

Open Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 13 February 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, Professor GP Hawthorn, Dr PC Hewett, Dr CR Hiley, Professor ML Jacobus, Professor RG Osborne, Professor SK Rankin 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 BJ Sahakian, Mr K Mohaddes, Dr N Tooke, Ms CL Burton and Mrs L Whitebread.

Dr J Runde was on sabbatical leave.

1164 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2007 were signed as a correct record, except to note that Professor Jacobus had been present.

Matters for report

1165 Membership of the Board: category (c) and co-opted member

The Board noted with pleasure the appointment by the General Board of Dr David Jefferson to membership in category (c).

1166 Part-time research courses

Applications by the Department of History of Art and King's College to admit part-time research students were approved.

1167 Student Complaints Procedure
(Paper 2712 refers)

The publication by the Council of a revised procedure for the formal stage of the Student Complaints Procedure without consulting the Board was noted. The Secretary was asked to write to the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Student Matters to seek confirmation of the process by which the new procedure had been brought forward and to express surprise at the lack of consultation.

Matters requiring discussion

1168 Membership of the Board: category (e)

The Board was pleased to note that Professor Rankin was willing to serve another term and agreed to co-opt her for a further three years.

1169 Examiners' fees for the MPhil Degree
(Papers 2667 & 2668 refer)

The current payments to MPhil examiners were considered in the light of proposals to raise examiners' fees for the Tripos. It was agreed that there could be no simple metric for comparison with either the Tripos or the PhD examination in terms of the amount of work or responsibility, so it was decided to aim simply to match the Tripos rates while keeping the thesis examination rate at about half that for the PhD.

The following rates were agreed:

Appointed as examiner	£110*	(from £44)
Examination of a thesis	£70	(from £60)
Oral examination	£17	(from £15)
Examination of a paper	£5	(as now)
External examiner for the cohort	£600	(from £144)

*It was agreed that rates for the 2-year MPhil should be the same as for the 1-year course.

The Board noted that these increases would increase the budget for payments to examiners by about £30,000 in a total expenditure of about £495,000. Given that the current budget is about £330,000, it has been necessary to ask for a substantial increase in the budget to cover not only present expenditure but also the new rates.

1170 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey
(Paper 2674 refers)

The Board agreed that it would be in the interests of the University and its graduate students to take part in this survey of research experience, particularly as a substantial proportion of the questions relate to transferable skills training (TST). It would also add value to benchmarking across the sector to have Cambridge participating.

Ms Wilkinson (TST officer at the Board) would be the main contact for the survey and would work in conjunction with TST officers at Staff Development.

1171 Plagiarism
(Papers 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679 & 2680 refer)

Detection software

The Board welcomed the feedback from academic colleagues who had tested the detection software and agreed to recommend that a licence is purchased forthwith, with a contribution from the Board's budget to meet the cost.

It was noted that a disclaimer notice would have to be drawn up to inform students of the use of the software and their rights in respect of their personal data. An example was considered and it was agreed to seek legal advice.

Plagiarism awareness

A proposal from CUSU and GU to hold a 'plagiarism awareness day' early in Easter Term was warmly supported. It was noted that such an event should be held in Michaelmas Term in future years.

'Oxbridge Essays'

The Board considered the activities of the essay bank business 'Oxbridge Essays' in attempting to recruit current graduate students to supply material in exchange for 'scholarships'. The Board agreed this to be an attempt deliberately to degrade the academic integrity of the University. It was agreed to issue a strong statement to this effect as part of the 'Plagiarism Statement', aimed at those who might supply as well as those who might be tempted to use the service.

Given the difficulty of detecting a case of supplying material to essay banks, it was unclear how any system of penalties might work, but it was noted that Oxford is also considering this matter. It was agreed to consult the Advocate and Proctors and to consult further with Oxford.

1172 Proposal for collaborative PhD scheme with the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*), Singapore
(Papers 2694 & 2701 refer)

The Board considered the proposal to set up a PhD collaboration with A* on the initiative of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for research. The Board noted the support of Heads of Department and the Schools for such a collaboration and the arrangements that made it possible for A* graduates to spend two years in both Cambridge and Singapore studying according to Cambridge regulations for the PhD degree. It was agreed that the scheme appeared to meet the criteria for PhD collaboration but it was agreed to ask for a five-year review point to be added to the agreement.

1173 Writing up status and fees
(Papers 2695, 2696 & 2697 refer)

The Board received the comments of the Graduate Tutors' Committee and the Director of the Cambridge Trusts and agreed to confirm their intention to introduce a 'writing-up' fee for terms 10-12 (except for candidates submitting before the end of the 10th term, who will be exempt). Those on 4-year PhD programmes would pay the whole fee up to term 12; the Board agreed that supervisors requiring 3-year PhD students to carry out further full-time research activity after the ninth term might reasonably be asked to find the full fee from their research funds.

It was agreed that the writing-up fee should be a percentage of the Home UCF and it was agreed that 5% would bring the total in line with fees levied by other UK institutions, should Colleges also decide to levy a comparable fee.

It was agreed to consult the Graduate Tutors further about when the new status and charge should be introduced. The Bursars would need to be consulted about any possible College fee.

It was further confirmed that, while entitlement to central services and supervision should be automatic during the writing up period, details of other types of entitlement are so subject-specific that these would have to be defined by individual Faculties. Colleges should be encouraged to define what entitlement 'writing-up' students would have.