

Open Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 11 March 2008 at 4 Mill Lane



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Prof WA Brown (Chair), Dr W Allison, Prof M Blamire, Dr GMW Cook, Dr LRR Gelsthorpe, Prof J Heal, Dr CR Hiley, Prof I Leslie, Ms KA Linder, Mr LS Liu, Prof RG Osborne, Mr MR Younger with Dr K Maxwell as Secretary and Dr LM Biggs, Ms SJ Pickard, Mr M Smith and Ms J Wilkinson in attendance.

Apologies: Prof GAJ Amaratunga, Prof BJ Sahakian

Professor PC Hewett and Professor SK Rankin are on sabbatical leave

3192 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 12th February 2008 were signed as a true record.

Matters for report

3193 **Board Membership**

The Board were please to learn that Professor Mark Blamire (Materials Science & Metallurgy) had agreed to join as a co-opted member (Class e).

Matters requiring discussion

3194 **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2007 results** (Paper 3201 refers)

The Board was pleased to receive the results of the survey and recommended that the University continues to participate in the scheme. The Board was pleased to see that the response rate was high (~35%), Cambridge rated above average in terms of infrastructure, intellectual climate and skills training, but noted with concern that Cambridge fell below the national average in terms of supervision, assessment and feedback. It was noted that the report would be forwarded to the Councils of the

Board of Graduate Studies
4 Mill Lane

42

07 May 2008

Schools and the Board hoped that issues arising would be taken forward as appropriate.

3195 Domestic Research Studentships: Annual Report
(Paper 3203 refers)

The Board noted the contents of the report of 2007 DRS competition. Given the reduction in the number of home PhD students, the Board agreed that Colleges should be encouraged to participate in the scheme and that the Secretary should circulate details to all Colleges.

3196 Application for renewal of Non-University Institution status: The Animal Health Trust
(Papers 3204 & 3205 refer)

The Board approved the application for renewal of NUI status.

3197 Completion of examination procedure

The Board recognized that significant delays between the submission of the PhD thesis and receipt of the examiners' reports was not acceptable and that examiners should be encouraged to submit their reports as soon as possible. The Board agreed to amend the wording on the guidance notes and to circulate the revised guidelines to Degree Committees.

Revised guidelines (changes are indicated in underscored text)

You are asked to complete the examination with a minimum delay and if possible within two months of receipt of the thesis. If this will not be possible, you must contact the Secretary of the Degree Committee so that the candidate may be made aware and alternative arrangements may be considered. You will appreciate that candidates from overseas may face particular difficulties if their oral examinations are delayed.

3197 Examination Allowances

The Board agreed to form a sub-committee to consider applications for examination allowances by circulation. This should allow for more rapid decision-making during peak periods.

3198 Overseas research Studentships competition 2007
(Paper 3206 refers)

The Board approved the report and were concerned to learn that 37% of applicants who were initially offered an ORS award subsequently withdrew. The Board expressed their hope that this situation would be improved this year with early offers of full-funding made to the top-ranked candidates as soon as possible.

3199 Admissions Statistics by School for entry in Michaelmas Term 2006 and Michaelmas Term 2007
(Paper 3209 refers)

The Board were pleased to receive more detailed information relating to the decrease in the number of home PhD students. The Board noted that the Schools of the Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences and Clinical Medicine had experienced the most severe decrease in the number of home student confirmations. It was agreed to circulate the Paper to the Councils of the Schools.

3200 Board of Graduate Studies Annual Report: 2006-07

The Board were pleased to receive the report in good time and to learn that in an attempt to make the data more accessible, the format of the Report would be different for 2007-08. The continued decrease in the number of home students was flagged as an area of concern. The low institutional PhD submission rate was also discussed and it was noted that there had been a decrease in submission rate for the School of the Arts & Humanities as compared to 2005-06.