Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 8 April, 2014

Present: Professor Prager (Chair), Dr Cook, Professor Gelsthorpe, Dr Grounds, Dr Hiley, Dr Padman, Dr Quinn, with Dr Maxwell as Secretary and Professor Redfern, Ms Barlow, Ms Benton, Ms Fage, Ms Green and Miss Reed in attendance.

Apologies: Professor Babinsky
Dr Dixon
Professor Forsyth
Professor Hewett
Dr McLarty

4157 Minutes
The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March, 2014 were approved.

4158 Declarations of Interest
There were none.

4159 Graduate Application Fee
Paper 5153

The Director of the ESS NERC DTP spoke to this item. He explained his concerns that the £50 application fee might deter less wealthy applicants and that the University risked losing strong applicants to competitor institutions that charged a lower fee or did not levy an application fee. He accepted the need for a charge to prevent spurious applications but suggested that the current level of application fee might be lowered or applied more flexibly by departments.
The Board noted that the fee income was significant but that it was not hypothecated to support either the application system in CamSIS or resource within the Graduate Admissions Office.

The Board also noted that there was a mechanism to rebate the fee in cases of hardship but that this process should be better advertised and offered as a fee waiver.

The Board agreed:

(i) All parties should be encouraged to use the GRADSAF and that this would be facilitated by the proposed changes to the application process;

(ii) An application fee was necessary to prevent spurious applications but that it might be reduced to £20 and which could be waived in cases of hardship;

(iii) An additional processing fee of £80 could be applied before the offer was set with a strict deadline by which the applicant must have made the payment;

(iv) The income from the application fee should be used to enhance the applicant experience.

The Board asked the Secretary to explore their recommendations and to refer this matter to the Postgraduate Admissions Committee for further discussion.

4160 Maintainence rates for the academical year 2015-16
(Paper 5154)

The Board approved the rates.

4161 Master's examination arrangements
(Paper 5155)

The Board considered a series of recommendations relating the examination of Master’s degrees. The Head of Educational & Student Policy spoke to this item.

The Board considered in some detail, the recommendation that provision for the MPhil by thesis and oral only should be made within the regulations for the PhD and that this should be achieved by renaming these MPhils as MLitt/MSc.

The Board welcomed the review and broadly supported proposals to rationalise the arrangements for the University’s Master’s degrees, and in particular to incorporate examination for the MPhil by thesis and oral within the regulations for research degrees. However, concern was expressed at the renaming of the MPhil by thesis and oral only as the MSc/MLitt on the grounds that (i) despite the very small numbers involved, there was a significant difference between a failed PhD and a stand-alone degree; (ii) that although a small number of students
elected to register for the MLitt/MSc from the outset, the Cambridge MLitt degree in particular, was generally recognised across the sector as a failed PhD.

The Board concluded that the proposals constitute an appropriate structure for research degrees lasting between 3 and 6 terms. They asked the Secretary and the Head of Educational & Student Policy to consider in greater detail the issues surrounding the failed PhD.

The Board approved all other recommendations.