

# **Unreserved Business**

## *minutes*

Board Meeting on 18 November at Mill Lane



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Prof J Rallison (Chair), Prof RJ Bennett, Mr W Bortrick, Prof D Cardwell, Dr GMW Cook, Prof EH Cooper, Prof PJ Ford, Dr LRR Gelsthorpe, Prof PC Hewett, Dr CR Hiley, Mr S Mtimbiri, Dr R Padman, Prof SK Rankin, with Dr K Maxwell as Secretary and Ms SJ Pickard in attendance.

Apologies: Prof BJ Sahakian, Mr MR Younger

Dr H Babinsky was in attendance throughout and Dr DR Sargan attended for item number 3302.7.

3299 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2008 were signed as a true record.

3300 **Expressions of interest**

DR Cook and Dr Hiley expressed an interest an interest in item number number 3302.7, but it was felt appropriate that they should be given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

3301 **Straightforward Business**

**Board Membership**

The Board welcomed Professor Bennett and Dr Padman.

3302 **Matters requiring discussion**

3302.1 **Partial devolution of the admissions process: Graduate School of Life Sciences**

(Paper 3474 refers)

The Board approved the proposal subject to CamSIS establishing the appropriate security access for the departments and Degree Committee and that processing of application was monitored by the Board. The Board agreed that partial devolution was a good model that should speed up the offer making process whilst maintaining the high risk aspects such as offer-making and confirmations within the offices of the Board. It was acknowledged that a flexible approach was required to any future roll-out of partial devolution and that some additional resource may be required in smaller units.

**3302.2 Revisions of the MPhil programmes offered through the Department of Archaeology**  
(Paper 3458 refers)

The Board agreed to approve the proposals in principle, subject to the satisfactory resolution of the following:

- (i) The University's common marking scheme for the MPhil be adopted, i.e. a pass mark of 60 and specifically, a mark of 75 and above for the distinction;
- (ii) Having a Science rate for the Archaeological Sciences module was identified as a significant problem. Financial difficulties could arise for overseas students who are admitted to the generic Archaeology course at the Arts rate and then elect to switch to the Archaeological Sciences Module once in residence. The Board recommended that the Department consider setting up Archaeological Sciences as a stand-alone course;
- (iii) The Board required assurance that the administration for the MPhils in Assyriology and Egyptology would be undertaken solely by the Degree Committee for the Faculty of Archaeology & Anthropology.

**Action: Secretary**

**3302.3 Application for renewal of Non-University Institution status: National Institute for Agricultural Botany (NIAB)**  
(Paper 3459 refers)

The Board received the application from NIAB and requested that a number of issues be clarified and satisfactorily resolved before agreeing to renew NUI status:

- (i) It should be clarified whether students are to be employed at NIAB. If this is the case, the employment contract in full, must be approved by the University's Legal Services Office;
- (ii) Each Principal supervisor's credentials be approved by the Degree Committee, to ensure that their research experience and outputs are comparable with a University Lecturer;
- (iii) The second supervisor must be an experienced member of staff in an affiliated University department;
- (iv) A formal first year progression exercise should be held at which neither the Principal or second supervisor shall participate, although the second

supervisor may be involved if no other suitable assessor is available. The Board would prefer that an experienced member of a University Department (other than the second supervisor) should participate as one of the assessors.

**Action: Secretary**

**3302.4 Application for renewal of Non-University Institution status: MRC Biostatistics Unit**  
(Paper 3481 refers)

The Board agreed to approve retrospectively, the MRC Biostatistics Unit for renewal of NUI status with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007.

**Action Secretary**

**3302.5 Points Based Immigration: monitoring and reporting requirements**  
(Paper 3465 refers)

The Board approved the proposals and agreed that the precise mechanism for monitoring student attendance during the long vacation should be determined in consultation with the Colleges via the Graduate Tutors Committee and Senior Tutors Committee.

It was also agreed that Degree Committees and Examiners should be advised that every effort should be made to ensure that examinations should be held as soon as possible after submission of thesis and prior to the expiration of entry clearance to the UK.

**Action: Secretary**

**3302.6 Deposit and copying of dissertation: proposed change to declaration and regulation**  
(Paper 3466 refers)

The Board approved the change to the wording of the declaration form and the proposed change to Regulation 17 of the general regulations for the Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Science and Master of Letters.

**Action: Education Committee**

**3302.7 Graduate Supervision**  
(Papers 3470, 3471, 3472 refer)

The Board welcomed the report received from the Counselling Service and agreed that it raised a number of serious issues regarding graduate supervision.

The Board agreed that the issue of the quality of graduate supervision should be addressed as a priority. It was agreed to form a working group which would report back to the Board in the Lent Term. It was agreed

provisionally that the membership of the working group would be Professor Rallison, Professor Cardwell, Professor Rankin, Dr Hiley, Mr Mtimbiri with Dr Maxwell as Secretary. Issues raised by the Board to be discussed by the working group include:

- i) Whether those elements of the Code of Practice relating to supervision should be formally adopted by the University;
- ii) Mechanisms by which supervisors can provide realistically negative feedback to student, sources of advice for supervisors;
- iii) To what extent the supervision system should be explained during induction in particular to account for cultural differences;
- iv) Whether it was desirable to adopt supervisory groups;
- v) The basis on which Degree Committees should monitor supervisors;
- vi) The importance of CamGRAD as a tool for supervisors and for monitoring of supervisors;
- vii) The extent to which student feedback at departmental level should be used to resolve difficulties;
- viii) A clear procedure for students to make a complaint regarding supervision in a timely fashion;
- ix) The need to train both new and experienced supervisors.

**Action: Secretary**

**3302.8 Revised Statement on plagiarism**  
(Paper 3473 refers)

It was agreed to ask Degree Committees to implement the University's statement on plagiarism and to incorporate any local requirements. The Board agreed that the statement should be incorporated into course handbooks and that the material should be introduced as part of student induction programmes.

**Action: Secretary**

**3302.9 External Examiners report: MPhil in Chinese Studies**  
(Papers 3416, 3488 refer)

The Board was content that the submission date for the dissertation was brought forward, but it was not convinced that additional subject-specific external examiners should be appointed as this was likely to proliferate problems if the examiners had not been properly advised and been made aware of procedures. The Board asked the Secretary to refer this matter to the Degree Committee.

**Action: Secretary**