Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 10 January 2012

Present: Professor Cardwell (Chairman), Dr Cook, Dr Fara, Professor Ford, Dr Hiley, Dr Lasenby, Dr Padman, with Dr Maxwell as Secretary and with Ms Allen, Mr Bennett, Ms Green, Mr Parsons, Ms Pickard and Ms Watts in attendance.

Apologies: Professor Forsyth

3867 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2011 were approved.

3868 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3869 Preliminary Comments

Prof Cardwell confirmed the revised remit of the Board and identified three key areas of business for forthcoming agendas:

(i) EDM;
(ii) supervision of research students;
(iii) diversity of college provision for graduate students.

He added that the interface between the Board of Graduate Studies and the University’s Education Committee continued to be fundamental to establishing and maintaining good practice and that he expected a significant feed-through of information.

3870 Approval for administration for courses leading the MSt degree (Paper 4633)

The General Board proposes that the responsibility for approval of students for admission, offer making and confirmation of admissions
rests with ICE Strategic Committee and that the MSt admissions processes are managed by the ICE Registry with effect from 1 September 2011, to coincide with the start of the 2012-13 recruitment cycle.

The Board approved the General Board’s proposal and consequent changes to the regulations for the MSt.

It was noted that the Board of Graduate Studies would remain the court of appeal for MSt students.

3871 Consideration and resolution of complaints relating to inadequate supervision

The Board noted that the OIA had recently determined that “where it can be shown that poor supervision may have impacted on a student’s performance […] there should be a mechanism for this impact to be considered […] as an application for an examination allowance”.

The University’s Legal Services Office had advised that references to “grave cause” in regulations relating to examination allowances should be interpreted as including inadequate supervision as a ground which may justify granting an examination allowance.

The Board considered the recommendation that it should entertain applications for an examination allowance under applicable regulations, where there has been a finding by a reviewer under the Student’s Complaints Procedure (SCP) that a student has been inadequately supervised and that it is likely that the candidate has consequently been hindered in preparing for or taking the examination or any part of the examination. Where an allowance is granted, it is likely to take the form of the candidate being allowed to submit a new thesis or otherwise be re-examined under specified conditions. It would remain a possibility that the Board may refuse to grant such an allowance, in particular if a candidate raised the matter of supervision as an ex post facto explanation for poor performance in the examination.

The Board noted that the timing of complaints regarding inadequate supervision should be considered as part of any appeal.

The Board approved the recommendation. It was emphasised that the decision whether or not to grant an allowance remains a matter for the academic judgment of the Board, taking into account any recommendations made by a reviewer under the SCP.

It was agreed that appropriate guidance in this regard should be provided to Degree Committees and Colleges and should appear in the appropriate Code(s) of Practice. It was noted that this guidance should clarify that the term “supervisor” included, for example, a course director on a taught course.
Action: Secretary to the Board

It was noted that a paper from CUSU / GU regarding supervision would be considered at the next meeting of the Graduate Tutors’ Committee and it was agreed that it would be helpful for the Board to receive this paper at a future meeting.

Action: Secretary to the Board

The Board recommends to the General Board amendment to Regulation 12 of the General Regulations for Admission as a Graduate Student to include candidates for all graduate degrees, with the exception of the MSt.