

Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 10 March 2009



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Prof J Rallison (Chair), Dr H Babinsky, Prof RJ Bennett, Prof D Cardwell, Dr GMW Cook, Prof EH Cooper, Prof PC Hewett, Dr CR Hiley, Mr S Mtimbiri, Prof SK Rankin, Dr DR Sargan, Mr MR Younger with Dr K Maxwell as Secretary with Ms S-A Gannon, Mrs CHG Daunton and Ms SJ Pickard in attendance.

Apologies: Prof PJ Ford, Dr R Padman, and Prof BJ Sahakian

Dr LRR Gelsthorpe is on sabbatical leave.

3335 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 10th February 2009 were signed as a true record.

3336 **Expressions of interest**

No expressions of interest were received.

Matters for report

3337 **MRes degree**

The Board noted that the MRes degree had been approved by Her Majesty in Council and requested that the Secretary produce a paper for the next meeting providing further details on the degree.

Action: Secretary

3338 **Chairman's report**
The Chairman reported that a meeting had been held with the Language Centre at which it was reported that in cases where applicants were confirmed on the basis that further language training was required, a number of departments were not observing the principle that the department was liable for the additional costs. Board members reported that a number of departments assumed that either the candidate or the Cambridge Trusts would pay for the course. The Board requested that the Secretary provide policy and procedure details for the next meeting.

3339 **Straightforward Business**

3339.1 **Resubmission Policy**
(Papers 3533 & 3542 refer)
The Board agreed that given the relatively small numbers involved, it was appropriate to modify resubmission to more closely resemble the deferral process.

Action: Head of Admissions

3339.2 **Composition of Degree Committee: Politics, Psychology, Sociology & International Studies**
(Paper 3543 refers)
The Board approved the proposed composition of the Degree Committee.

Action: University Draftsman

3339.3 **Graduate Supervision Working Group**
(Paper 3544 refers)

The Board approved the recommendations made by the Working Group and agreed that Degree Committees should be consulted prior to formal adoption of relevant sections of the Code of Practice.

Action: Secretary

3339.4 **Independent Chairs for PhD examinations**
(Paper 3544 refers)

The Board approved the principles set out in the paper but agreed that the guidelines for appointing an independent Chair should not be too prescriptive. The guidelines should allow Degree Committees to use their judgement in a particular case in particular in regard to the experience that external examiners have had of examining in Cambridge. The Board proposed that Independent Chairs should receive a fee of £50. Drafting comments should be sent to the Secretary who would refer the final proposal to the General Board.

3339.5 **Meeting dates for 2009-10**

The Board approved the proposed meeting dates and also agreed to meet weekly in September 2009 to approve MPhil degrees.

Action: Secretary

3339.6 **Notice of intention to rescind MPhil course in 2009-10**
(Paper 3519 refers)

The Board noted the outcomes of the meeting that the Chairman held with representatives from the Degree Committee for the Faculty of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies and agreed that since correct procedure had not followed:

- (i) the MPhil in Contemporary Studies should remain open for entry in 2009-10;
- (ii) the Board should scrutinize Course Handbooks and CamGRAD reports for the next calendar year.

Action: Secretary

3339.7 **Graduate fee levels: School of Humanities and Social Sciences**
(Paper 3554 refers)

Although the Board agreed that MPhil fees should reflect the market rate, it was not prepared to accept the proposed significant increases in fees for 2009-10 at this stage in the admissions cycle, but would approve the increases for entry in October 2010. The Board also requested reassurance that where premium/differential fees are to be applied that departments have ensured that Research Council funded students will not be expected to find the difference in fee above the Research Council maximum and that adequate bursary schemes are in place.

The Board also agreed:

- (i) that in the future it was not desirable for each MPhil course to charge a different and arbitrary fee and that it would be preferable to introduce a scale of fee levels.
- (ii) deadlines for application for consideration of differential fees should be established in consultation with the Planning and Resources Committee.

Action: Secretary

3339.8 **Cambridge International Scholarships Competition**

The Board noted the arrangements for the CISS competition.

3339.9 **AHRC Block Grant**

The Board received the outcome of the Block Grant bid and noted that the University had received fewer awards than may have been expected as a result of the AHRC reducing its national allocation. The Board agreed that the Domestic Research Studentship would continue to play an important role in ensuring that as many PhD students as possible are funded and in supporting students from excluded subjects. The Board noted that the University faced a problem in securing funds for MPhil students.

Action: Secretary

3339.10 **Proposal to revise MPhil in Economics**
(Paper 3556 refers)

The Board approved the proposed revisions to the MPhil programmes in Economics subject to the Degree Committee agreeing:

- (i) that the common marking scheme for the MPhil should be adopted
- (ii) that a deadline of the division of the Michaelmas Term should be established for students wishing to switch between courses.

Action: Secretary

3339.11 **Proposal for a new MPhil strand: MPhil in Biological Sciences**
(Paper 3557 refers)

The Board agreed to defer discussion of this matter until the meeting on 13th April 2009.

3339.12 **Fee liability of graduate students: Fee for the course**

The Board agreed to delay implementation of the fee for the course until October 2010 to enable detailed negotiation of procedures with colleges to take place

Action: Secretary, Mr Wilson (PRAO)