

A meeting of the Board of Examinations was held on Wednesday 12 March 2014 in the Council Room at the Old Schools.

Present: Professor J Rallison (Chair); Rev Dr J Holmes; Dr M Jones; Dr J Keeler;
Mr Jia Hui Lee; Mr T Milner; Rev Canon H Shilson-Thomas; Mr R Taplin;
Mr D Woodman; Mrs C Fage (Secretary); Mrs J Green (In attendance)

Apologies: Professor P Allmendinger; Dr D Good; Dr R Thornton

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 13 November 2013

Subject to minor correction to points 6 and 6.5, the minutes were approved as a correct record

3. Matters Arising not appearing on the Agenda

Ref minute 4.2

Mrs Green is working with the Disability Resource Centre on new guidelines.

Ref minute 5

Professor Allmendinger has been appointed under class c, nominated by the Council, for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2017.

Ref minute 6.6

Outstanding fines were chased further in November 2013. Of the five outstanding, two were proven cases of mistaken identity, one was for a student who graduated in June 2013 and the college were not prepared to chase and the final two remain outstanding. The Board were disinclined to pursue any further.

Ref minute 7

Sports Hall open days have been set at 22 and 23 April 2014.

Ref minute 9.1

The Secretary is consulting amongst the sector on how other HEI's are planning for Ramadan and will report back. It was noted that last time Ramadan fell during the examination period was 1985 and there was no reference in the Secretary's report from that year.

Follow up from 24 July 2013, item 6.1

An investigation in the use of temporary desktops in Lady Mitchell Hall and Sidgwick Avenue Lecture Block; highlighted insufficient room between rows to allow their use. Alternative routes are being investigated, including finding more suitable, new flat examination space.

4. Secretary's Action

- 4.1 The Board received a paper listing Secretary's action. The Chairman reported on a recent complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) that was found to be justified. It was agreed that the alternative mode of assessment process that is now in place should avoid similar cases; however steps in the process still require further work, particularly relating to anticipatory duty.
- 4.2 There was discussion on the trend attached to the alternative mode of assessment applications and the Secretary reported that all those that had been submitted for 2013/2014 were significant health issues, however the trend was upward.

5. Examination Arrangements

- 5.1 The Secretary presented a paper on the plans to improve special examination arrangements. The first section focussed on the outcome of a recent OIA complaint, indicating the need for the University to strengthen its examination arrangements where mitigating circumstances are involved. This is being led by the Deputy Academic Secretary along with the Head of the Student Registry. The Board agreed the need for a strong process, and it was felt that the role of the college tutor should remain the primary route for students to request examination arrangements.
- 5.2 The second section of the paper focussed on operational matters to ensure efficiency and secure passing of data around the relevant stakeholders. The Board agreed that the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) should be relied upon to make recommendations for those areas in which they are qualified.
- 5.3 The Board delegated authority to the Secretary to agree extra time for a candidate where no exact time had been specified, based on reasonable evidence. The Secretary should report such decisions to the Board.

6. Examination exuberance

- 6.1 The Senior Proctor gave an oral report on the proctorial approach to the problem of exam exuberance for the upcoming 2014 examinations. The focus for 2014 would be to;
 - (i) – Stop students from celebrating on the public highway, namely the following sites; The Guildhall, The Corn Exchange, Bene't Street, Mill Lane and outside the Pitt Building.
 - (ii) – Prevent the throwing of foodstuffs.This means that other university sites would be largely without proctorial support.
- 6.2 The Senior Proctor had consulted the Senior Tutor's Committee on Welfare and Finance who were sympathetic to the problem and agreed to write to students.
- 6.3 The Senior Proctor had also consulted the local police who advised that they would attend if requested, but suggested maintaining it within the university in the first instance, as the police would have to address any behaviour witnessed, which could lead to on the spot fines, or possibly even criminal charges. The police did confirm that should they be called by the public, they would attend.

- 6.4 CUSU had debated the issue in meeting attended by JCR, MCR and Faculty reps. They voted to support the proctorial approach and agreed to write to students asking them to be respectful of others and consider their community. They also encouraged working with colleges and the university to find suitable outdoor space for students to celebrate. Dr Jones requested that CUSU ask students to be mindful of property and community on university sites where staff are working. Jia Hui Lee also confirmed that the vote included a motion against unfair fines. The Senior Proctor confirmed that the ability to issue a fine remains in place, but is not the default position for the forthcoming examinations.
- 6.5 The Senior Proctor confirmed that plans were underway to recruit three additional pro-Proctors to patrol those sites identified on the public highway. Mrs Green is working with HR to finalise the paperwork.
- 6.6 It was agreed that a list showing dates and locations of final papers would be sent to the Proctors from the Student Registry, however identifying a student's last examination was not straightforward.
- 6.7 The Junior Proctor suggested that final year students should be moved to university sites in future years and Mrs Green agreed to investigate.

7. Use of Computers by the Faculty of Law

- 7.1 The Secretary reminded the Board of the pilot, run in 2013 by the Faculty of Law, on their mock examinations. The Faculty now sought permission to run the Master of Corporate Law (MCL) university examinations in 2014/15 using student laptops and the Exam4 software.
- 7.2 The Board considered the request and agreed, subject to the following conditions:
 - It would remain optional to students
 - Students must be informed of the option at enrolment
 - Use of laptops (e.g. in submission of essays) should be encouraged as part of the teaching programme as a whole
 - Students should be given an opportunity to practice on laptops in the examination room ahead of time
 - Basic health and safety checks on power supply, should be undertaken by Estate Management in liaison with the Faculty's safety representative
 - It is the responsibility of the student to ensure their laptop is in working order
 - Students would be able to continue on paper if their laptop failed in mid-examination.
- 7.3 The Board requested a report from the Faculty on the running of the examinations using this software, at the end of the academic year 2014/15.

8. Infrastructure at West Cambridge

- 8.1 The Board received a paper from the Secretary regarding the infrastructure on the West Cambridge site. This was based on concerns that had been raised by CUSU through the Senior Tutors Committee. The Secretary confirmed that Estate Management is considering the issue of food provision at West Cambridge
- 8.2 The Board considered the issue of transport to the site, especially on a Saturday when the Uni 4 bus did not run. The Board agreed;
- The open days scheduled for the 22 and 23 April would be key to allow students to familiarise themselves with the Sports Hall venue for examinations and should be heavily promoted.
 - It was the responsibility of the student to get themselves to any examination site across the estate, including the Sports Hall. It would be wise to make a trial visit.
 - Any travel by bus does not guarantee arrival on time and this should also be made clear to students
 - students should be warned to take food with them if they have both morning and afternoon sessions at West Cambridge.
- 8.3 The Board agreed to run the Uni 4 on a Saturday, exceptionally for this first year to aid the transition. It would be subject to a specific timetable based on the examination timetable and the costs would be met by the Student Registry. It was further agreed that usage monitoring should be requested from Stagecoach.

9. Identifying SpLD students at the marking stage

- 9.1 The Board were reminded of a request made in March 2013 to attach coloured stickers to students' scripts in order to identify students with SpLD to the examiner. A new request has been made by the Senior Examiners for NST IA that raises the issue again. The Board were reminded of the current procedure which is a list of those students identified is sent to the Chair of Examiners (or Senior for NST) for onward distribution to examiners.
- 9.2 The Board reaffirmed the current procedure, satisfied that it was robust and any attaching of stickers should be done at department level if it was felt this was needed.

10. Master's Examinations

- 10.1 The Senior Proctor gave an oral report of observations that had been raised by the proctors during the examination walking during the recent Lent term examinations. The issues raised related to examinations held for Master's examinations. Examples given were;
- No examiner available on site, or present in each room in a multi room site
 - Expectation by the students, particularly overseas students, that there would be reading time at the start of the examination
 - Candidates who requested or required special exam arrangements had not approached their college to apply, so had presented themselves in the main examination site for the supervisor to manage
- 10.2 It was felt that the examiners for the Masters examinations were not all suitably familiar with the examination process and further, clearer guidance was required. It was also essential that they understood the need to be present at the start of the examination.

- 10.3 Candidates for Master's examinations needed to be better prepared for the examination process to help manage expectations.
- 10.4 The PVC noted that the Education Committee wished Masters examinations to move increasingly toward the same arrangements as obtained for the Tripos.

11. Exam arrangements for Easter Term 2014

- 11.1 The Board received a table showing the number of applications for special examination arrangements received to date for the Easter term 2014 and total number for the previous 4 years. It was expected that there were a significant number of late applications outstanding, as in previous years.
- 11.2 Concern was raised about the number of candidates taking their examinations in college. Mrs Green reported that the Student Registry had worked closely with colleges over the past 2 years to reduce the numbers in college, increasing capacity in the Titan and Pitt building. Therefore, those in college should only be there for specific reasons that cannot be accommodated in the main central sites, or last minute conditions.
- 11.3 Mrs Green further confirmed that there was a meeting of the Undergraduate Tutorial Forum on 18 March where good practice for in college candidates was being discussed. This would feed into a 'Guide to Colleges for in college examinations' that was being drafted by the Student Registry.

12. Dates for 2014/15

The Board received the dates for the meetings for the next academic year.

13. Exam operations – script collection

- 13.1 The Board were reminded of the script collection process at the end of each examination. Some concerns had been raised with the Secretary when a student mistakenly removes their script from the room at the end of the examination.
- 13.2 The Student Registry was willing to run small trials in the forthcoming examination period, collecting answer scripts from desks whilst the students remain seated.
- 13.3 The Board felt overwhelmingly that the current process was adequate. In 2013 the 0.01% rate was managed effectively. By running the proposed trials, it may apply further pressure to students during their examination and could open other risks (e.g. excited chatter or cheating). Therefore, the Board confirmed that the trials should not take place.

14. Next meetings

Wednesday 9 April 2014 2pm, Syndicate Room
Wednesday 23 July 2014 2pm, Syndicate Room