Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 7 February 2012

Present: Professor Cardwell (Chairman), Dr Cook, Dr Dixon, Professor Ford, Professor Forsyth, Dr Lasenby, Dr Padman, with Ms Allen as Secretary and with Mr Bennett, Ms Wilkinson and Ms Watts in attendance.

Apologies: Board members: Dr Fara
Student Registry: Ms Green, Ms Pickard

Professor Martin Dixon and Professor Christopher Forsyth were welcomed to the Board.

3879 Minutes

Minute 3870: it was noted that the changes would come into effect on 1 September 2012, not 2011 to coincide with the 2013 / 14 recruitment cycle.

Subject to this change, the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2012 were approved.

3880 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Matters for Report

3881 Dates of meetings for 2012 / 13

The following dates were approved.

2012

9 October
13 November
It was noted that the dates of the congregations result in there being two meetings in April 2013.

Meetings will take place in the Meeting Room at the Student Registry, 4 Mill Lane, starting at 4.15pm.

3882 Examination allowances

The Secretary reported that the introduction of Notes for Guidance: Applications for Examination Allowances, approved by the Board on 11 October 2011, will be graced on 10 February 2012 and that the Notes for Guidance will be published on the new Student Registry website when it goes live on 20 February 2012.

Matters for Discussion

3883 Consideration and resolution of complaints relating to inadequate supervision

3883.1 CUSU / GU paper: Experiences of supervision by Cambridge Research Graduates

Paper 4652 was received. The paper had been produced by the Graduate Students’ Union and CUSU for initial consideration at the Graduate Tutors’ Committee. During discussion the following points were made:

(i) Cambridge underperforms nationally and in the Russell group on matters of supervision; this is mirrored in the findings of the paper;

(ii) there is inconsistency across Faculties and it is possible to identify good practice as well as areas for improvement;
(iii) the definition of good practice will vary across disciplines;

(iv) there is an increased risk of litigation in providing supervision which is deemed inadequate;

(v) Degree Committees should be made aware of the findings and be invited to contribute to consultation on how to improve areas of concern;

(vi) possible remedies include the application of quantitative measures where possible to ascertain standards of supervision and to introduce training and ultimately sanctions where appropriate.

3883.2 It was noted that at its meeting on 25 January 2012 the General Board Education Committee had agreed that a small Working Group (to include a College representative and a representative of Board of Graduate Studies) should be established, should consult as appropriate and should report back to the Committee in the Easter Term. GBEC minute 480.6.2

3883.3 It was agreed that at its April meeting the Board should consider a paper identifying issues and some possible ways forward under the following headings: progression; supervision; assessment.

ACTION SECRETARY

3883.4 The paper would be for consideration by General Board Education Committee and was likely to be an evolving document which might ultimately result in the production of Guidelines for Good Practice.

3884 Update on Electronic Data Management (EDM) for graduate admissions

Ms Wilkinson reported on the progress of the introduction of EDM.

- There has been a 68% decrease in paper applications, together with a 12% increase in applications.

- CamSIS is developing two new reports: one to allow departments to see all of their students’ conditions in a single place, rather than looking-up each student individually, and one to show when more supporting documents have been added to a student who appears in a work-list.
• Users are still receiving feedback via the bulletin, although issues are becoming less frequent.

• No more resources will be assigned to changes until the end-to-end review of the business process is complete and phase two has been planned. This is likely to be Long Vacation 2012 at the earliest.

Professor Ford reported that schools find it difficult to work out how many MPhil offers have been made and departments report that the fee for on-line applications has caused a 1/3 drop in applications. It was suggested that over-subscribed courses might have a different application fee assigned to them. It was noted that a fee waiver is available.

It was agreed that the concern about the fee for online applications should be referred to the Head of Student Operations for consideration.

ACTION ACTING HEAD OF GRADUATE ADMISSIONS