



A meeting of the Board of Examinations was held on Wednesday 19 November 2014 in the Syndicate Room at the Old Schools.

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

Apologies: Dr D Good

1. Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Dr Silva and Professor Forsyth to the Board of Examinations.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 23 July 2014

Subject to a minor correction, 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 Board sought an update on the review of Masters provision. Since the work is ongoing the Proctors were reassured that Honorary Degrees would not be affected in 2015.

5. Secretary's Action

The Board received a paper listing Secretary's action. The following points were noted;

- 5.1 That further discussions are being held with student representatives from faith groups, organised through GU and CUSU, and also with examination bodies e.g. OCR. Such discussions would inform the policy.

6. Update from reports received from the Proctors and Secretary 2014

- 6.1 The Secretary presented a paper consolidating the main recommendations from the two reports received by the Board in July, organised by theme. The Board noted all items were progressing, some into the examination review, two items covered within documents of the meeting and one item completed.
- 6.2 The Board received the proposed changes to the Rules for the Guidance of Candidates and for the Prevention of Misconduct in Examinations. After discussion, new wording was agreed (to read 'cigarettes, e-cigarettes and the like'). Subject to this change, **the Board approved the amendment and publication of the Rules.**

7 Accounts for 2013/14 and new payment rates for 2014/15

- 7.1 The Board received the accounts for 2013/14. Attention was drawn to the bottom line that showed expenditure in 2013/14 was lower than that in 2012/13 despite dramatic cost increases in venues. These venue costs would continue to rise. The Board was advised that expenditure generally would increase over time because of both rising venue costs and anticipated expenditure on storage, new examination furniture and shipment of furniture across the estate. The reduction in examiner payments occurred because of tightening of procedures.

Some concern was expressed about payment for internal venues, such as the Sports Hall. The Board were advised this was an accounting matter.

- 7.2 **The Board agreed the proposed payment rates for 2014/15** whilst noting the ongoing concern about appointment and retention of good quality invigilators. It was acknowledged that the appointment, and future payment, of invigilators would fall within the remit of the Examination review.

8 Examination review: terms of reference

- 8.1 The Chair conveyed that the General Board gave their enthusiastic support for the review. The Chair recognised that initial thoughts on the review were operationally focussed, but that the General Board's Education Committee recommended this be extended to consider fundamental policy issues. Consequently, GBEC endorsed the proposal of one body to review the whole examination process, rationale and strategy and operations. Sub-committees might be formed to work on specific aspects.
- 8.2 Two reports are expected; the first dealing with the 'quick wins', the second would be a deeper report. **The Board agreed this approach.**
- 8.3 Proposed membership was discussed and it was agreed that two Chairs or ex-Chairs of Examiners be appointed to the review committee to ensure representation across the Arts and Sciences. Members of the Board would send recommendations for members to join the review, to the Secretary.

9 Question paper format

As regards reading time, the Board agreed there should only be two choices; reading time or not and that this should be explicitly stated in the rubric. There was recognition that more variables in reading time put strains on all areas of the process. There was also a request for standardisation of exam format across faculties. This would need considering under the examination review.

The Board agreed the recommendations.

10 Roll out of UIS functionality

The Board endorsed the proposal that the Student Registry works with UIS to conduct a pilot with a small number of colleges to use a standard template for candidates sitting examinations on a computer in college for examinations in Easter term 2015. They would then report to the Board in November 2015 outcomes and any further recommendations prior to a decision on a full rollout.



11 **Any other business**

11.1 The Chair reported an item of good practice that was reported at the Senior Tutor's Committee. When a student had failed, the Chair of Examiners reported this directly to the Senior Tutor of the student's college prior to publication of results on CamSIS or at the Senate-House. It was agreed that this was good practice and should be included in the Examination review to determine a policy.

Until a policy was confirmed, it was agreed that the Student Registry would communicate this to Chairs of Examiners as good practice and encourage them to adopt similar practice where possible.

11.2 The Board discussed moving the scheduled dates to better accommodate the work flow.

The Board agreed:

- a) To cancel the April meeting;
- b) To bring the July meeting to the start of that month, when it would consider urgent topics, and this would be cancelled if no topics for discussion and;
- c) Schedule a meeting for late September to allow time to prepare the necessary reports and analysis which allows the Board more opportunity to reflect on the examination year.