

Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 13 April 2010



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Professor Rallison (Chair), Dr Gelsthorpe, Professor Goldhill, Professor Ford, Professor Heal, Dr Miller, Professor Sahakian, Dr Sargan, Mr Younger with Dr Maxwell as Secretary and Ms Harcourt, Ms James, Ms Pickard and Ms Wilkinson in attendance

Apologies: Professor Cardwell, Dr Cook, Professor Hewett, Dr Padman

3503 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2010 were approved.

3504 Expressions of interest

None were received

Matters for report

3505 Chairman's report

The Chair reported that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills had announced the Newton Scholarships. In total, 100 awards would be available nationally in STEM subjects and the funding will be administered via the Research Councils. Although it was not yet clear whether the awards would be restricted to Home/EU or Overseas students, the Board would use its CHES and CISS ranked lists to allocate awards to the best students.

Discretion was given to the Secretary and Chairman to bid for an allocation of the awards if swift action was needed.

Matters for discussion

3506 Devolution of the approval of graduate degrees: Degree Committee and School responses

The Board received the Degree Committee responses to the letter of consultation. It noted that all parties favoured the devolution of the award of graduate degrees to the Degree Committee, but there was some concern about the level of resource this work would entail, in particular for the PhD degree.

The Board agreed that the Schools should have the authority to appoint an external member to its Degree Committees where appropriate and that this practice should be encouraged for small Degree Committees. The Board recognised that the Degree Committees would continue to require a source of advice for difficult cases and recommended that the Board of Graduate Studies continued to act in this capacity, and noted that some casework could also be undertaken by Graduate Schools.

The Board also agreed that the award of the Masters level degree should be devolved to Degree Committees with effect from 1st October 2010 and should apply to students admitted on or after that date. The Board also requested that the Secretary should commence business process mapping of PhD approval and completion, in conjunction with MISD, with a view to devolving these processes at a later date.

Action: Education Committee and Secretary

3507 Cambridge International Scholarships (CISS)

The Board noted that 81 awards had been offered in March, two weeks ahead of the US deadline. An earlier application deadline had been introduced to coincide with that for the Cambridge Gates competition. This resulted in an increase of 2500 applications during December 2008 as compared to the previous year.

Dr Gelsthorpe spoke on behalf of the CISS Committee. She explained that awards had been made on the basis of academic strength, with particular emphasis placed on the departmental recommendations and references, but that the project proposals were considered less important as they did not provide evidence on the strength of the candidate. For the first time, the CISS Committee had moderated marks for candidates at the margin and had undertaken random dipstick testing to ensure consistent scoring of applicants. She explained that although the CISS awards appeared biased in favour of the science disciplines, this resulted from a high proportion of applicants from arts and humanities being offered Gates Scholarships.

The Board expressed its concerns regarding the standard of English for a number of CISS candidates and agreed that applicants should be

asked to provide satisfactory proof of English Language proficiency in order to be considered for a CISS award with effect from 2011—12 entry. It also agreed that a single December deadline should be retained for at least the next two years and that a second, smaller CISS competition to be held later in the year, should not be introduced in the meantime.

The Board thanked Jane Wilkinson and the CISS Committee.

Action: Secretary

3508 **MPhil degrees 2008-09: External Examiners' reports**

The Board received the reports and was pleased to note that the majority of reports had been extremely favourable. The Board agreed that the introduction of the common marking scheme, from 1st October 2010, would counter many of the criticisms regarding the narrowness of the marking schemes and the lack of a formal distinction, but Degree Committees must provide clear marking rubrics to Examiners to promote full use of the entire range of marks. The Board was concerned to note that some assessed work had not been delivered in time for the Examiners' meetings and agreed to pursue this matter with the Degree Committees concerned. The Board agreed that it was important for Degree Committee's to supply feedback to students for all elements of the course.

Action: Secretary

3509 **Application to admit part-time MPhil students**

The Board approved the application from the MRC Cognition & Brain Sciences Unit with immediate effect.

Action: Secretary

3510 **Application for a new MPhil in Music Studies**

The Board approved the application and noted that it would replace the existing MPhil degrees in Ethnomusicology, Musicology and Musical Composition with effect from 1st October 2011.

Action: Education Committee

3511 **Request to amend special regulations: MSt in Local and Regional History**

The Board approved the amendment to the special regulations with effect from 1st October 2010, to apply to the cohort who started on or after that date.

Action: Education Committee

3512 Diplomas awarded by the Board of Graduate Studies

The Board agreed to refer this item to the Education Committee in the first instance.

Action: Education Committee

3513 Proposed amendment to the Regulations for the Review of Examinations for Postgraduate Qualifications

The Board approved the proposed amendment with immediate effect.

Action: Education Committee

3514 Request to amend special regulations: MPhil in Management

The Board approved the proposed amendment with effect from 1st October 2010.

Action: Secretary

3515 Annual Report of the Board of Graduate Studies, 2008-09

The Board received the report and approved the document, subject to minor corrections to be made by the Secretary.

Action: Secretary

3516 Report of the BIS review of postgraduate education

The Board received the report and flagged a number of items of interest:

- It is proposed that the national student survey is extended to include taught Masters students and that the PRES should be made compulsory and its results made public. This was an area of concern, as the university has not performed well previously in the PRES;
- Transferable skills training is to be embedded in HEI programmes but funding will not be available. The Board understood that was on the Schools' agenda;
- Access to postgraduate courses is reported as an area of possible concern and it is likely that funding would be made available to undertake further research in this area or additional data would be captured by HEIs for the HESA return;
- It is important for UK graduate courses to be compliant with the Bologna protocol, but credit assignment would be at the discretion of individual HEIs and based on learning outcome rather than period of study.

- Proportionally more HEFCE money is likely to be channelled into high quality research institutions;
- More Research Council funding would be supplied through Doctoral Training Centres and Collaborative Awards (with an industrial partner and co-funding);
- There is implicit support for graduate schools and multidisciplinary research;
- The report proposes increased collaboration and formal links with industry which would benefit the UK economy and ensure students are trained to meet the requirements of potential employers;
- It is important to encourage overseas students;
- There is emphasis on the need to support and enhance the UK economy and therefore the report is strongly biased towards STEM and management disciplines.