

A meeting of the Board of Examinations was held on Tuesday 22 March 2016 in the Syndicate Room in the Old Schools.

Present: Professor G Virgo (Chair); Mr R Cashman; Mr G Chesterman; Mr D Goode; Dr P Johnston; Dr W Nolan; Dr C Ristuccia; Dr N Rutter; Dr E Silva; Mr D Taplin; Dr H Thompson; Dr R Thornton; Professor C Young; Mrs C Fage (Secretary); Mrs J Green (In attendance)

Apologies: None

Declarations of interest

Item 5.3 – Professor Virgo

Item 6.2 – Mr Cashman

Membership

The Chair welcomed new members to the Board of Examinations

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2015 had been circulated and were approved.

2. Starred items

The Board agreed to unstar the business to which Minutes 6.2 and 6.3 – ‘Student Advice Service’ and ‘Examination Press articles’ but otherwise to approve the starred items.

3. Matters arising

The Chair welcomed the circulation of the UIS service document, confirming the arrangements between the UIS and the Student Registry.

The Secretary reported that a response had been received from the Clinical School regarding names on examination answer sheets. They confirmed that the answer sheet is produced by a third party and they will be working with that provider to amend the template, however it was too late for this cycle of examinations. It is expected that a new template will be in place by the Easter term 2017, and in the interim the Clinical School will brief their students not to complete the field. The Board was satisfied on the assumption the change would be guaranteed for next academic year.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair reported that the General Board's Education Committee (GBEC) had recommended to the General Board that public publication of Class Lists should cease. The General Board approved this change in principle and a draft full report to the General Board and Council was considered by GBEC at its last meeting. Subject to confirming some administrative detail, the report will be passed to the General Board for approval.

5. Principal items of business

5.1 Illegible Scripts

5.1.1 Rubric changes

The Board noted that GBEC did not support the recommendations made to them following the meeting on 1 December and instead GBEC recommended:

- a) Retaining the existing practice for transcription;
- b) Amending the rubric on all examination papers to state that students should write legibly;
- c) Removing the warning that if scripts were illegible, students would be at a 'grave disadvantage'.

The Secretary presented a revised rubric circulated as paper **BE151612** that included these recommendations and in an improved style and format. The Secretary also confirmed that, given current levels of stationery, it would not be possible to implement any change in rubric until the next academic year.

The Board approved the revised rubric without change, except to underline and highlight in bold the text that students must not remove stationery from the examination room.

5.1.1 Change in process

As part of the consultation about illegible scripts, GBEC reported that the Senior Tutor's Education Committee remained concerned regarding consistency and fairness in declaring a script illegible. The Committee recommended that the Chair of Examiners, or the Senior Examiner as appropriate, be required to confirm that a script was illegible before transcription.

The Board welcomed the recommendation and agreed to implement, with immediate effect, the change in process.

5.2 Missing Students

The Board received a response from GBEC following its recommendations to establish firm guidance regarding the management of students missing from an examination venue. GBEC had consulted the Senior Tutors' Committee and both Committees agreed implementing the following from the Easter term 2016:

- a) Colleges did not need to be informed of students missing from the examination in an examination hall within the first 30 minutes of a session. The obligation should be on the student to arrive on time for their examinations.

However, in recognition of possible pastoral issues, it was agreed that Colleges should be informed at some point during the examination session if a student was absent without explanation.

Consequently, the Examinations Office will not report students missing from the examination in an examination hall within the first 30 minutes of a session but will do so before the end of the examination

- b) A student who arrived at the examination hall within the first 30 minutes of the examination should be allowed to sit the examination in the time remaining;
- c) A student who arrived at College after the start of the examination, but within the first 30 minutes, should be allowed to sit the examination but that 30 minutes should automatically be subtracted from the examination time;
- d) A student with permission to sit an examination in College would not have a time penalty imposed if they arrived within the first 30 minutes of the start of the examination, but would only be allowed to sit the examination in the time remaining;
- e) A student who arrived later than 30 minutes after the start of the examination, either at the examination hall or in College, would not be permitted to take the examination

The Board agreed with the revised recommendations and instructed the Secretary to communicate these changes in process to students, colleges and departments running examinations. Further, the Secretary was to clarify the procedures regarding students who fall ill.

5.3 Use of Amanuensis

The Board received notification that the use of amanuensis was raised at the Senior Tutor's Committee (Welfare and Finance) in January regarding the amanuensis being able to type instead of write. The Board last considered the policy of amanuensis use in March 2015 and the discussion paper (**BE151613**) from March 2015 was recirculated for reference.

Following discussion, the Board agreed that the assumption be that an amanuensis hand writes, with the standard 25% additional time (plus any other allowances) save where evidence is provided that the person taking the examination requires the script to be typed.

5.4 Alternative Mode of Assessment

Board members were reminded that requests for Alternative Mode of Assessment (AMA) come under the Code of Practice: Reasonable adjustments for Disabled Students.

The Board noted the Secretary's reflection on the current process for students requiring an AMA, how this might be strengthened, and the increase in requests due to mental health conditions. Of the examples given to strengthen the Code of Practice, the Chair noted that reinforcing the decision process might have implications for the Board, and the Secretary noted expressions of concern about the distribution of sensitive medical evidence.

The Board noted that the Secretary is working with the Secretary of the General Board's Education Committee, the Secretary of the Applications Committee and the Joint Head of the Legal Services Office and is also consulting the Heads of the DRC and Counselling Service to strengthen the Code, which will require approval from GBEC and General Board.

The Board agreed that the AMA procedure should be kept under review, specifically the distribution of medical evidence and the possible use of medical experts. The Board looks forward to receiving an update at its next meeting.

5.6 Examination Management

The Secretary reported that, in the past 3-years, the Student Registry (SR) has supported the Clinical School by managing the delivery of one of their professional examinations in the Michaelmas term. These are not University examinations, yet remain part of the clinical course for regulatory reasons. The administrative support for running these examinations is growing and the Board was asked to consider the remit of the SR in delivering examinations that are not listed in the university regulations, but remain a core part of a student's course.

The Board confirmed that degrees with a professional examination are within the University system and it therefore follows that, when those professional examinations do not clash with University examinations, the Clinical School might use space dedicated for University examinations but that at other times University examinations take priority. Consequently, the Clinical School should not assume priority of examination space in the new Student Services Centre.

The Board agreed that the SR should meet with representatives from the Clinical School to formalise arrangements on what support is needed and to re-charge any costs back to the Clinical School in delivering these professional examinations.

6. Other Business

6.1 Applications Committee Annual Report

The Board received an extract of the 2014/15 Annual Report noting the volume of cases dealt with by the Applications Committee and the 17% increase from 2013/14.

The Board welcomed access to the data held within the Annual Report and asked to receive it annually.

6.2 Student Advice Service

Mr Cashman welcomed the reference to the Student Advice Service Annual Report, noting that in future years the report would be sent automatically to the Board.

The Board welcomed sight of the information held within the Annual Report and asked to receive it annually.

6.3 Examination Press Articles

The Board discussed the growing use of so-called 'smart watches' and their potential use for cheating in examinations. The Secretary reported that the current set of Rules and Guidance for Candidates and for the Prevention of Misconduct in Examinations covers any possible usage of these devices under regulations 5 and 6.

Following discussion the Board agreed:

- a) Students should not be able to take smart watches or wireless earpieces into an examination venue with immediate effect;**
- b) To amend the announcements and instructions for invigilators, to reflect this change;**
- c) To reconsider this issue after the main examination season.**

Date of next meeting

2pm, Thursday 7 July 2016 (only held if urgent business)

2pm, Wednesday 28 September 2016.