

Open Business

minutes

**Board Meeting on 23 May 2006 held in the
CRASSH buildings, 17 Mill Lane**



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Dr PC Hewett (Chair), Dr GMW Cook, Professor MJ Daunton, Dr LRR Gelsthorpe Dr LEA Howe, Professor ML Jacobus, Professor SK Rankin, Dr F Leeper, with Dr LE Friday as Secretary, Dr K Maxwell, Ms L Burton and Mr A Broadbent (Graduate Union).

Apologies were received from Professor G Amaratunga, Professor LF Gladden, Professor BJ Sahakian & Mrs L Whitebread.

Professor WA Brown, Professor GP Hawthorn, Professor RG Osborne and Dr J Runde were on sabbatical leave.

1014 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2006 were signed as a correct record.

Matters for report

1015 New Internet-based TOEFL tests (Paper 2271 refers)

The Board noted TOEFL is gradually replacing its computer and paper-based English language tests with an internet-based test.

1016 AHRC review of studentship competition

The Board noted that the AHRC has established a working group to review the existing student-led open competition.

The Board also noted that institutions had been asked to supply data on the time commitment by academics and administrators in dealing with the current

competition and that the Secretary will attend a meeting with the working group and will be gathering the views of the Faculties.

1017 AUT action: effect on graduate examinations
(Paper 2295 refers)

The Board agreed, in fairness to the students, and within the limits required to uphold the academic standards of the university's examination processes:

- 1) For examinations involving a *thesis and oral only*, for which each examination is arranged individually for each student, examinations should go ahead as planned wherever it is possible to find examiners who are willing to act.
- 2) For examinations involving *taught elements*, unless it is essential for the purposes of moderating marks across the whole MPhil class that all marks for the whole cohort are before the Board of Examiners at the same time, an individual whose mark sheet is complete should not have his or her marks held back because another member of the cohort does not have a complete set of marks.

While the Board generally believed that students should be treated even-handedly, in these circumstances, they did not believe that unfairness to the whole cohort is preferable to unfairness to a subgroup. The Board were also aware that class-sheets are frequently incomplete in any case, as one or more candidates may have an allowance to submit work or be re-examined later than the rest of the cohort.

- 3) Where the marksheet for one MPhil is unaffected, the Board did not believe that the results for that MPhil should be held back if the marksheet for another MPhil in the same Department or Faculty is incomplete; the same principle applies as in 2, with the additional reason that each MPhil has a separate set of examiners, including a different external examiner.
- 4) The Board would, therefore, expect a Degree Committee not to hold back a course or an individual for which there are no marking problems.
- 5) If it is certain that a candidate cannot be approved for the degree at the normal time, he or she should be informed as soon as possible.
- 6) In achieving the above, academic standards should not be compromised.

It was further agreed that these guidelines should be made known to the Degree Committees at the earliest opportunity.

The Board also noted the position of the AHRC and ESRC regarding the completion of 'examination results' forms for their respective competitions.

Matters requiring discussion

1018 Word limit for the PhD in the Judge Business School
(Paper 2272 refers)

The Board approved the proposed clarification of the word limit.

1019 Research Ethics Working Group

The Board nominated the Secretary to represent the interests of graduate students; Dr Gelsthorpe agreed to advise as required.

1020 Private loans for UK students: proposal for a pilot scheme
(Paper 2294 refers)

The Board were content to go ahead with a pilot scheme starting in October 2006 under the following arrangements:

- the pilot should be limited to graduate students;
- the Board's Studentships office would be the sole point of contact with Sallie Mae for the University (in order to co-ordinate the scheme and keep an overview of the applications and payments);
- Sallie Mae would not be afforded any commercial preference, nor would BGS promote the loans, but simply provide a link to the Sallie Mae UK loan website through its funding web pages.

The Board noted that College Bursars and Tutors and the Graduate Union were happy with these arrangements.