

**A meeting of the Board of Examinations was held on Wednesday 30 September 2015 in the Syndicate Room, The Old Schools.**

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

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from. Dr A Bell; Professor C Forsyth; Dr D Good; Dr M Jones; Dr E Silva.

### **2. Declarations of interest**

Dr Woodman declared an interest under minute 9. The Board agreed that he need not withdraw for this item.

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 7 July 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**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. Dates of meetings 2015/16**

The Board received and noted the dates.

### **6. Examination Review update**

The Chair reported that the Examination Review Working Group met last on 8 July 2015 and agreed that the work, in the academic year 2015-16, would focus on:

- mode of assessment, such as timing, length and type of examination; and
- examination adjustments.

A meeting of Directors of Teaching (23 September 2015) discussed mode of assessment and offered some interesting and thoughtful comments for the Review Group to consider. In general, that meeting expressed a willingness to look at alternative modes of assessment.

A consultation was launched in the Reporter (ref; <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2014-15/weekly/6395/section3.shtml#heading2-10>), which will be supplemented by further communications to all faculties and departments. Responses are due by 1 November 2015.

**7. Report from the Faculty of Law running MCL examinations using Exam4**

The Board received the report from the Faculty, noting its relevance to other current topics including the Examination Review and the University Digital Education Strategy. **The Board approved** the request for the Faculty to continue running their MCL examinations in this way for 2015/16.

**8. Report of the Proctors to the Board of Examinations**

The Senior Proctor spoke to the Report, highlighting the key areas of concern of plagiarism, **student identification cards and some confusion over operational procedures in examination** rooms. On these points,

- a) The Chair confirmed that the General Board Education Committee is considering the issue of use of Turnitin, including requiring all faculties and departments to use Turnitin for all summative assessment from October 2016. The Senior Tutors' Standing Committee on Education is involved in discussions about the use of Turnitin for formative assessment. **The Board welcomed** these proposed developments.
- b) **The Board recommended** strengthening the message to students about the requirement to bring their University id cards to each examination and the training for invigilators and supervisors to ensure consistency in practice.
- c) **The Board agreed** that the School of Clinical Medicine must cease from requiring students to write his/her name on the answer sheet for the Final MB examinations, Part III (MCQ Papers).
- d) After discussing the disparity in practice concerning the regulation of water bottles into examinations, **the Board agreed** to change the wording from 'small screw-top bottle' to 'small bottle' and confirmed it would not limit contents to just water.
- e) **The Board stipulated** that Colleges should adhere to the instructions to running examinations to ensure consistency between examinations held within University and College venues.

**The Board accepted** all the recommendations and asked the Secretary and the Head of Records and Exams to take forward operational matters.

Matter for the Board's Consideration	Board outcome
That consideration be given to the use of Rooms 6 and 7 in Mill Lane being discontinued	The Board agreed that the Proctors and Student Registry should review current space available and identify any new appropriate space and report findings to the Board, 1 December 2015
That invigilators perhaps need further guidance about what to do if; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A student does not have ID</li> <li>b) A student is suspected of cheating</li> </ol>	The Proctors and Student Registry to collaborate to strengthen training of casual staff

That the rule about water bottles should be standardized	Agreed, revision to be managed by ten Student Registry
Measures should be in place to deal with any kind of computer malfunction of the type encountered in the Titan Suite; and consideration be given to having a secondary venue with adequate computing facilities in case of emergencies	Agreed to produce an Emergency Action Plan for the Titan Suite and the identification of possible alternative space
Consideration should be given to colleges being informed of the real risks of students using phones during exams which are taken in College rather than at the main examination sites	The Proctors and Student Registry to collaborate to strengthen guides provided for casual staff and a reminder sent to Colleges at appropriate point in examination cycle
Owing to the rise in cases of plagiarism, Faculties / Departments should be strongly encouraged to use Turnitin as part of their standard processes and that Faculties / Departments should encourage the formative use of Turnitin by their students	Referred to GBEC
The employment of Additional Pro-Proctors should be continued next year, to help with post-exam celebrations	Agreed, as felt money well spent

The Proctors congratulated the examination team for the success in organising the examinations.

### **9. Report of the Secretary to the Board of Examinations**

The Secretary spoke to the Report, highlighting the key issues of examination corrections, arrangements and the examination venues and consequently:

- a) The Chair expressed real concern about the number of corrections to examination question papers, recognising this was a common theme of concern across the Proctors, the Secretary and feedback received from Colleges. The Chair wished to see a zero tolerance approach. Particular disappointment was expressed about Mathematics which, despite previous exchanges on this matter, had seen a further significant increase in corrections. **The Board agreed** to refer the matter to the General Board Education Committee which would determine how to follow up with the Mathematical and Natural Sciences Triposes, and possibly, all whose papers required correcting.
- b) The Board agreed that authority to approve examination adjustments rests with them and so were dismayed that one Faculty had made provision outside of the formal process. **The Board agreed** to refer to the matter to the General Board Education Committee to follow up.
- c) The Board noted that examination arrangements continue to challenge all stakeholders and complicates the process. Members conveyed concern about the increase in adjustments for reasons of mental health and **agreed with the suggestion** for a need to identify adjustments only for those with genuine and urgent need rather than those encountering stress. **The Board agreed** for the need for a clearer threshold for sitting an examination in College, and entrusted this to the Examination Review.

- d) **The Board acknowledged** the continual challenges of securing suitable examination space and agreed that the standard for space should be as that expressed in the Report and also 'Suitability of space (e.g. lighting, noise)' **and asked** the Proctors and the Student Registry to review and identify appropriate spaces which met these standards and report findings to the Board.

The Board also received document from Colleges giving feedback on examinations in 2014/15.

**The Board agreed** to each of the Matters for Consideration, with the following points noted.

<b>Matter for the Board's Consideration</b>	<b>Board outcome</b>
To conduct a full-scale review of the question paper template, with Faculties and Departments	That, since the requirement was less urgent following some improvements in 2014/15, the Student Registry should implement in own time
To revisit the policy to transcribe illegible scripts and then determine what penalties might be implemented from 2015/16	Board of Examinations to consider on 1 December 2015
To consider a policy on missing students for the next academic year, acknowledging that it would require wider consultation across the collegiate university	To maintain the status quo as regards reporting missing students, whilst consider any technical solutions to speedily capture students sitting the examinations and then report on missing students
Would the Board commend the review of the training and instructions to staff, to a sub-group of the Board?	That the Proctors and Student Registry should collaborate to strengthen the training of casual staff
How does the Board wish to respond to the rise in the number of corrections and clarifications to question papers and subsequent concerns raised by the Senior Tutors?	Referred to General Board Education Committee (GBEC)
Should the Board charge departments who require reprint to question paper after the publicised deadline for checking?	Agreed to implement in 2015/16, with caveat that if an error is identified in the Paper that Paper must be reprinted rather than rely in correction. Outcomes will be reported to GBEC
Is the Board content that the procedure for students to remain seated until their scrips are collected in those venues that allow, should continue?	Agreed, without further comment
Will the Board support the engagement of additional casual staff to ensure speedy delivery of scripts to Examiners?	Agreed, as felt money well spent
Would the Board encourage further discussions with UIS to identify technology to improve examination operations?	Agreed, without further comment

Would the Board allow the release of the data on examination adjustments to the Examination Review working group?	Agreed, without further comment
Does the Board wish to specify the reasons permitting early / late sitting of an examination?	Secretary to bring to the Board, 1 December 2015
How does the Board wish to address those Faculties and Departments who determine and implement examination adjustments without approval?	Referred to GBEC
Would the Board determine the standards to be followed when securing examination space in 2015/16?	Agreed with standards proposed with the addition of 'Suitability of space (e.g. lighting, noise)' and agreed that, together, the Proctors and Student Registry should review and identify appropriate space and reporting findings to the Board, 1 December 2015
Is the Board content that the new conference facilities at Robinson College should be used for examinations in 2015/16? Does the Board have a view on which venues should cease operating as examination venues if Robinson College is secured?	The Board encouraged use of this alternative space and cease usage of the Guildhall
Is the Board content to develop a space strategy for examinations, and if so should the Secretary and Proctors prepare initial discussion paper for the December meeting?	Agreed, and noted that the Board of Scrutiny had supported this idea previously
The Titan Suite incident highlighted that the Board does not have any emergency measures in place for examination operations. Does the Board wish to produce an Emergency Action Plan for examination operations?	Agreed to limit to the Titan Suite and to the identification of possible alternative space
Does the Board wish to share any of this report with the collegiate University? If so, which parts and does the Board have a preferred method of communication?	The Board wished circulation of a complete copy of the Secretary's Report to the General Board Education Committee and the Senior Tutors' Committee and an edited version (i.e. with removal of paragraphs and tables concerning SpLD) to be circulated to Faculties and Departments for consideration at their Faculty Boards.

The Secretary thanked the Proctors for their good and effective working relationship over the past year.

#### **10. Report from UIS regarding Titan Suite arrangements for examinations**

The Secretary reported that, following on from the verbal report in July, she now meets with the UIS team responsible for running the Titan Suite on a regular basis and service agreements are being developed. The Board will need to provide instruction and set the required standards and UIS will be responsible for delivering those standards. Further information will follow at the December meeting.

The Board welcomed the approach being followed by the Secretary, and confirmed that this support was core business of the university and should not come at a cost to the Board.

The Board required some clarification on the statement within the report '*...significant disruption was caused to the service as a result of a technical configuration mismatch with the server infrastructure used to provide the service...*' and requested that the report be re-written without technical jargon. Once re-written, the Board requested that the Secretary circulate to those Chairs of Examiners and Senior Tutors concerned with the Titan Suite incident.

### **Any other business**

**The Board agreed** that they were content with the reconfiguration of the dates of meetings and the September meetings would include the incoming Proctors.

**The Board expressed** their gratitude to the outgoing Proctors, Dr Woodman and Rev Canon H Shilson-Thomas for their hard work and support of the examination processes over the past year.