

Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 8 February 2011



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

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

Apologies: Professor Ford is on sabbatical leave.

3694 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2011 were approved, subject to the removal of Professor Ford's name, who was erroneously reported as being in attendance.

3695 **Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were expressed.

Matters for Report

3696 **Chairman's Report**

Professor Rallison notified the Board that the THES had recently reported that some Universities had already increased their fees for Masters level courses in response to the increases in the undergraduate fee and that postgraduate fees were under discussion with the Schools. He also reported with approval that some Schools were considering adopting a gathered field approach for the consideration of graduate applications and/or rescinding MPhil courses in response to the cap on Masters student numbers.

Matters for discussion

3697 **Level of service by the Institute of Continuing Education (IoCE) for MSt Degrees**
(Papers 3887, 4327, 4328)

The Board welcomed the consultation document from the Director of IoCE in response to the General Board's recommendation that IoCE should perform more of the Registry functions for the MSt degree. The Board reviewed the proposals and agreed that a review of the arrangements, regulations and fees of MSt degrees was timely and that the matter should be referred to the General Board.

Action: Education Committee

3698 **Composition of the Degree Committee: Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages**
(Paper 4329)

The Board approved the amendments to the composition of the Degree Committee.

Action: Secretary

3699 **Proposed amendment to the regulations for graduate examination allowances**

The Board noted the recommendation made by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to make clear in the regulations that applications for examination allowances made on the basis of religious observance should be considered.

The Board noted that the dates affected by religious observance were known in advance and that in the majority of cases, religious observance should not affect the examinations. In circumstances where students considered, with appropriate supporting evidence from a religious leader, that their religious observance would affect their ability to attend the examination as normal, it was the responsibility of the students to apply in advance for special arrangements to be made to sit the examination. It also agreed that examination allowance requests should relate only to urgent causes outwith the students prior knowledge or control. The Board agreed that applications for examination allowances made on the grounds of religious observance were acceptable on this basis and would also need to be supported by a relevant religious leader. The Board agreed that the matter should be referred to the University's Legal Services Offices for advice on the appropriate form of words before making a change to regulation 12 of the General Regulations for Admission as a Graduate Student and regulation 16 of the General Regulations for the MSt degree, the

phrase 'mitigating circumstances' was considered too loose in this context.

Action: Secretary

3700 **Request to put course into abeyance: MSt in Modernism**
(Paper 4320)

The Board approved a request from the Degree Committee for the Faculty of English that the MSt in Modernism is put into abeyance with retrospective effect from 1 October 2010.

Action: Secretary

3701 **Student Complaints Procedure: Stage 2**
(Paper 4331)

The Board agreed that it was appropriate for Departments or Degree Committees to assume the responsibility to consider all complaints from graduate students submitted under Stage 2 of the Student Complaints Procedure.

3702 **Registration of probationary students for the PhD Degree**
(Paper 4332)

The Board agreed that it was in the best interest of the student, and in compliance with HEFCE, Research Council policy and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees that Degree Committees complied with regulation 9 of the General Regulations for Admission as a Graduate Student which requires that the progress examination is held not later than the end of the long vacation of the first academic year.

Action: Secretary

3703 **Plagiarism: Policy, procedure and guidance for staff and Examiners**
(Paper 4333)

The Board reviewed the documentation redrafted in respect of the information available to staff and examiners for cases when plagiarism is suspected. The Board welcomed the consistency in approach and approved the guidelines for publication.

Action: Secretary

3704 **ESRC Doctoral Training Centre**
(Paper 4334)

The Board received the details of the new ESRC DTC, which equates to 26 studentships in 2011-12. It noted that although ESRC will no

longer make any separate provision for the College fee, the DTC may be used to meet the College Fee albeit at the expense of student numbers.

3705 **Graduate Admissions Update**
(Paper 4335)

The Head of Graduate Admissions spoke to this item, explaining that when compared to last year, there has been a 15% rise in applications and a 3% rise in conditional offers. These increases could, in part, be explained by the earlier overseas funding deadline. Following planning round discussions, three Schools have returned revised plans and course quotas that fall within the requested caps. One School will be providing revised figures once 75% of the maximum offers for each course have been made. It is likely that the other two Schools will take a similar approach.

Dr Biggs further reported that Professor Rallison had written to all Colleges asking if they could increase their places for the 2011-12 entry, over and above the figures submitted in September 2010. Two Colleges have responded so far, with increases factored into the revised cap.

3706 **Application For A New Stream For The MPhil In English Studies**
(Paper 4336)

The Board approved the proposal for a new stream, Modern and Contemporary Literature, within the MPhil in English Studies with effect from 1 October 2012.

Action: Secretary

3707 **Application For A New MSt In Building History**
(Paper 4337)

The Board approved the proposal from the Faculty of English for a new MSt in Building History to commence 1 October 2011. The Board noted that since the research component appears to comprise no more than 45% of the total mark, it may be appropriate for it to be classified as a PGT course.

Action: Education Committee

3708 **Request To Admit Part-Time PhD Students**
(Paper 4338)

The Board approved the proposal from the Degree Committee for the Faculty Music to admit part-time PhD students.

Action: Secretary