Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 11 October, 2011

Present: Professor Hewett (Chairman), Professor Cardwell, Professor Coakley, Dr Cook, Professor Ford, Professor Gelsthorpe, Dr Hiley, Dr Lasenby, Dr Padman, Dr Sargan with Dr Maxwell as Secretary and with Ms Allen, Mr Bennett, Ms Gannon, Ms Watson, Ms Wilkinson and Ms Pickard in attendance.

Apologies: Professor Barker, Professor Goldhill, Professor Heal, Professor Rallison

3821 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July were approved.

3822 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3823 Matters for discussion

Dr Maxwell provided an oral report on a discussion on the future of graduate education that had taken place in the Regent House. The Board noted that concerns had been raised that the Board’s revised constitution did not include any members appointed by the Council. The Board agreed that given the large volume of casework it would support the addition of two further members, to be appointed by the Council.

Action: Secretary
The Board noted that the Director of the MSt should be added to the membership and otherwise approved the revised constitution for the Degree Committee for the Faculty of History.

Action: Secretary

Examination Allowances

The Board approved the documentation, subject to clarification of the limitations which could be applied to allowances made on the grounds of religious observance and amendments to the proposed appeals procedure so that it matched that in place for the Applications Committee in 2011-12.

Action: Secretary

Working Group on English Language Requirement for Admissions

The Board received a report of the working group on English Language requirements.

Cambridge Home/EU Scholarships Scheme (CHESS) 2011

The Board received the annual report of the 2011 CHESS competition. The Board asked the Head of Funding and Fees to investigate whether the uptake of awards had been reduced as a consequence of the introduction of partial funding.

Action: Head of Funding and Fees

Cambridge International Scholarships Scheme (CISS) 2011

The Board received the annual report of the 2011 CISS competition. Discussion centred on the timings of offers, the ranking process and the number of awards available. The Head of Graduate Funding and Fees reported that she was currently involved in talks with the Cambridge Trust and the Development Office regarding this issue.

The Board noted its thanks to the Head of Graduate Funding and Fees and her staff, together with the Committee members for the organisation of both the CHESS & CISS competitions.

Update on Student Operations

The Board noted that a new Student Registry, to be located at 4 Mill Lane, is to be established in the Lent Term 2012. The Student Registry will be formed from a merger of the office of the Board of Examinations,
Student Administration & Records and office of the Board of Graduate Studies and will service all students (whether undergraduate, postgraduate or graduate).

The Graduate Admissions Office and a new International Student Team will be based at 17 Mill Lane together with Educational and Student Policy (formerly the Education Section).

3830 Report on graduate admissions for 2011-12 entry

The Board received a report on graduate admissions. It noted that the number of confirmed Masters student applications was 77 below the cap and that this figure would have reduced further when Admissions stop making unconditional offers on the 7 November (Division of Term)

The Board noted that a number of courses were undersubscribed which might have a knock-on effect on PhD recruitment. In some cases, and in particular for the MPhil by thesis and oral examination only, home applicants may have been disadvantaged as overseas students had applied earlier to meet funding deadlines.

The Board was concerned that the target for admissions had not been met and agreed that more places would have been filled had greater discretion been given to Degree Committees regarding the number of offers they were permitted.

After some discussion the Board agreed to request that the cap should be removed from the MPhil courses which are examined by thesis and oral only. The Board also agreed that it might be appropriate to reconsider the cap for other MPhil course that fed directly into the PhD.

3831 Update on Electronic Data Management (EDM) for graduate admissions

The Board received a report on the introduction of EDM for graduate admissions.

General statistics indicated that applicants were successfully uploading their applications and supporting documents, with 850 applications having been received to date. However, it was noted that departments have been experiencing difficulties using the work-lists and that additional training has been put in place.

Professor Cardwell reported that that EDM was not working well and the additional workload was having a significant impact in administrative offices. He reported that the Department of Engineering had experienced a 30% increase in workload. In addition, he reported that CamSIS was running slowly. He expressed the view that EDM should not have been implemented in the absence of a pilot
programme. Professor Cardwell’s views were endorsed by a number of members of the Board. However, others highlighted the potential negative impact on the University’s reputation externally had yet another year passed without the implementation of an on-line application system.

The Board also noted its concerns that users may be able to view applicants’ details in roles which may not be directly related to the admissions process.

Dr Maxwell apologised for the problems associated with EDM and reported that following an emergency meeting with various parties, including the Head of MISD in August, a decision had been made to introduce EDM in September. It was hoped that adequate resource was available to produce real performance improvements as issues were brought to light by users.

The Board asked that their comments should be conveyed to the Head of MISD.

Action: Secretary