

# ***Open Business***

## *minutes*

**Board Meeting on 22 May 2007 held at  
4 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 SK Rankin, Dr J Runde and Professor BJ Sahakian, with Dr LE Friday as Secretary and Dr L Biggs in attendance.

Apologies: Prof GAJ Amaratunga, Ms B Bowers, Dr DA Jefferson, Dr C Maxwell, Mr K Mohaddes, Professor RG Osborne, Dr N Tooke, and Mrs L Whitebread.

Dr Biggs was welcomed to the meeting as incoming Head of Graduate Admissions. Dr Hewett was congratulated on his election to a personal Chair in Astrophysics. The Secretary informed the Board of her intention to stand down at the end of September 2007.

### **1228 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting on 24 April 2007 were signed as a correct record.

### **Matters requiring discussion**

#### **1229 Maintenance rates 2008-09 (Paper 2789 refers)**

The Board noted the Director of the Trust' acceptance of their proposal for the costs for 2008-09 and that a new consideration of the matter would be in order next year.

#### **1230 Word Limits for the PhD and MLitt in International Studies (Paper 2796 refers)**

The proposed word limits were approved and the Board agreed to add them to the web documentation for graduate students forthwith.

1231 Examination for the MPhil Degree in Medieval & Renaissance Literature  
(Paper 2797 refers)

The proposal to require a dissertation, in line with comparable courses, was welcomed.

1232 Examination for the MPhil Degree in Computational Biology  
(Paper 2798 refers)

The Board noted with regret that the changes pertain to an examination about to be taken. They agreed the change *de facto* for this year and agreed to support a change in the ordinances for 2007-08 to include an unseen examination.

1233 MPhil in Development Studies: change to schedule of shared courses  
(Paper 2799 refers)

The Board noted the need to change the schedule of courses with which papers can be shared, necessitated by the rescinding of Land Economy Option B.

1234 Student Complaints, allowances and academic integrity  
(Paper 2807 refers)

The Board strongly supported the proposal for a single central office for dealing with student complaints, appeals and other matters concerning academic integrity and discipline. This service would require legal advisers and would co-ordinate and oversee a framework of university review bodies (as now) to provide independent review. The powers and responsibilities of these in relation to the Boards of Examinations and Graduate Studies and other bodies would need to be clearly established. A comparative review of the various regulations would be needed.

The Board agreed that the establishment of such a service would be a major project and gave its support to this being set up as soon as possible.

1235 Admission of candidates to women's Colleges  
(Paper 2817 refers)

The Board regretted the difficulty experienced by the all-female Colleges in recruiting students this year due to a problem in the assignment of candidates under the CamSIS College distribution model.

The CamSIS team were thanked for their rapid action to correct the problem once detected and the Board's Admissions staff for working on the manual redistribution of women applicants to redress the imbalance.

It was noted that the 'preference' box system on the application form was proving to be unhelpful and that the boxes to exclude 'all-female' and 'all-graduate' colleges had been removed from the web forms. The Board further agreed to recommend that the Colleges review the College allocation system in general.

1236 Plagiarism

Board of Graduate Studies  
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(Papers 2819, 2820, 2821 refer)

The Board considered the use of plagiarism detection software in the light of advice from the Legal Services Team, the views of CUSU and the Plagiarism Working Group and experience at other institutions. The Board agreed to recommend

- 1) plagiarism awareness training should be offered to all graduate students as early as possible in their studies and PhD students should be given 'top-up' training in their third year, perhaps as part of the Transferable Skills Training programme;
- 2) the *primary* use of the software should be to *teach* plagiarism out of the system;
- 3) students should be able to try out their own work using the software during Michaelmas Term as part of Faculty-based teaching of good academic practices;
- 4) all students should see a full explanation of the implications of submitting work to the system and sign a formal agreement before using the software themselves or having their work submitted for screening;
- 5) no use should be made of the software in graduate examinations until these agreements are in place (the Board would expect the use of the software to begin not earlier than 1 October 2007);
- 6) the *secondary* use of the software should be to act as a deterrent to potential plagiarists and as an incentive to learning good academic practice;
- 7) the *tertiary* use of the software should be to enable examiners to detect plagiarized material in examinations and the extent and source of the plagiarized material;
- 8) random selection of scripts and/or targetting suspected scripts would fulfil these last two functions; blanket testing would be unwieldy and would not be supported by students;
- 9) the plagiarism awareness campaign should proceed in partnership with the student body.

The Board further recommended that the University should build on the success of the recent Plagiarism Awareness Day by promoting and supporting a programme of awareness training which is a compulsory part of the early training of all graduate students. This could include lectures given locally in MPhil courses etc using resources being developed by the Plagiarism Working Group and displayed on the project's website [www.cam.ac.uk/plagiarism](http://www.cam.ac.uk/plagiarism)

Such training would ideally happen in Michaelmas Term as part of normal teaching. For example, 'practice essays' could be routinely submitted and the students allowed to see, and to learn from, their own results. PhD students would need a 'reminder' session in the third year.

The Board understood the use of the software in teaching mode to require the use of students' names (ie personal data) but we that it need not involve storage of the material in the commercial database (ie would not have implications for copyright). However, use in examinations could involve identification by examination number and institution only (ie not involve personal data) but would involve storage in the database.

The student concerned must be made aware of what is happening to his or her work and the consequences of submitting it to a commercial database. The principle areas

of concern are: data protection (submission with the work of personal data, such as 'name'); copyright (who owns and has the right to use the work once submitted).

These matters must be covered in an agreement to be signed by the student before testing can begin. A draft agreement, which had been passed as fit for purpose by the Legal Services team, was considered. However, separate documents might be preferable for the use of software in teaching mode and for the submission of examination materials. The Board agreed that the following documentation would be required:

- a generic information document issued at admission or during induction training;
- a coversheet for examination materials (including PhD theses) confirming the student's understanding of the University's rules on plagiarism and the implications of the use of the software.

The Board was unclear whether or not a student could object to having his or her work tested; this would need to be looked into.

The Board agreed to lend its support and encouragement to the Plagiarism Working Group comprising members of Board of Graduate Studies, Board of Examinations, CUSU, Graduate Union, CARET and academic staff, to continue to meet to carry forwards the recommendations under the joint aegis of the student bodies and the two examination boards.

1237 MPhil costing model  
(Paper 2824 refers)

Dr Runde was thanked for his efforts to clarify the MPhil costing model and improve the advice and support available to users. The costing template and the MPhil course proposal template should be amended to provide further information.