

Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 11 January 2011



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Professor Rallison (Chairman), Professor Barker, Professor Cardwell, Professor Coakley, 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, Dr Biggs, Ms James, Ms Nelson and Ms Pickard in attendance..

Apologies: No apologies were received.

3672 **Minutes**

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

3673 **Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were expressed.

Matters for Report

3674 **Board Membership**

The Chairman welcomed newly appointed members, Professor Barker and Professor Coakley to their first meeting.

Matters for discussion

3675 **Update on graduate admissions**
(Paper 4294)

Dr Biggs spoke to this item. She explained that the number of Masters students submitted by the Schools in the Planning Round was 24% higher in 2010-11 than the number of students admitted in 2009-10 and well in excess of the target of 6% above the 2009-10 numbers. She reported that in response, the Schools overall targets had been reduced and that Schools had the flexibility to distribute the total number between courses and to dispute the conversion ratio for individual courses. The

Schools had nominated representatives with whom the Admissions office could liaise and Schools will be alerted once they achieved 50% of the maximum number of offers. A small number of courses had already closed and a larger number were approaching the 50% threshold.

The Board agreed that:

- i. the disparity between the numbers of Masters students that the Colleges were prepared to admit and the ambition of the Schools was a concern and that a long-term solution was required as a matter of urgency;
- ii. Schools may consider suppressing Masters course which were underperforming, although courses could not be rescinded if offers of admission had been made;
- iii. Variable levels of College membership or the formation of an Approved Society should be discussed;
- iv. It would provide data to address the question of whether the increase in Masters students had resulted in a decrease in student quality together with a breakdown of the proportion of overseas student applications, offers and confirmations.

Action: Head of Graduate Admissions

3676 **Annual Report of the Hardship Awards administered by the Board of Graduate Studies**
(Paper 4295)

The Board received the report.

3677 **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2010**
(Paper 4296)

Ms Nelson spoke to this item. She explained that the PTES took place from February to April 2010. In total, 629 students representing 42 faculties/departments had responded, of which, 30% of respondents were from PGCE students.

85% of respondents had chosen to study at Cambridge due the University's overall reputation, as compared to national value of 38%. In total 86% indicated that their course had met expectations overall.

Students were generally positive about learning resources and the quality of teaching and learning which was higher than the national average. However, assessment and feedback, and personal and professional development were poorly endorsed, with Cambridge performing below the national and Russell Group averages.

The Board noted that the response rate (23%) was low and that the Education Section had set up a working group to consider an institutional strategy on national surveys and mechanisms by which response rates

could be improved. The Board agreed that overall, the results were more positive than the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey and that where appropriate, a breakdown of results by Department should be submitted to the Schools for comment.

Action: Ms Nelson

3678 **Proposal for differential University Composition Fees**
(Papers 4297, 4298, 4299)

The Board approved the following differential fee proposals with effect from 1 October 2012:

- i. An additional fee of £500 for each MPhil within the School of Arts and Humanities with the exception the MPhil in Environmental Design and the MMus which will both increase by £1000 on the 2011-12 rate;
- ii. An additional fee of £4000 for the MPhil in Advanced Chemical Engineering above the standard Home/EU and overseas rates;
- iii. The overseas fee for the MPhil in Economics will be frozen in cash terms at the 2011-12 rate and the Home/EU fee will increase by a further £1000 and that the same fees will apply to the new MPhil in Finance and Economics;
- iv. The Home/EU fee for the MPhil in Planning, Growth and Regeneration will be increased by £3000.

The Board also requested an annual report on the Schools' bursary schemes.

Action: Secretary

3679 **College Fees for Research Council supported students**

The Board noted that the Resource Management Committee had agreed that the University will cover the cost of the College Fee for all new AHRC and ESRC funded students in 2011-12, subject to a permanent solution being reached for 2012-13 entry.

The Board noted that changes in Research Council policy together with the cap on Masters student numbers would by necessity, result in significant policy changes and agreed that there was a risk that Research Council funded students may become less attractive to Colleges.

3680 **Student immigration consultation**
(Paper 4300)

The Board noted that the UKBA had announced a consultation on the reform of Tier 4 (students) of the Points Based Immigration system.

The Board was invited to respond to the Secretary with any comments.

3681 **Request To Appoint External Examiner For Four Years: Rolls-Royce Dtc In High Performance Structural Metallics**
(Paper 4301)

The board approved the request from the degree committee for the faculty of physics and chemistry to appoint the external examiner for the rolls-royce dtc in high performance structural metallics for a period of four years.

Action: Secretary

3682 **Requests to amend the Special Regulations for the MPhil Degree**
(Papers 4302, 4303)

The Board approved the request from the Degree Committee for the Faculty of History for amendments to the Special Regulations for the following MPhil degrees with immediate effect:

Early Modern History
Economic and Social History
Medieval History
Modern European History
Political Thought and Intellectual History

The Board also approved the request from the Degree Committee for the Faculty of Computer Science and Technology for an amendment to the Special Regulations for the MPhil in Advanced Computer Sciences with immediate effect.

3683 **Response to the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2009: School of Technology**
(Paper 4304)

The Board received the report from the School of Technology to the 2009 PRES. Professor Cardwell reported that the School had given serious consideration to the survey and that whilst acknowledging that the response rate was low, had considered it a useful tool in the consideration of changes to current policy and process.

The Board agreed to send the report to other Schools for information.

Action: Secretary

3684 **Examination in Micro- and Nanotechnology Enterprise, 2009-10**

The Board considered the Degree Committee response to the poor performance of a large number of students in the 2009-10 cohort and

what processes it will put in place to monitor and if possible, improve performance in the 2010-11 academical year

The Board agreed that the Secretary should discuss this matter further with the Degree Committee.

Action: Secretary

3685 **Request to rescind formally the MPhil in Management Research**
(Paper 4306)

The Board agreed to the request from the Degree Committee to rescind the MPhil with immediate effect.