

## ***Unreserved Business***

# *minutes*

Board Meeting on 16 March 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, Dr IB Kingston, Prof PC Hewett, Dr R Miller, Dr R Padman, Dr DR Sargan, with Dr K Maxwell as Secretary and Ms S-A Gannon, Ms J Harcourt, Ms SJ Pickard in attendance.

Apologies: Prof BJ Sahakian, Mr MR Younger

Mrs C Fage (Head of the Points Based Immigration Office) attended for update on paper 3954.

**3480**      **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2010 were approved.

**3481**      **Expressions of interest**

Dr Cook declared an interest in papers 3926 and 3927 Disability guidelines but the Board agreed that it would be appropriate for him to contribute to the discussion.

**Matters for report**

**3482**      **Chairman's report**

The Chairman reported that the Planning and Resources Committee had been discussing ways to reduce the University's carbon footprint and were to circulate a list of venues with suitable facilities for video conferencing, which could be used for oral examination and admissions interviews. The Board will discuss this matter further when more information is available. He also reported that the General Board had received the results of the 2009 PRES and had requested that the Schools should address their results and indicate how they will address

any shortfalls. He reported that the response rate for the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey was currently 13% and that the Schools had been asked to encourage their students to participate.

### **Matters for discussion**

#### **3483 Meeting dates 2010-11**

The Board approved the following meeting dates:

12 October 2010  
16 November 2010  
11 January 2011  
8 February 2011  
15 March 2011  
19 April 2011  
3 May 2011  
7 June 2011  
12 July 2011

#### **3484 Application charges for PhD applicants**

The Secretary explained that it was already possible for Departments to forward applications to more suitable units at no extra cost to the applicant. The Secretary agreed to make this information more apparent to departments and applicants. It was also suggested that in the future, Graduate Schools or similar administrative structures could play an important role in co-ordinating applications between Departments.

Action: Head of Graduate Admissions

#### **3485 Disability guidelines for examination of the PhD degree**

The Board agreed that it was not possible to create guidelines that would cover all disabilities and that the current arrangements for taking examinations under special conditions should apply equally well to the PhD examination as to other examinations. The Board agreed that it was the responsibility of the student to declare a disability, if they felt able, and that this would trigger any special arrangements to be put in place. The Board also recognised the responsibility of the Supervisor in recognising student difficulty due to disability and the importance of their role in making clear the University's procedure. The Board was unsympathetic to special allowances being made for errors in PhD dissertations where mitigating strategies could be employed.

#### **3486 Policy on preventing violent extremism**

The Board received the guidelines and the Secretary reported that she had attended the first PREVENT meeting and that she would report back matters of interest arising from future meetings.

**3487**      **Membership of the Council for Lifelong Learning**

The Board agreed to defer this item.

**3488**      **Plagiarism: Guidelines for Examiners**

The Chairman explained that the Plagiarism Working Group had agreed that the current practice for dealing with cases of suspected plagiarism were often unworkable resulting from the sharp distinction between disciplinary matters and actions taken by Examiners who have an academic perspective. It was felt that on the undergraduate side and for taught postgraduate assignments, Examiners should be given the discretion to subtract marks for poor scholarship where cases of suspected plagiarism were minor. The Board agreed that this approach was acceptable and in some cases was already happening, but that a clear set of guidelines for Examiners was required to ensure consistency. It recognised that this strategy was crucial for M.A.St. and Part III students, who otherwise, would be governed by different rules for the same piece of work. It agreed that this approach would not be viable for cases of significant plagiarism in important parts of a thesis though some instances of plagiarism in a dissertation would not completely devalue the work. It also agreed that student awareness of what constitutes plagiarism varied, particularly in light of cultural differences and that Departments should be encouraged to include a session on plagiarism as part of the mandatory induction programme.

Action: Secretary

**3489**      **Requests for differential MPhil University Composition Fee rates**

The Board received the requests from the Council of the School of the Arts & Humanities and agreed to increase the University Composition Fee by £500 for all MPhil courses under its remit, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011. The Board also accepted a request from the Council of the School of the Humanities & Social Sciences to increase the fee for the MPhil in Modern Society & Global Transformations by £500 for Home/EU students and £1000 for overseas students with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011.

Action: Secretary

**3490**      **Information on graduate degrees from the Annual Quality Update**

The Board was pleased that graduate matters were now being included in the Annual Quality Update. It noted that the responses had been patchy, in particular with respect to progress reporting. It agreed that it would welcome the opportunity to ask more targeted questions in the next Update.

Action: Secretary

**3491**      **Fee for the Course**

The Board agreed that fee-paying students who had been granted leave to work away should be able to apply for a grant to support their studies whilst away from Cambridge and that this should normally be capped by the fee they have paid for the period away and made on the basis of need. Allowable items are research-related costs that exceed those that the student would ordinarily meet if staying in Cambridge, e.g. tuition fees payable at another institution; travel costs; research related costs; exceptional living costs. The Board agreed that initially the Board's Office would deal centrally with all applications and refine guidelines that can be transferred to the Schools to manage (in conjunction with other Trust Funds where appropriate) at a later date.

Schools would be required by the Board to make an annual report on funds spent.

Action: Secretary

**3492**      **Points Based Immigration: Policy to manage and report student absences to the UKBA**  
(Paper 3954)

The Board received the report and agreed that it would define an "authorised absence" in one of two ways, to be determined by the Board on a case by case basis:

- 1) An authorised absence for an agreed period, for which the student will remain on the register of graduate students where circumstances such as pregnancy or illness prevent the student from studying on a full-time basis. Such an absence does not normally require the student to repeat the missed period of study.
- 2) An authorised absence for which the student will be removed from the register of graduate students for an agreed period, where circumstances such as lack of funding, leaving the UK to complete the PhD dissertation, prevent the student from studying on a full-time basis and may, or may not, require the student to repeat the missed period of study.

Mrs Fage reassured the Board that students who returned to the UK for an examination alone, or to attend a graduation ceremony, would not require a new student visa, but could enter the UK for such purposes on a visitor's visa.

The Board thanked Mrs Fage for her hard work in this area.

Action: Head of the Points Based Immigration Office