

Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 6 July 2010



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Professor Rallison (Chairman), Professor Cardwell, Dr Cook, Dr Gelsthorpe, Professor Ford, Professor Goldhill, Professor Heal, Professor Hewett, Dr Miller, Dr Padman, Dr Sargan with Dr Maxwell as Secretary and Dr Biggs, Ms James, Ms Pickard in attendance.

Apologies: Professor Bennett, Professor Sahakian, Mr Younger

3570 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2010 were approved.

3571 **Declarations of interest**

None were made.

3572 **Application for a new Certificate of Postgraduate Study**
(Paper 4056)

The Board approved the introduction of a new Certificate of Postgraduate Study in Geography, backdated with effect from 1 October 2009.

Action: Draftsman

3573 **Request to put MPhil course into abeyance**
(Paper 4057)

The Board approved the Degree Committee's request to put the MPhil in Environment, Society and Development into abeyance for the academical year 2011-12, with a view to offering a revised course in 2012-13.

Action: Draftsman

3574 **Request to rename MPhil course**
(Paper 4058)

The Board approved the Degree Committee's request for the MPhil in Social Anthropological Analysis to be renamed as the MPhil in Social Anthropology with effect from 1 October 2011.

Action: Draftsman

3575 **Payment of College fees by Research Councils**
(Paper 4059)

The Board noted that the AHRC has announced that it will no longer make provision for the College fee with effect from October 2011. Dr Sargan reported that it was likely that the MRC would also announce that the College fee was no longer an allowable expense. The Chairman informed the Board that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research was intending to write to Research Councils UK to protest that such decisions had been taken without due consultation or assessment of impact.

3576 **Diplomas awarded by the Board of Graduate Studies**

The Board noted the change of nomenclature and asked the Secretary to discuss with the Faculty of Economics whether it was still appropriate for its Diploma students to be classified as graduate students.

Action: Secretary

3577 **Review of the partially devolved admission process: Graduate School of Life Sciences**
(Paper 4060)

The Board received the report. Dr Sargan explained that the Graduate School had experienced similar difficulties to other pilot schemes in that it had created a significant amount of extra work and that the introduction of a fully electronic application system and electronic referencing will have a significant and welcome impact. It was also reported that training of staff had been an issue both for the School and the Board's office and it was clear that central support would always be required.

The Board wished to thank the Graduate School for its informative report.

Action: Secretary

3578 **Ad hoc vacation meetings for the approval of MPhil degrees and to consider requests for examination allowances**

The Board agreed to repeat the arrangement for the approval of MPhil degrees and for the consideration of examination allowances (by circulation) during the long vacation.

Action: Secretary

3579 **Admissions Statistics**

The Board noted that the number of offers processed by the BGS exceeded the total number of offers made in the whole of the previous year and mindful of the difficulties which this is creating for securing College membership and ensuring College provision, the Board agreed:

1. Degree committees should be told that they may not now make any further offers if their planning round submission for a particular course (PhDs excluded) is already accounted for. Several hundred applications are still in this position.
2. Any student who fails to meet the full terms of their Master's offer for 2010 will not be admitted.
3. No applications for Masters courses in 2010 will be entertained after the relevant closing date.

Concerns were expressed about the adequacy of departmental teaching provision in relation to the increased number of students for some courses.

The Board agreed that it will be necessary to approach Colleges to seek their cooperation and goodwill in admitting additional numbers of graduate students this year (without any promise of accommodation) and that Colleges will want to be assured that the problem can be resolved for next year.

In the future, the Board agreed that means must be found for agreeing overall graduate numbers with colleges as part of the planning round and, once agreed, graduate student numbers for Masters courses should be capped at planning round levels.

The Board also wished to thank the admission staff for processing such a large volume of applications in a timely fashion.

Action: Chairman, Secretary

3580 **Minimum English language requirements**
(Paper 4082)

The Board agreed that with effect from 1 September 2010, the English language requirement for the School of the Arts and Humanities and the Humanities and Social Sciences should be increased to:

- IELTS: a minimum of an overall score of 7.5, with no element below 7.0;
- TOEFL iBT: an overall score of 110, with no element below 25;
- TOEFL paper-based: 637 with 5.5 in the test of written English.

The Board noted that:

- Difficulties arise in the production of dissertations by students with poor English language;
- Concerns have been registered by Colleges in relation to these skills
- Reputational issues arise for the University in relation to language skills of its graduates;
- English language competence is part of the transferable skills training that students should expect;
- For short courses, very little time for English language training is available. Oxford imposes a higher admissions standard than Cambridge for such courses;
- There may discipline-specific differences between subjects. The Board agreed that the science Degree Committees should be invited to reconsider and increase their language requirements.

Action: Secretary

3581 **Application deadlines**

The Board agreed to enforce rigorously the default University deadline of 31 July for receipt of applications for entry in October 2010 and to bring forward the deadline to 30 June in the next admissions cycle.

Action: Head of Admissions

3582 **MSt Admissions**
(Paper 4061)

The Board agreed that the Head of Admissions should undertake a consultation exercise with the Degree Committees and ICE with a view to removing the Board from the admissions process with effect from October 2012 entry.

3583 **PhD submission rates: School of Technology**
(Paper 4062)

Professor Cardwell explained that the School had been aware of the problem for some time and were attempting to put measures in place to improve the submission rate. The Board welcomed the School's response and agreed that it should be circulated to the other Graduate Schools or equivalent bodies for information.

Action: Secretary

3584 **Maintenance rates 2011-12**
(Paper 4062)

The Board agree to an increase of 6% in the maintenance rate for 2011-12.

Action: Head of Fees and Funding

3585 **Supervisor payments**
(Paper 4063)

The Board agreed with a letter from the Faculty of History that a payment of £55 to CTOs did not reflect the work involved but noted that it was not possible to increase the fee from moneys available to the Board in the current economic climate. The Board agreed to refer this matter to the School of the Humanities and Social Sciences who may elect to use a proportion of the top-up fee to pay their supervisors.

Action: Secretary

3586 **Administration of Examination Allowances**
(Paper 4079)

The Board agreed that the mechanism for the consideration of graduate allowances required review and that there were lessons to be learnt from the undergraduate process. In the interim, the Board asked the Secretary to improve the communication with the Degree Committees so that sensitive and often confidential difficulties could be accommodated in the form of the allowance tailored to the circumstances of a particular student.

Action: Secretary

3587 **Application for a new MPhil**
(Papers 4047, 4048, 4049)

The Board received the report of the working group and agreed to the introduction of a new MPhil in Finance and Economics with effect from 1 October 2011. The Board also noted that the steady-state intake was predicted to be 20 students per annum.

Action: Education Committee

3588 **External Examiners and employment checks**
(Paper 4097)

The Board noted legal advice that External Examiners could be paid a fee only if the Degree Committee had provided evidence of the right to work in the UK and asked the Secretary to put the necessary guidelines in place. It also noted that although non-EEA Examiners may not enter the UK on a tourist visa, it was still not clear which route should be used and asked the Secretary to obtain an unambiguous directive from the HR Division.

Action: Secretary