

A meeting of the Board of Examinations was held on Tuesday 7 July 2015 in the Council Room, The Old Schools.

Present: Professor G Virgo (Chair); Professor C Forsyth; Dr D Good; Mr D Goode; Dr J Keeler; Mr T Milner; Mr R Richardson; Rev Canon H Shilson-Thomas; Dr E Silva; Dr D Woodman; Mrs C Fage (Secretary); Mr R Cashman (In attendance); Mrs J Green (In attendance)

Apologies: Dr A Bell; Dr M Jones

1. Apologies and Welcome

Apologies were received and welcome extended to the incoming CUSU Education representative.

2. Declarations of interest

Dr Good declared an interest under minute 8

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 18 March 2015

The minutes were approved as a correct record. The Board received and accepted the Action Summary.

4. Matters Arising not appearing on the Agenda

The Chair reminded members that this was an exceptional meeting to deal with immediate issues that arose in the recent examination period. More detailed discussion of policy and strategy would be considered at the meeting scheduled on 30 September 2015.

5. Secretary's Action

The Board received and accepted a paper listing Secretary's action.

6. Faith Policy

The Board warmly welcomed the draft document on faith-provision for University examinations, noting it was part of a consultative exercise and was being viewed in several committees. No further comments were made.

7. Report on the use of PC's in the Titan Suite in the main Examination period

The Secretary reported on the problems that occurred in the Titan Suite in the main examination period, with the IT provision failing over several sessions. This affected in excess of 50 students, and the Proctors, who attended the venue during the problems, agreed that procedural irregularity had occurred.

The Secretary has since met with representatives of the University Information Services (UIS) who provided a report on how the malfunction occurred and provided recommendations to mitigate problems from happening in future years. It was agreed that the service definition required formalising and also highlighted to the Secretary that there is no emergency action plan in place. This would be revisited with the Board of Examinations

Action - Secretary

8. Procedural Irregularity relating to Question Paper setting

The Board received and accepted a paper detailing a procedural irregularity occurring in the Psychological and Behavioural Sciences Tripos, Part IIA. Dr Good, as Chair of Examiners for this Tripos, confirmed that the Tripos Examination Board had fully considered those candidates affected and the allowances made were generous.

9. Examination exuberance

The Board received a verbal report from the Senior Proctor regarding the issue of post-examination exuberance. The approach taken in 2015 mirrored that of 2014, focussing on preventing the throwing of foodstuffs and to carefully manage sites that were on the public highway. This was managed by employing additional Pro-Proctors and the university constabulary were engaged to patrol key sites. The Proctors also circulated a notice via the Senior Tutors prior to the start of the examination season and were grateful to those Colleges that circulated it to their student body.

It was agreed that the issue was no worse than last year, with a lot of spraying of drink still occurring. The Proctors expressed some concern about the number of students gathering on public areas around the Guildhall, Corn Exchange and Pitt Building. The Secretary confirmed that she would be meeting with representatives from Cambridge Live who manage bookings for the Guildhall and Corn Exchange to discuss costs associated with cleaning up following these events.

10. Cheating / Plagiarism cases 2015

The Board received a verbal report from the Senior Proctor regarding the number of cases in 2015. It was felt that the number was larger than in previous years, with 15 cases of cheating being reported to them and 8 cases of Plagiarism so far. It was confirmed that the cases primarily related to unauthorised materials being taken into examinations and mobile telephones being used.

Upon discussion, it became clear that the majority of cases were not seemingly those students who were at risk of failing, nor restricted to finalists. It was agreed that the role of the Invigilator was key in identifying these cases, as well as being vigilant during toilet breaks.

It was further acknowledged that the use of 'smart' watches was a risk and the Board should determine if all watches should be banned from sites for the next examination season.

Action – to carry forward to September meeting

11. Topics to be included in Secretary's report

The Secretary reminded the Board that the style and content of the annual Secretary's report changed in 2014, and asked for topics to be included in the 2015 report, scheduled for the September meeting. Alongside those subjects already determined, the Board agreed the following topics should be considered;

- Feedback obtained from the Senior Tutors via the Examination review
- Exuberance
- Corrections to question papers – including number, how corrections are disseminated to students and how question papers are signed off by Exam Boards
- Exam arrangements, including alternative mode of assessment and location of those candidates receiving additional time.
- Toilet breaks across venues

Members were asked to forward any further topics by 31 July.



12. Any other business

The Chair reported that the next meeting of the Examination Review Body would be held on 8 July which would consider the work still to be done. A notice would be published in the Reporter and online indicating the start of consultation and requesting feedback and engagement. There would be a questionnaire sent to every Faculty and Department, asking them to review their examination processes.

The focus for the review in the next academic year would be assessment and allowances.