Unreserved Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 11 November, 2014

Present: Professor Cardwell (Chair), Professor Babinsky, Dr Bampos, Dr Cook, Professor Dixon, Professor Forsyth, Dr Grounds, Dr Hiley, Dr Padman, with Dr Maxwell as Secretary and with Ms Reed, Ms Fage, Ms Gardiner, Ms Wilkinson and Ms Green in attendance. Professor Virgo, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education also attended.

Apologies: Professor Gelsthorpe, Dr McLarty, Dr Quinn

4231 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October, 2014 were approved.

4232 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

4233 Request to increase the level of payment for PhD, MSc and MLitt examination

The Board agreed to increase the fees for examiners to £165, subject to review after three years.

The Board raised concerns over the rates payable to examiners for subsistence and it was confirmed that these expenses were set by the Finance Division.

4234 Additional costs for Graduate Courses

Concern was raised by the Board on the variation across courses and in some cases, individual students. Whilst it was acknowledged that it would be difficult to have a single policy to cover all disciplines, it was agreed that there should be a common approach and that discrimination must be avoided.
The Board agreed that any additional course costs should be made clear to students prior to admission and there should be no further costs once the students had been admitted. Where additional costs were significant, it was felt that departments should instead renegotiate their income from the Composition Fee.

A position paper would be drafted for discussion at the next meeting.

4235 Permission for Supervisor to participate in PhD registration examination

The Board agreed that it was expected that Supervisors would be involved in the assessment of their students. However, the final decision on registration for the PhD degree should be made by someone independent of the student and was ultimately the decision of the Degree Committee.

4236 Independent Chairs for PhD examination

The Board considered a request to allow senior academics within Faculties to act as Independent Chairs.

The Board did not support the request and agreed that it was important to retain the integrity of the examination process. It re-iterated that the Independent Chair is there to advise on procedure only, is not an Examiner and therefore need not be a specialist in the subject area.

The Board agreed that if Faculties could not identify an Independent Chair, they should contact the Secretary who would assist in identifying candidates. The Secretary was also asked to identify a pool of academics willing to serve as an Independent Chair.

4237 Report on workshops for Supervisors of graduate students

The Board received the report and noted their support of the programme and their gratitude to the Course Organiser.

4238 Graduate Admissions Business: English Language proficiency

The Board received a proposal to extend the scores at which it accepts Cambridge English: Advanced and Proficiency to an equivalent level to the current IELTS scores used.

The Board approved the proposal and, in common with undergraduate admissions, agreed to accept CPE at grades A-C and CAE at grades A-B as evidence of satisfactory English language for admission in 2016 onwards.

4239 Requests to be exempt from interviewing MPhil applicants
Professor Virgo spoke to this item and reported concerns across the University regarding the relevance and burden placed on faculties and departments on the need to interview all candidates for the MPhil. He also highlighted the risk that interviewing may result in late offers and the loss of stellar applicants in an increasingly competitive market.

The Board agreed that the emphasis should be on recruiting only the very best students and that this could be achieved if interviews were more selective and focussed on weaker applicants and within those courses with a history of difficulties, for example a disproportionately high failure rate. The Board also agreed that Departments must continue to interview all PhD applicants and any Masters applicants who did not meet either the language or academic condition but to whom the Department wished to make an offer of admission.

The Board agreed that the Secretary would bring to the next meeting suggested criteria to identify applicant profiles and courses that would allow a more nuanced approach to interviewing.

4240

**Updates on student immigration**

The Board received a paper on changes to student immigration.

The Board noted that a number of students were not able to apply for the Doctorate Extension Scheme due to the timing of the February meeting. The Board agreed to ask the Secretary to convene an extraordinary meeting for the approval of candidates in this category during the Lent Term.

The Board noted that Degree Committees must be made aware of such complications when approval of PhD degrees was devolved.