

Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 12 January 2010



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Prof J Rallison (Chair), Prof RJ Bennett, Dr AK Bennison, Prof D Cardwell, Dr GMW Cook, Dr LRR Gelsthorpe, Prof SD Goldhill, Prof PJ Ford, Prof PC Hewett, Dr R Miller, Dr DR Sargan with Dr K Maxwell, as Secretary and Ms A Nelson, Ms SJ Pickard in attendance.

Apologies: Dr IB Kingston, Dr R Padman, Prof BJ Sahakian, Mr MR Younger

3437 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2009 were approved.

3438 **Expressions of interest**

None received.

Matters for report

3439 **Chairman's report**

The Chairman welcomed Dr Bennison and Dr Miller as new members. It was reported that the University had submitted its response to the Department of Business Innovation and Skills and that it would be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

3440 **Formation of a Graduate School for the Arts & Humanities**
(Paper 3853)

The Board endorsed the proposed structure of the new Graduate School. In more general terms it agreed that it was difficult to establish Graduate Schools within the Ordinances until their administrative responsibilities had been clarified. As a body, it would favour a common

structure for all Graduate Schools, but recognised that this might be difficult to achieve in the short term. It noted that it was likely that the majority of transferable skills training would be delivered centrally (and probably through Graduate Schools), once the Roberts funding had ceased.

3441 **Annual Report of the Counselling Service**
(Paper 3854)

The Board received the Report. It noted that the report did not contain any information which related specifically to graduate students.

3442 **Minutes of the MSt Liaison Committee**
(Paper 3855)

The Board received the Minutes.

3443 **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2009**
(Paper 3856)

The Board received the 2009 survey and was disappointed with the findings overall. In particular it identified that Cambridge fell below the national aggregates for the categories of "Supervision and Support" and "Goals and Standards" whereas similar surveys for undergraduates had placed Cambridge above the national average and the Russell Group average. The Board agreed that it would be interesting to learn whether there was a correlation with the size of the graduate population and student dissatisfaction and how we compared with other Institutions.

The Board agreed to refer the report to the General Board's Education Committee and that the areas of concern should be integral to its Learning and Teaching Strategy. It also agreed that the data should be further disaggregated by Faculty/Department and referred to the Councils of the Schools for response.

Action: Secretary and Education Committee

Matters for discussion

3444 **Minutes of the Transferable Skills Committee**
(Paper 3857)

The Board received the minutes. It endorsed the survey but cautioned that it may be too long so that the response was likely to be small and biased in favour of those Supervisors who support the transferable skills agenda.

3445 **Application for a new Certificate of Postgraduate Study**
(Paper 3858)

The Board approved the proposal for a new CPGS in Materials Science & Metallurgy: DTC Higher Performance Structural Metallics with effect from 1st October 2010.

The Board also wish to ask the Degree Committee why it had not proposed a new MRes degree as the first year of the four year PhD programme.

Action: Secretary and Education Committee

3446 **Future of the paper version of the Graduate Prospectus**

The Board agreed that the production of the paper Prospectus was no longer viable and that it would only be published on-line, with immediate effect.

3447 **Proposed amendment of Regulation 12 of General Regulations for Admission as a Graduate Student**

The Board agreed that time-limits for the receipt of applications for examination allowances made under Regulation 12 should be brought into line with those in place for other appeal processes. It agreed to amend Regulation 12 to read:

12. If the Tutor of a candidate for the M.Phil. or M.Res. Degree, 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 *and such representations are received by the Secretary of the Board not later than three months after the date on which the result of the examination was communicated by the Secretary to the candidate*, 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. Representations received after the prescribed time limit shall not be considered.*

Action: Education Committee

3448 **Amendment of the Regulations for the Review of Examinations for Postgraduate Qualifications**

The Board supported the recommendation made by the OIA that the review regulations should be extended to include students who passed the examination but whose progression to a further qualification was affected, provided that it was made clear to all parties that complaints relating to matters of academic judgement were excluded.

The Chairman invited suggestions for the procedure by which the Board considers student complaints and allowances. *[It has since been suggested that the Secretary should identify on a case-by-case basis particular Board members to scrutinise individual cases and to report to the Board. This will be tried on an experimental basis at the February meeting.]*

Action: Secretary

3449 **Reforms of the MPhil programmes in International Studies**
(Paper 3871)

The Board agreed to the proposed changes to the Special Regulations for the one year MPhil in International Relations on condition that the Department (i) agreed to inform all applicants of the changes and (ii) agreed to re-imburse the application fee and any associated postal costs for any applicant who elected not to take up an offer of admission on the grounds that they were no longer interested in pursuing the course due to the change in the course structure.

It noted that the Department would not accept any applications for entry to the two-year course but required that the Department re-imburse the application fee and any associated postal costs for any applicant to the course and that any applicant should be given the opportunity of applying for the one year course.

It agreed in principle to a change in the General Regulations to permit a two year MRes and requested that the Department produce a draft Notice and Grace for its scrutiny.

Action: Secretary and Education Committee