

Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 4 May 2010



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Professor Rallison (Chairman), Professor Bennett, Professor Cardwell, Dr Cook, Dr Gelsthorpe, Professor Ford, Professor Hewett, Dr Miller, Dr Sargan, Mr Younger with Dr Maxwell as Secretary and Dr Biggs, Ms Gannon, Ms Harcourt, Ms James and Ms Pickard in attendance

Apologies: Professor Goldhill, Professor Heal, Dr Kingston, Dr Padman, Professor Sahakian

3524 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2010 were approved.

3525 Expressions of interest

Dr Cooke declared an interest in minute number 3535 but as this was a matter of principle he was invited to contribute to the discussion.

Professor Cardwell expressed an interest in minute number 3536 and was invited to speak on this item.

Matters for report

3526 Chairman's report

The Chairman welcomed Dr Biggs on her return to the Board's office following maternity leave. He also provided an update on the Newton Scholarships

3527 **Report on consultation by the Cambridge Commonwealth and Cambridge Overseas Trusts about funding of overseas graduate students**

The Board received the report and noted its satisfaction with both the consultation exercise and its outcomes.

Matters for discussion

3528 **Maintenance rates 2011-12**

The Board acknowledged the need to keep pace with increases in accommodation costs and approved a maintenance rate of £10 440 for the academic year 2011-12 (an increase of 3% on the previous year), subject to approval of the Senior Tutors' Welfare and Finance Committee.

Action: Head of Fees and Funding

3529 **Fee for the Course: Fieldwork costs**

The Board agreed that the proposed guidelines should be incorporated with those approved at the meeting held on 16 March 2010 and that it should made clear that conference expenses would not normally be considered unless attendance was an integral part of the period of leave to work away. The Board was invited to pass any further comments to Ms Gannon and asked that she circulates the final version of the guidelines to Schools and Departments.

Action: Head of Fees and Funding

3530 **Management of the PhD submission deadline**

The Board agreed that the CamSIS record should include both an Expected Submission date and a Removal from the Register date. In addition:

1. Students to be informed that the expected submission date is at the end of the third calendar year and this to be reflected on the CamSIS record;
2. Students to be informed that they will automatically removed from the register at the end of the fourth year (unless otherwise informed by the Degree Committee);
3. The introduction of a new "Extension to Study Period" to be approved by the BGS in each case and to extend both the dates appearing on CamSIS.

Action: Secretary

Report of the Senior and Graduate Tutors' working parties

The Board received the report and welcomed the interest that the Colleges were showing in graduate matters and the dialogue that the report had generated. In relation to student numbers, the Board noted that the Postgraduate Admissions Committee had been established to bring together the views of the University and Colleges in relation to graduate admissions. The Board re-iterated that it was difficult to establish clear trends when there are methodological differences in the ways that different bodies quantify graduate student numbers. It also acknowledged that there may be tensions between the Colleges and the Schools, who wish to increase graduate numbers. It concluded that although graduate numbers are increasing, it was impossible to predict the short-term rate of increase or its nature (MPhil or PhD) with accuracy. The Board noted that student numbers (both undergraduate and postgraduate) were under discussion by the University and Colleges' Joint Committee. It agreed that the development of the North West Cambridge site should generate suitable accommodation for graduate students in the future and that this should be raised with the Bursars' Committee.

The Board also noted that there were large differences in College provision for graduate students and that for its part, it would welcome the formation of a Committee akin to the Undergraduate Admissions Forum.

In response to specific recommendations made in the report, the Board agreed:

1. It was unclear to the Board the means by which it could "put in place mechanisms to alert the Colleges when the point is reached at which they need to admit students without being able to offer accommodation". The Board takes the view that it is open to Colleges at any stage to offer a place without an offer of accommodation.
2. Since more than 50% of MPhil courses would still be in progress, it was not possible for all MPhil results to be confirmed by the end of August. However, the Board hoped that the proposed devolution of the award of the MPhil degree to Degree Committees in 2011-12, would expedite the approval process.
3. The Board's admissions office would make clear to prospective students that the Board's maintenance level is a minimum value and that the majority of students require additional funding.
4. The Board's Office would make clear to prospective PhD students that they are responsible for their maintenance costs beyond three years and that they should not expect to receive hardship funding beyond this point by right.
5. The collective training of Tutors in a number of areas, including student complaints was welcomed and the Board's Officers would be pleased to participate.

6. The formal adoption of the Code of Practice should make transparent the expectations of Supervisors and students alike.

Action: Secretary

3532 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2009: College provision

The Board received the report and noted the need for publicity material to be accurate and sufficient to meet student expectation. It also noted that student dissatisfaction increased in the fourth year and that it must be made clear from the outset that the Colleges would not normally provide hardship for PhD students in year four.

3533 MSt Degree 2007-2009: External Examiners' Reports

The Board received the reports and were pleased that the majority were entirely positive. It agreed to refer the External Examiner's report for the MSt in Local and Regional History to the Degree Committee for comment.

Action: Secretary

3534 Closing dates for paper and online applications

The Board approved the following recommendations with effect from 1st September 2010:

1. There will be a single closing date for paper and online applications;
2. Online applicants will receive a warning after two weeks, if they have not submitted any documents, and their applications will be withdrawn if they have not submitted anything after a further two weeks;
3. Online applications will no longer be reinstated if documentation is received after the application has been withdrawn.

The Board agreed that Departments and Degree Committees should be made aware of this proposed change, and should be asked to comment or note any objections.

Action: Head of Graduate Admissions

3535 General Regulations for the MPhil degree in relation to the oral examination for the MPhil in Biological Science

The Board agreed in principle that in line with the recommendation of the Review of Graduate Education (i) that the regulations for the MPhil by thesis and oral only are removed from the General Regulations for the MPhil degree and brought into line with the General regulations for the PhD, MLitt and MSc degrees; (ii) The MLitt and MSc degrees should incorporate the MPhil by thesis and oral only. This would require a

change in the minimum residence requirements of the MLitt and MSc degrees from six to three terms.

It agreed to consult the relevant Degree Committees before taking any further action.

Action: Secretary

3536 Application for a new MSt degree in Construction Engineering

The Board agreed that the proposed course was unique, interdisciplinary and of importance to the Department of Engineering. It was reassured that admission would be on the basis of academic merit.

The Board approved in principle, the application for a new MSt in Construction Engineering with effect from 1 October 2011 subject to final approval from the Faculty Board and the School of Technology and submission of the final course content.

Action: Education Committee

3537 Postgraduate Admissions Committee (PAC) Minutes

The Board received the minutes.