU), Daisy Bowen (Manager, Special Cases), and Charlotte Monk (Manager, Complaints Team)

Section 4: Quality Assurance Processes

Annual Review: Institutional report [UTC.23-24/70, Open]

23-24/126   The Committee **considered** Annual Review: Institutional report, presented by Steve King (UTC Deputy Chair). This item was Chaired by Jan Ball-Smith, Interim Head of Academic Affairs. The Committee was asked: **to note** Faculty reports and actions plans (Cat ll); **to endorse** institutional actions and **to consider** further actions as necessary; and **to endorse** coordination activities, and **to consider** further activities as necessary.

23-24/127   The Committee **observed** that:

1. The new annual review is intended to stimulate an ongoing cycle of reflection through periodic communication of key data and metrics as they become available, and through the formulation, and monitoring, by departments of action plans informed by that data. This principle would be reinforced in the future to mitigate against the possibility that the process is perceived as a once-a-year activity. A formal institutional level report on the annual review will be included in UTC's annual cycle of business.

Action: Duncan Jackson (UTC Secretary)

2. None of the faculty level reports, or the institutional report, included explicit recognition of professional programmes, possibly implying that such programmes are not being actively considered in faculty planning. The data provided to departments in Semester 1 2023/24 reflected what was available at the time. The provision of data relating to professional programmes in future annual review cycles should be explored.

Action: Steve King (Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor TLS)

3. Annual review action plans would be enhanced by including clear timescales for actions to be progressed, and by identifying the individual on whom responsibility for progressing those actions rests.

Action: Associate Deans TLS

4. It was noted that there are sometimes contradictions between data sources, for example, between the feedback provided by students in module evaluations, the feedback provided in the National Student Surveys, and the insight obtained through, for example, OfS data on

continuation, completion and progression. This may reflect a range of factors, not least evaluation return rates, where students are in their degrees etc. It was also observed that the students unions can receive detailed feedback on the lived experience of students, which does not appear in university surveys, implying that alternative ways for students to raise issues should be considered (although to note here, annual review is concerned with the academic degree rather than the broader student experience).

5. It was noted that the report identifies areas for coordination within and between faculties, and between faculties and existing institutional projects that are supported by central professional services (section 5). However, it is not currently clear where accountability for facilitating and ensuring this coordination lies. It will be necessary to clarify how the annual review will work going forward in this respect, to ensure that there is appropriate 'joined-upness' within the institution, and efficient dissemination of good and effective practice.

Action: Steve King (APVC TLS) and Associate Deans TLS

23-24/128   The Committee **endorsed** the following recommendations:
1. The institutional actions as noted in section 4 of the report.
2. The coordination of activities noted in section 5 of the report.

New Programme: BA Architecture [UTC.2324/71, Open]

23-24/129   The committee was asked **to approve** a new programme, BA Architecture. Although programmes of this nature are normally approved by Faculty Learning and Teaching Groups, UTC was requested to approve in this instance because BA Architecture is the first new programme to be submitted by a new academic department (Department of Architecture and the Built Environment). Lorraine Farrelly (Head of the Department of Architecture and the Built Environment), Ehab Kamell (BA Architecture Programme Leader), and Amy Muckersie (Academic Quality Manager) were in attendance. Paul Bishop and Jill Webb reviewed the programme on behalf of UTC, with contribution from Meely Doherty (YUSU). It was **reported** that:

1. The Department of Architecture and the Built Environment is being developed in line with the vision of York as a university for the public good. A series of strands relating to teaching, research, and student community are being developed, emphasising social responsibility, community engagement, responsibility for the environment and sustainable design. To this end, active consideration is being given to how collaboration with colleagues across the university might be fostered.

2. There is a strong focus on innovation through developing interdisciplinary curricula, introducing studio and skills modules that are unique at York, and looking at the possible creation of an architecture clinic aligned to the existing law and sustainability clinics. Thinking is currently also turning towards the development of postgraduate taught programmes.

23-24/130   It was **observed** that:

1. The approval process, between reviewers, the Academic Quality Manager, and the BA Architecture programme team was undertaken collegially and constructively, involving iterative communication that resulted in the development of useful additional documentation, such as an assessment policy document.

2. The new programme is interesting, representing a unique teaching and learning approach compared to other programmes at York. It is well structured, and has received strong support and enthusiasm from external reviewers.

3. An exception to regulation has been requested in that all core modules should be non-compensatable because they are tied to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) requirements (as interpreted through a York lens). Optional modules can be compensated. It

was noted that it may be possible to allow students to receive an award that isn't professionally accredited where academic requirements are met, but professional body requirements are not. This aligns with practice on some other professionally accredited York programmes such as nursing. It was also highlighted that sub-degree level awards should carry generic names.

Action: Lorraine Farrelly (Head of the Department of Architecture and the Built Environment)

4. The accreditation of the BA Architecture programme will occur *after* the first students have commenced studies. The intention is to apply to become a candidate for accreditation, and that RIBA will undertake an exploratory visit, at the earliest, in the third semester. The validation process is retrospective and therefore will be secured at the end of the programme.

5. Portfolio assessment is a challenge at York in terms of how it might be designed and assessed. It was noted that the use of portfolios in the BA Architecture could represent an opportunity to explore more systematically how such assessment could be facilitated across the institution (noting that BA Architecture included physical, not just digital, artefacts).

6. There is an implication that academic advisors will be allocated on an annual basis. In line with the university approach to supervision, it was noted that a student should be allocated the same advisor/supervisor through the programme of study. It was confirmed that this would be the case, and that other positions reflecting particular BA Architecture programme needs would be introduced (e.g. year leads).

7. The requirements on space for professional programmes are often different from those for conventional programmes. It is important that this is recognised and accounted for in the development of programmes across all faculties, because space requirements are often associated with PSRB accreditation conditions concerned with the appropriateness of the learning environment in which students are engaged.

23-24/131 The BA Architecture was **approved**, subject to the following conditions:

1. Assessment transparency is provided through the assessment policy document which, in particular, details the component parts and weightings of the portfolio assessment. This information should be communicated to students and made available via the module catalogue.

2. The assessment burden in terms of word limits is high in some instances (for example, in relation to the Architectural Humanities modules, and the 20 credit dissertation). These word limits should be revisited.

3. In terms of assessment involving group work, it was clarified that although group working is integral to the assessment process, assessment lies at the level of the individual. This must be communicated clearly in programme specification and in the module catalogue.

4. Greater clarity is required in terms of formative assessment: what format this takes and when it is provided. This information should be clearly communicated to students via the programme specification and the module catalogue. .

5. Contact time expectations appear to be high in some modules. This may very well reflect the cultural specificity of studying a degree in architecture (for example, where time spent in studio overlaps with time spent on assessment). Again, this needs to be communicated clearly via programme specification and the module catalogue.

Section 5: Sub-committee Summaries and Meeting-related information

Update on Electives Group [UTC.23-24/72, Open]

23-24/132   An Update on Electives Group paper was presented by Tom Cantrell (Associate Dean TLS for Arts and Humanities), and Sally Quinn (Director of Interdisciplinary Teaching). The committee was asked to **note** improvements to the current cycle of electives, and planned improvements during 2024/25 for the 2025/26 elective cycle; and to **consider** potential solutions to blockers to the growth of elective provision.

It was **reported** that: .

1.   During 2023/24, 567 student applications to study electives delivered across 16 departments/schools had been received.

2.   Progress had been made automating processes to ease administrative burden associated with electives, and in improving communication and information through the development of the elective module webpages. Exemption has been secured from the multi-cohort policy to allow more students to access language electives.

3.   Further development of systems (e:vision, SITs and module catalogue) is planned with the aim of introducing further efficiencies for students and staff.

23-24/133   In consideration of the identified blockers and solutions, it was **observed** that:

1.   The timetable is built in response to student optionality and therefore is not released until June or July. Ring-fencing is likely to create resistance in departments/schools if core timetabling is constrained by those who want to undertake an elective.

2.   It is important to reach a definition of what a prerequisite is in regard to electives, and that this definition is then applied across departments/schools so that students can make informed decisions. Traditionally, prerequisites refer to modules that have been studied previously within a particular defined programme. For electives, it may be more appropriate to identify essential prior knowledge and skills that a student must have. A tiered system could be introduced by which there is a curated list of modules that any student can study, and a second list only available to students with specific prior knowledge / skills.

3.   Interdisciplinary modules currently either need to be owned by a specific department or, if they have a sustainability focus, quality oversight can be offered by Environmental Sustainability at York (ESAY). The use of ESAY in this respect was intended as temporary pending the development of a governance structure better suited to the development of creative interdisciplinary modules. Further consideration of such a governance structure should be undertaken

Action: Duncan Jackson (Head of Academic Quality and Development)

Section 6: Category 2 Items
Items for Information

[Secretary's Note: With regard to its Category II agenda, UTC was provided with the following Category 2 Agenda Items for: [a] information only, where UTC discussion is not required or anticipated, unless a request is made to escalate an item is from Category II to Category I for consideration OR as [b] supplementary information and data for items on the Category I agenda.]

23-24/129 **Annual Review and Action Plan for: (a) Arts and Humanities, (b) Sciences, and (c) Social Sciences faculty reports [UTC.23-24/73a , UTC.23-24/73b , UTC.23-24/73c]**

23-24/130 **Faculty Learning and Teaching Group reports 14 February 2024: (a) Arts and Humanities, (b) Sciences [UTC.23-24/74a , UTC.23-24/74b]**

23-24/131 **Apprenticeship Monitoring Board report [UTC.23-24/75]**

23-24/132 **Update on validated provision report [UTC.23-24/76]**

23-24/133 **The new Union's SUmmit: Structure of the merged Student Union [UTC.23-24/77]**

23-24/134 **A guide for staff from students: How to support students across multiple departments [UTC.23-24/78]**

Claire Pinder, S&AS Admin Team
March 2024