

Open Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 16 January 2007 held in Seminar Room G, 17 Mill Lane



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Professor WA Brown (Chair), Dr GMW Cook, Dr LRR Gelsthorpe (from Item 1143), Dr PC Hewett, Professor RG Osborne, Professor BJ Sahakian, Mr K Mohaddes with Dr LE Friday as Secretary, Dr C Maxwell, Miss KJ Wilkinson and Ms B Bowers in attendance.

Apologies: Prof GAJ Amaratunga, Professor LF Gladden, Professor GP Hawthorn, Dr CR Hiley, Professor ML Jacobus, Professor SK Rankin, Dr N Tooke, Ms CL Burton and Mrs L Whitebread.

Dr J Runde was on sabbatical leave.

1137 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2006 were signed as a correct record.

Matters for report

1138 Membership of the Board: category (f)

Mr Mohaddes was welcomed to his first meeting as the Graduate Student elected to the General Board.

Matters requiring discussion

1139 Membership of the Board: category (c)

It was noted that the General Board had not yet elected a new member to replace Professor Hawthorn but that Dr David Jefferson from the Department of Chemistry had indicated that he would be pleased to be nominated.

1140 Writing up status and fees
(Paper 2604 refers)

The Board considered the case for creating 'writing-up' status and reinstating the fee for continuing beyond the minimum number of research terms. It was agreed:

- a) to create 'writing up' status for students continuing beyond the minimum research terms ie terms 10-12 for the full-time 3-year PhD, terms 16-21 of the part-time PhD; (terms 10-12 fall within the envelope of the 4-year PhD and full fees are payable for the entire period)
- b) to reinstate an existing fee liability for terms beyond this minimum
- c) to set this fee as low as possible at first, to cover the nominal supervision fee (ie to charge £60 per term); the fee should rise in due course to around the median for UK institutions;
- d) as an incentive to stay on the register and finish in good time, no fee would be charged for the tenth term providing the thesis is submitted within 21 days of the start of the 11th term (or 17th term part-time);
- e) 'writing-up students would have no right to use of labs and other arrangements for acquiring new data on the grounds that the Board expected the research for the PhD not to extend beyond 9 terms and the thesis to be submitted within 10 terms; writing-up students would, however, retain the right to use of libraries, computing services, desk space, and other central services (such as the Counselling Service);
- f) in recognition of the wide range of variation in research methods, however, Faculties should be free to specify what entitlement the writing-up fee would confer to students within their remit.

The student members expressed concern about reinstating such a charge, particularly if Colleges followed the University's lead by applying an additional College Fee.

The Board agreed to consult the Graduate Tutors' Committee and the Cambridge Trusts and to return to the question of the timing of the introduction of, and mechanism of collecting, a writing-up fee.

1141 Payment of non-UTO Supervisors and Advisors
(Papers 2605 & 2606 refer)

The Board agreed to extend the payment of the supervision fee (currently £55 per term) to supervisors of students in the writing-up period (ie terms 10-12 for the full-time PhD and terms 16-21 for the part-time degree). A nominal fee of £20 per term for Advisors was also agreed.

1142 Career Development and Transferable Skills Training (Roberts)
(Papers 2607 & 2608 refer)

A report on the activities of the Transferable Skills Training Steering Committee was received. Ms Wilkinson reported that progress was being made but that funding for non-Research Council students would now be sought. It was noted that much of the TST money is devolved and TST activity at Cambridge is driven by 'bottom-up'

initiatives and that it is important to engage the University at the level of the Pro-Vice Chancellors.

It was also noted that it is still difficult to engage students in TST, but that take-up is improving. Colleges are also considering their contribution, perhaps in terms of supplying training 'credits'.

1143 Code of Practice for graduate courses with significant taught elements
(Paper 2611 refers)

The Board agreed to provide feedback on the draft document before distribution for consultation. In particular, further amendment of the sections on plagiarism, the role of External Examiners, and the status of the viva might be needed.

1144 Review of Graduate Education – Second Report to the General Board
(Paper 2612 refers)

The report was welcomed by the Board. Progress towards the formal recognition of a 'graduate school' in Biological and Medical and Veterinary Sciences was welcomed and the Board noted that discussions were well advanced with the officers of the graduate school concerning the constitution of this body and devolution of certain powers and responsibilities. The Schools concerned would be looking at the financial implications; the Board agreed that resources would need to follow any reorganisation of structures and functions. It was agreed that some co-ordination of graduate studies at School level is vital for planning (especially in view of the devolution by most Research Councils of their studentship activities) and the Board hoped that this trial could provide a model for other Schools in future.

It was further agreed that a central core of knowledge and expertise at the Board of Graduate Studies would continue to be needed to provide quality assurance and both specialised and generic support across Schools.

1145 Plagiarism
(Paper 2614 refers)

The Board reconsidered the results of its earlier review of the first year of the plagiarism procedures in the light of comments from the Board of Examinations. It was agreed that 'naming and shaming' might be too harsh. No conclusion was therefore reached on the nature of penalties, other than it may be advisable to wait for a national yardstick to be proposed.

It was noted, however, that strictly academic marking-down for poor scholarship would be evident on a student's transcript and that, in minor cases, this would be sufficient to encourage effort to avoid plagiarism; in more serious cases, might the fact of a further penalty for plagiarism also appear on the transcript?

The Board welcomed the trial of the detection software, Turnitin, which would run to the end of March. A review of the pilot would come before the Board so that a recommendation could be made about taking out a software licence.

1146 English for Academic Purposes
(Papers 2620 & 2632 refer)

The Board note with pleasure the on-going financial support from the central bodies for the EAP course and agreed that a small charge for in-session training would be reasonable. The Board contested the idea that they did not exercise sufficient vigilance over language attainment at admission but noted that Faculties often made special pleading for candidates to be admitted with borderline scores. It might not be unreasonable, therefore for Faculties to contribute to the cost.

1147 AHRC submission survey 2007
(Papers 2625 & 2626 refer)

It was noted with regret that the Faculty of Law will be unable to submit any applications in the 2007 and 2008 competitions due to low submission rates, and that an appeal against the decision on the grounds of the very small number of candidates involved had been rejected by AHRC. Two other Faculties have been put on notice of blacklisting if this year's results fall below the threshold set by AHRC.

1148 AHRC studentships: arrangements for payments in 2007
(Paper 2627 refers)

The Board noted that responsibility for managing the payment of studentships will be passed to institutions with effect from October 2007. It was noted that no provision was made by AHRC for any administrative costs. The Schools involved have made it clear that they do not wish to manage the fund and the burden will therefore fall on the BGS Studentships Office. Further resource for this office will be needed to manage the AHRC's and ESRC's devolved schemes.

1149 Proposal for a new MPhil in Land Economy Research and suppression of the MPhil in Land Economy (Option B); revised proposal
(Papers 2609 & 2649 refer)

The Board approved, for their part, the amended proposal and Programme Specification.

1150 MPhils in Land Economy; change in course length
(Paper 2610 refers)

The Board supported the proposal to bring all courses offered in Land Economy to 10 months duration.

1151 Examination for the MPhil Degree in Computational Biology
(Papers 2648 & 2652 refer)

The change in options was noted. However, the Board did not have sufficient information to judge whether a written paper could be introduced at this stage for

2006-07, regardless of whether or not this was what the students had been told to expect.

1152 Constitutions of Degree Committees

1152.1 Earth Sciences & Geography

(Paper 2654 refers)

The Board agreed with the proposed change to the Constitution of the Degree Committee to include the Director of the Scott Polar Research Institute *ex officio*.

1152.2 Modern & Medieval Languages

(Paper 2655 refers)

The Board agreed with the proposed change to the Constitution of the Degree Committee to include the Directors of two new MPhil courses.