

Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 16 November 2010



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Professor Rallison (Chairman), Professor Bennett Professor Cardwell, Dr Cook, Professor Ford, Professor Gelsthorpe, Professor Goldhill, Professor Heal, Professor Hewett, Dr Hiley, Dr Lasenby, Dr Padman, Dr Sargan with Dr Maxwell as Secretary and Mrs Benton, Ms James, Ms Pickard and Ms Rai in attendance.

Apologies: Mr Ward

3649 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2010 were approved subject to clarification of item 3621.

3650 **Declarations of interest**

Professor Cardwell declared an interest in minute number 3653 and the Board agreed that he should contribute to the discussion of this item.

Matters for Report

3651 **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman informed the Board that Mrs Benton had been appointed as the Head of Student Education and Policy and that Dr Maxwell had been appointed as the Head of Student Operations. There would be consequences in the medium term for the operation of the Board with increased focus on Unreserved business.

3652 **Board Membership**

The Board welcomed Dr Lasenby to her first meeting and thanked Professor Bennett for the contribution he had made during his tenure.

Matters for discussion

3653 **Application for a new MPhil: Nuclear Energy**
(Papers 4251, 4252)

Professor Cardwell spoke to this item. He explained that the Department (CUED) and the School of Technology had identified nuclear energy as a key research area, with little competition elsewhere in the sector. The Board noted that the increase in new students would probably require a decrease in numbers from other one-year courses within the School and that although the course was expensive to run, the initial costs would be underwritten by CUED. Dr Padman questioned whether it was appropriate for CUED to be expected to bear the costs whilst the University would make a profit and whether the University's resource allocation was appropriate.

The Board noted that the University Composition Fee would be set at £2000 above the standard rate for Home/EU and Overseas students and approved the new MPhil with effect from 1 October 2011.

Action: Education Committee

3654 **Proposed amendment to the special regulations: MPhil in Social Anthropological Research**
(Paper 4253)

The Board approved the proposed change to the special regulations to be backdated to 1 October 2010.

Action: University Draftsman

3655 **Proposed amendment to the special regulations: MPhil in Politics**
(Paper 4254)

The Board approved the proposed change to the special regulations to be backdated to 1 October 2010.

Action: University Draftsman

3656 **Proposed amendment to the regulations for the PhD degree: Practice-based disciplines**
(Paper 4255)

The Board considered the proposal from the Faculty Board of Music to amend the regulations for the PhD degree to permit the submission of other work, for example, musical compositions, in addition to the dissertation for consideration by Examiners.

The Board noted that the proposed amendment represented a significant departure from current practice but was in-line with Faculty strategy. However, it was concerned that the proposal was not sufficiently detailed and that it was not clear what the Faculty were seeking to achieve.

It agreed that in principle, the proposal was not inappropriate for the Faculty of Music, but also that it related directly to other Faculties who must be consulted prior to any change to the regulations in order that due consideration was given to the type of material that could be submitted (which was likely to be subject-

specific) and its subsequent assessment. It was also suggested that special regulations for each PhD degree might be required.

The Board agreed to seek further clarification on the balance of the dissertation and the additional material and how each element would be assessed and whether it might be possible for a candidate to fail the dissertation element but be recommended for the degree on the basis of the additional material, or vice versa. It also agreed that it would be difficult to set an academic standard across a variety of different elements such as a performance or a composition.

The Board agreed that the Faculty Board should submit its proposal to the Council of the School of the Arts and Humanities for further discussion.

Action: Secretary

3657 **Implications of the Browne Report and the Comprehensive Spending Review for graduate education**

The Board considered that:

- 1) it was necessary to justify the graduate University Composition Fee in terms of the costs of teaching and resource;
- 2) It was important to consider any adverse affect on Home/EU recruitment before increasing the graduate fee;
- 3) The undergraduate and graduate market are different;
- 4) It was possible that overseas recruitment would be adversely affected if the pound strengthened;
- 5) There would be a significant anomaly in the fees paid by integrated Masters and MAsT students compared with those taking MPhil courses.

3658 **Review of the procedure for graduate examination allowances**

The Board were invited to consider the procedures for the consideration of examination allowances and agreed:

- 1) Some of the medical evidence was vague and in many cases scrutiny by a medical expert would be welcomed;
- 2) In many cases, departments may have the best knowledge of the students and their difficulties;
- 3) Medical evidence might be improved if doctors had guidance regarding the demands of the course, especially for students who were retuning to study;
- 4) Medical evidence was often only submitted once a student had failed the degree and students should be encouraged to make their difficulties known in a timely fashion;
- 5) Independent medical assessment may be desirable in some cases;
- 6) It may be desirable to introduce the equivalent of the undergraduate warning letter;
- 7) The OIA should be consulted as part of the review.

The Board agreed to participate in the formation of a working group to examine this matter in more detail.

Action: Secretary

3659 **Submission of published works for the ScD degree**

The Board supported the request made by the Degree Committee for the Faculty of Physics and Chemistry that candidates for the ScD should be permitted to submit published works on DVD. More generally, the Board also recognised that there were difficulties in finding examiners for higher degrees and agreed to recommend that the fee for examining was significantly increased and the application fee increased accordingly.

Action: Secretary

3660 **Format of the dissertation for the PhD degree**
(Paper 4256)

The Board recognised that there were precedents (from Economics) for the submission of a dissertation in a publishable format, but agreed to seek clarification from the Degree Committee of Economics regarding the consideration of, and copyright issues surrounding, co-authored work.

Action: Secretary

3661 **Membership of the CISS Committee 2010-11**

The Board agreed that the membership of the committee from 2009-10 would stand, other than Dr Lasenby as a replacement for Dr Miller and either Dr Sargan or Dr Hiley to represent the School of Clinical Medicine. The Board agreed that a Chair should be appointed free of any responsibilities to represent the interests of his or her School. Following the meeting the Chairman proposed that Professor Hewett should continue as Chair of the CISS Committee in 2011 and that an additional SPS representative should be appointed to assess SPS applications in his place.

Action: Secretary

3662 **Graduate student numbers: 2011-12 intake**
(Papers 4166, 4282, 4291)

The Board noted that the College responses for intake of one year graduate students had been collated and translated into a 6% increase on 2009-10 and a 4% decrease on 2010-11. The data had been provided to the Schools to inform the planning round.

The Board agreed that the decrease in intake would have powerful implications for graduate admissions. It recognised that it may be necessary for departments to introduce a gathered field to compare all applications equitably. Whilst some members argued that the allocation of one year students should be demand-led, others were worried that this would disadvantage those courses with small numbers of outstanding applicants.

The Board were concerned that:

- 1) The intake figures would need adjusting year on year and that a five year review should be introduced;
- 2) It was difficult to apply an accurate cover ratio;
- 3) Intake targets and cover ratios could only be applied to steady-state MPhil courses and provision must be made for new MPhil courses which were not included in the 2009-10 planning round;

- 4) MPhil degrees by thesis and oral only in the Life Sciences were spread across a large number of departments and the cap should operate on a School rather than departmental level;

The Board noted that the Colleges were concerned that the increase in graduate student numbers might exceed the accommodation capacity of the city, although it did appear that more graduate rooms were available in the Colleges than had been expected. The Board agreed that there was a need for a clear policy on graduate numbers and greater collaboration between the Colleges and the University. The Board noted that this matter had been referred to the University and Colleges Joint Committee's Working Group on graduate student numbers.

3663 **Response to limit on Masters student admission**
(Paper 4291)

The Board noted that the Clinical School was under pressure from the NHS to increase academic training for clinicians by way of Masters courses which would be adversely affected by the cap on graduate numbers. The Board agreed to draw this matter to the University and Colleges Joint Committee's Working Group on graduate student numbers. The Chair noted however that College concerns related to the number of one year Masters students and the proposed courses appeared to fall in this category.

Action: Secretary

3663A **Application to introduce a premium fee: MPhil in Multi-Disciplinary Gender Studies**
(Paper 4288).

The Board approved the Department of Geography's request to set the University Composition fee £1300 above the standard fee with effect from 1 October 2012, subject to the consent of the School of the Physical Sciences.