Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 9 October 2012

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

Apologies: Dr Dixon

3953 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2012 were approved.

3954 Matters Arising

3940 Special examination arrangements for research degrees examined by thesis and oral only

Following a request by a Degree Committee, further clarification regarding the requirements for special consideration will be disseminated.

3955 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

Matters for Discussion

3956 Proposed changes to the Cambridge Commonwealth and Cambridge Overseas Trust
(Paper 4785)

The Board received the paper from the Director of the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust and Overseas Trust which outlined proposed
changes at the Trusts and detailed plans for future fundraising. The Board noted that the proposed changes would address the perceived inequality between UK and overseas students, had the potential to improve our competitiveness (particularly in respect to US institutions) and provide a basis to leverage additional funding. There was agreement that funding should be flexible and awards made earlier in order to be able to attract the best students and to compete with other institutions. The Board emphasised that fundraising should be coordinated and undertaken in collaboration with the Schools where possible. It agreed that the proposals offered the opportunity to reverse the downward trend in the recruitment of UK students but should also address concerns regarding EU students, the majority of whom are offered part-funding with the result that many of the best students accept places at competitor institutions that offer full funding.

The Board were particularly concerned that the fundraising should be responsive to areas of academic need to fund students of high academic quality for specific graduate programmes across all disciplines. It noted that the University has already established links with industry which must not be jeopardised and that there would need to be excellent communication with the academic community.

The Board noted that the Graduate Tutors Committee had proposed that the University should consider a central Funding Office (similar to Oxford) and acknowledged that these proposals represented a welcome step in that direction. The Board also expressed their concerns that there should not be competition between different groups of fundraisers, e.g. the Trust, CUDO and the Colleges and discussed whether it was more logical to have two separate organisations involved in funding or whether it was better to have specialist fundraisers within a unified Funding Office.

The Board agreed that donors might appreciate full case studies to enable them to understand how their money had been used. The Board also noted the importance of effective marketing of the University’s funding opportunities to prospective students.

Action: Secretary

3957 Review of the Cambridge Graduate Supervision Reporting System (GCSRS) (Paper 4786)

The Board received the consultation paper submitted by MISD. The Board noted that the reporting system was most important when issues arose with a student, that there was a clear issue with access and ease of use of the system and that the IT should be improved.
It was suggested that CGSRS be used solely for PhD reporting and that Masters student reporting was undertaken using CamCORS. The Board also recognised that it was difficult to determine who should submit the termly report for most MPhil students.

It was agreed that:

- Reporting on CGSRS is important for PhDs;
- Supervisors must receive emails to remind them to submit their reports;
- Students should be told to expect regular reports from their supervisors and that the default position should be that reports should be available as soon as they had been submitted by the Supervisor;
- Reports should be made available to Colleges as soon as they had been submitted by the Supervisor;
- The approval chains are too long;
- Students should be made aware when reports are available;
- Termly reports were appropriate and PhD supervisors should also be encouraged to submit a report in the long vacation;
- Reports should only be available to submit at the end of term but there should be a facility to submit a special/warning report at any time;
- Eligible Supervisors should be paid automatically as soon as possible after submission of the report;
- The need for a reporting system is significant but the changes required are not as radical as suggested in the paper;
- Further consultation with the Degree Committees was required.

Action: Secretary

Request to consider amendment to the Regulations for the Review of Examinations for Postgraduate Qualifications

(Paper 4810)

The Board received the correspondence between the Deputy Academic Secretary and the Chairman of the Review Committee, which considered an amendment to the regulations to permit Examiners (or other interested parties) to attend a hearing of the Review Committee.
The Board agreed that for the most part, representations were made against the examination procedure rather than against individuals or a challenge of their competencies. The Board also agreed that if it were to become mandatory for Examiners to attend hearings it would add considerable delay to proceedings.

However, the Board also noted that Examiners are often closest to the procedure in question and their testimony may be significant in cases of hearsay or allegations of bias and/or prejudice against the candidate.

The Board therefore agreed that it was appropriate for Examiners to be invited to the hearing at the discretion of the Review Committee and recommend an amendment to the regulations accordingly.

Action: General Board’s Education Committee