

Open Business

minutes

**Board Meeting on 23 October 2007 held at
4 Mill Lane**



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Prof WA Brown (Chair), Dr WD Allison, Dr GMW Cook, Prof ML Jacobus, Ms K Linder, Mr LS Liu, Prof RG Osborne, Dr J Runde, Mr MR Younger with Dr K Maxwell as Secretary and Dr LM Biggs, Ms SJ Pickard and Mr MR Smith in attendance

Apologies: Dr LRR Gelsthorpe, Dr CR Hiley, Dr DA Jefferson and Prof BJ Sahakian

Professor PC Hewett and Professor SK Rankin are on sabbatical leave

1315 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 2nd October 2007 were signed as a true record.

Matters for report

1316 Membership of the Board

The Board were pleased to learn that Professor Osborne and Dr Gelsthorpe have agreed to serve another term and that Dr Runde has agreed to serve for a further 12 months.

Matters requiring discussion

The Board welcomed Mr M Younger (Faculty of Education) and Dr W Allison (Department of Physics) as co-opted members of the Board of Graduate Studies.

1317.1 Review of Graduate Education

Professor Ian Leslie (Pro Vice Chancellor for Research) and Mr Duncan McCallum (Deputy Academic Secretary) were in attendance for this item.

The Board noted that the Review had been approved by the General Board and were happy to support the recommendations made in the Review. The Board were pleased to note that the Board of Graduate Studies would maintain a strong presence within graduate education and would continue to provide quality assurance support across the Schools. The Board supported the formation of a Steering Committee and recommended that both the Chair and Secretary of the Board be made members.

The Board wished to comment on several recommendations:

(i) Convergence of academic and funding decisions which will require close co-operation between admitting and funding bodies

The Secretary reported that in respect of the Overseas Research Studentship (ORS) competition, the offices of the Board had developed efficient systems to ensure that the Cambridge Trusts receive application papers for all students who had been offered an ORS award by early March. The Board were concerned to hear that, in 2006, 25% of applicants who had been made an ORS award had been lost to competitors with offers of a full-funding package and that to date, 28% had been lost in 2007.

(ii) Clarification of the roles of Degree Committees

The Board recognised the need for extended discussion with Degree Committees and this was validated by the Deputy Academic Secretary, who would lead these discussions.

(iii) Adequate resourcing for pilot projects for devolution of processes

The Deputy Academic Secretary reported that resourcing would be available for pilot projects.

(iv) Blueprints for devolution

The Board recommended that pilot studies should be used to identify model systems for devolution and bespoke models for individual Degree Committees should be avoided.

(v) Graduate School representation on the Board of Graduate Studies

It was agreed that each School should be represented on the Board by a member with experience and interest in graduate education. The Board agreed to offer membership to the Chair of the School of Life Sciences.

(vi) Board of Graduate Studies to focus on strategic matters and sufficient authority to be given to the Board once its remit is clear

The Board welcomed the opportunity to focus on strategic matters and the power to uphold policy decision, but were concerned that this could only be achieved if significant case load work relating to complaints was removed from the Board's remit.

(vii) *Chair of Board to become academic spokesman on graduate matters*

The Board was pleased to support the recommendation that the Chair would take this role.

(viii) *Formation of an Applications Committee to consider examination allowances*

The Board recommended that until a better solution was available, the Secretary of the Board, together with two Board members should be empowered to make decisions on straightforward examination allowances. Difficult cases would continue to be presented to the Board.

(ix) *Establish an Academic Integrity office to consider all student complaints*

The Deputy Academic Secretary reported that the establishment of an Academic integrity office was well under way. The Board firmly endorsed the decision to create such an office and recommended that it be given the highest priority.

(x) *Bands to be introduced for premium fee courses*

The Board strongly supported this recommendation.

(xi) *Introduction of a "fee for course"*

The Secretary reported that this should be in place for October 2009 admission.

(xii) *Harmonisation of BGS and Cambridge Trust funding. PRC to underwrite ORS candidates*

In light of the number of ORS students who reject an offer at Cambridge in favour of a place at a rival institution which offers a fully-funded package, the Board strongly endorsed this proposal.

(xiii) *Establishment of a single University financial aid office*

The Board strongly supported this recommendation and noted that the Offices of the Board had developed a transparent and efficient system responsible for managing financial aid centrally. The Secretary reported that both US and Canadian loans for both undergraduate and postgraduate students are managed at the Board, together with significant Research Council funding and administration. The Board also co-ordinates the Overseas Research Studentship and Domestic Research Studentship competitions. It was noted that discussions are underway with CamSIS to enable the

tracking, disbursement and auditing of funding packages which are managed by the Board.

(xv) *Thesis-only MPhil should be absorbed into MSc./M.Litt degrees*

The Board recommended that MSt degrees become part-time MPhil degrees and suggested that research only MPhil Degrees be absorbed within the MSc and MLitt Degrees.

(xvi) *Mechanisms to ensure resource viability of proposals for new courses and Common credit and modularity*

The Board noted that a new MPhil template had already been launched and that the Board had undertaken a review of the MPhil Degrees in 2006, which promoted common credit and modularity. It was agreed to re-circulate the findings

(xvii) *A review of the continuation process*

The Secretary agreed to undertake a full review of the continuation process.

1317.2 Devolution of graduate admissions processes: a proposed pilot scheme in the Department of Physics

The Board were pleased to support this pilot programme which will be used to determine resource implications and the viability of CamSIS for devolved admissions programmes and which will inform future models for devolution.

1317.3 Revision of the general regulations for admission as a graduate student: Regulation 12

The Board recommended that Regulation 12 of the General Regulations for Admission as a Graduate Student be revised by insertion of the text (underscored) below:

If the Tutor of a candidate for the M.Phil. Degree (one-year course), for the M.Phil. Degree (two-year course), or for any Diploma or Certificate for which candidates are required to be Graduate Students, supplies the Board of Graduate Studies with satisfactory evidence that the candidate has been hindered by illness or other grave cause in preparing for or taking the examination or any part of the examination for the degree or other qualification concerned, the Board shall have power, notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in the relevant regulations

Either (a) to approve the candidate for the degree or other qualification without further examination, provided that no candidate shall be so

approved unless the Degree Committee concerned judge him or her to have performed with credit in a substantial part of the examination;
or (b) to allow the candidate to be examined or re-examined under such conditions and at such time as may be determined by the Board after consultation with the Degree Committee concerned,
Provided that a candidate may reject the offer of an allowance by writing to the Secretary of the Board within one month of the date on which the allowance was offered.

1317.4 MPhil in Management Research: Closure of admission to course

The Board agreed that on the recommendation of the Degree Committee, the MPhil degree in Management Research be closed for direct admission. The Board agreed that the degree should be retained for those students who do not proceed to the PhD following the first year progress assessment, but have produced work which is recommended by the Degree Committee as sufficient for the MPhil degree.