05/63 Membership and terms of reference

The membership and terms of reference of the Board for 2005/06 were noted.

The Chair welcomed new members to the meeting.

The Chair reported that the Registrar was conducting a review of University governance, including the committee structure. One possible outcome was the establishment of a single committee to cover both graduate and undergraduate students.

05/64 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2005 were approved,
amendment of the third paragraph of M05/41 by the substitution of the phrase “marginal benefits” in place of “marginal costs”.

05/65 Review of priorities for 2004/05

The Board reviewed its priorities for 2004/05.

With regard to priorities (b) (implementation of policy on research degree programmes) and (c) (mechanism for the communication of information from departments to the Board), the Chair proposed that the Board should explore establishing a procedure for annual reflection by departmental graduate school boards on their implementation of the code of practice on research degree programmes, and for “exceptional” reporting by departments to the Board.

It was noted that implementation of priority (f) (formulation of a policy for dealing with academic misconduct by research students) was in progress (see M05/69 below).

It was noted that the remaining priorities had been achieved.

05/65 Priorities for 2005/06

The Board agreed to adopt the following priorities for 2005/06:

(a) to respond to the QAA’s special review of research degree programmes

(b) to finalise and implement the University’s code of practice on research degree programmes

(c) to finalise and implement the procedure on academic misconduct by research students

(d) to consider proposals towards a York Graduate School

(e) to consider proposals for a Virtual Graduate School

(f) to explore the formulation of a policy on taught postgraduate programmes.

In connection with (e), the Board received information about the discussions which had been held with five other universities about the possible development of a Virtual Graduate School.

05/66 Draft University code of practice on research degree programmes

The Board received the report from the meeting of Senate held on 12 July 2005, and noted that Senate had decided that the version of the draft code of practice on research degree programmes which it had received should be withdrawn for
further consultation with departmental graduate school boards, and that a final version should be brought to the next meeting of Senate for approval.

It was noted that, following further consultation, comments had been received only from Mathematics and Psychology. Further comments had been made by the group preparing a response to the QAA special review of research degree programmes.

After careful discussion, the Board approved a final draft of the code of practice for submission to Senate. Particular points discussed were:

(a) in connection with section 3(f), it was agreed that University guidelines on the conduct of interviews of MPhil/PhD applicants should be formulated; these should contain a recommendation that a record of the interview should be kept.

(b) in connection with section 13(g), it was agreed that the need to have evidence concerning the conduct of an oral examination in the event of an appeal made it imperative that the examination should be either recorded or conducted in the presence of an independent observer.

(c) in connection with section 13(j), it was agreed that, where the examiners failed to agree whether or not a candidate had satisfied the requirements for a particular degree, and an additional examiner was appointed, the additional examiner should also have access to any recording of the oral examination.

(d) that examiners’ reports should be made available to MPhil/PhD candidates.

The final draft of the code of practice is attached as Appendix 1.

05/67 Overseas Research Students award scheme: revised arrangements

The Board received for information an HEFCE circular setting out revised arrangements for the Overseas Research Students award scheme. This indicated that funding for 2006/07 would be based on the average value of ORSAS funding received by institutions over 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05 (including payments in respect of continuing students as well as new students) in respect of awards taken up. Future funding would not be based on the number of awards offered to candidates over 2002/05, or on previous quotas of awards.

It was agreed that the procedure for the allocation of awards in 2006/07 should include an element of pre-selection by departments.

05/68 QAA special review of research degree programmes

The Board received for information the operational description and questionnaire for the QAA’s special review of research degree programmes. It
was noted that a group comprising the Chair, Professor Sheldon, Dr Clegg, Ms Kennell and Mr Simison was preparing a response, for submission by 10 February 2006. A draft would be submitted to the Board at its next meeting.

05/69 Draft procedure on academic misconduct by research students

The Board received the draft procedure prepared by the Working Party on Academic Misconduct by Research Students.

In the course of discussion, it was agreed:

(a) that the procedure should not apply to draft materials submitted to supervisors, and that the final sentence of paragraph 1.2 should therefore be omitted.

(b) that students should not be able to use as a defence the failure by the supervisor to detect academic misconduct at an earlier stage.

(c) that the departmental investigative committee should recommend penalties, and that these penalties should be specified in paragraph 3.18, under either sub-paragraph (ii) or sub-paragraph (iii), depending on the severity of the penalty.

(d) that, where a less severe penalty was recommended, the student should have the right of appeal to a panel of the Board for Graduate Schools.

(e) that where a more severe penalty was recommended, there should be an automatic hearing by a panel of the Board for Graduate Schools.

(f) that the hearing by a panel of the Board for Graduate Schools should represent the final level of appeal within the University, following which a candidate who remained dissatisfied would need to lodge a complaint with the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

(g) that the supervisor might give evidence to the departmental investigative committee, but should not be a member of it.

(h) that the department should inform the Graduate Schools Office as soon as an investigation into possible academic misconduct was initiated.

It was agreed to ask the Working Party to reformulate the proposed procedure in the light of this discussion, and of a number of suggestions which the Graduate Students’ Association wished to convey to the Working Party.

05/70 Proposal to amend options open to PhD examiners

The Board considered a proposal to amend Regulation 2.5(m) to provide
examiners with the option of recommending that a PhD thesis should be referred for resubmission for the degree of MPhil only, and that a similar option should be introduced in Regulation 2.6(n) for the PhD by publications.

It was also proposed that the existing options providing for the award of the MA or MSc degree should be amended to provide for the award of an MA or MSc degree by research.

The Board was minded to approve the first part of the proposal, but felt that the options for the award of MA or MSc degrees should be removed. It was agreed to consult with departments on this point, and then to reconsider the proposal as a whole at a future meeting.

05/71 Working Party: Towards a York Graduate School

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Working Party: Towards a York Graduate School held on 5 July 2005 were received.

It was noted that the Working Party had recommended that the model of a single graduate school would be preferable to that of multiple graduate schools, given the size of the University; and that a graduate school should be headed by a senior member of academic staff, supported by a committee.

It was envisaged that a graduate school could enhance the role of Wentworth College as the graduate college, could add structure and visibility to the University’s graduate activity in order to facilitate marketing, and might enable departments to share resources more easily. A graduate school would include taught as well as research postgraduates.

05/72 Procedure for checking quality of submitted theses in Psychology

The Board received a proposal from the Board of Studies in Psychology for checking the quality of theses submitted by Psychology research students before examination. This involved the supervisor certifying, before submission, that the quality of the thesis was satisfactory.

(It was agreed to include this item among the Board’s unreserved business.)

The Board felt that the proposal compromised the distinction between the role of the supervisor and that of the examiner. It also went against a student’s right to submit a thesis.

In the Board’s view, the Department should rely on Regulation 2.5(l), which provided for a poorly presented thesis to be returned to the candidate for correction before the examination. The Board also recommended that, if the supervisor were to inform the candidate that the thesis was not ready for submission, this should be recorded.

05/73 Dates of meetings in 2005/06
It was noted that meetings in 2005/06 were to be held on the following dates beginning at 2.15pm:

- Tuesday 22 November
- **Thursday 26 January**
- Tuesday 28 February
- Tuesday 20 June