

# Gazette Supplement



## Oration by the demitting Proctors and Assessor

The following Oration was delivered in Congregation on Wednesday, 16 March, by **The Revd Colin Peter Thompson**, MA DPhil Oxf, Fellow of St Catherine's, on demitting office as Senior Proctor.

Senior Proctor: *Insignissime Vice-Chancellorie: licetne Anglice loqui?*

Vice-Chancellor: *Licet*

Senior Proctor: Colleagues

You may not know that the Elizabethan businessman and MP Richard Watts founded in his will of 1579 a charity in Rochester for six poor travellers, who, 'not being ROGUES, or PROCTORS', were to receive gratis for one Night, Lodging, Entertainment, and Fourpence each. Sir Richard was silent on the subject of Assessors. I hasten to add, lest my successors charge me with reckless or deliberate plagiarism, that my source for this information is Wikipedia. This year's Proctors assumed office already battle-scarred by involvement in University politics, and were no doubt deemed ROGUES by some for that. The Assessor, on the other hand, would have emerged entertained and fourpence richer (indexed to RPI, one hopes). That this juxtaposition of nouns was no oxymoron was confirmed by the reaction of one of my undergraduate contemporaries at a gaudy when he discovered what I had become. 'Now there's a case of poacher turned gamekeeper,' he muttered. I cannot think what he meant...unless he was referring to the incident with fireworks on the roof of Hertford one November 5 long ago, in defiance of Proctorial and decanal warnings against all forms of pyrotechnic display by Junior Members.

Rather more recently, on a Wednesday morning of ninth week of Hilary, an about-to-be-admitted Senior Proctor, now Master

of St Catherine's, led the college procession to Convocation House down Bath Place, past the Turf Tavern and into St Helen's Passage. Last March he insisted on doing the same for the new one, to the collective astonishment of a group of overseas tourists loitering there. Goodness knows what they told the folks back home about the episode of *Morse* into which a rift in the time-space continuum had transported them. Only if they are avid readers of the *Gazette* will they ever discover whodunit and how.

For those unfamiliar, as our successors may currently be, with the language of committees, the first months in office may make them wonder whether they too have been transported, in their case to a land where plain English is not spoken. An example may help explain this. Those gathered in the Convocation House today may have thought they were present to witness the admission of the Proctors and Assessor. However, in committee-speak, such simplicity is not fit for purpose. Instead, today's ceremony is a roll-out, for scrutiny by attendees and other stakeholders, of a joined-up suite of Proctors and Assessor. This iteration is to be rolled out robustly and transparently, benchmarked in line with best-practice BIS guidance and embedded for the fulfilment of the student experience, but since this morning's circular mandates with less of a headline outcomes-focus that this is now to be prioritised as the student journey, external audit demands the compilation of a risk register for the use of line managers in growing and delivering the required output. The year ahead will be a journey of organisational transformation. The new team will conceptualise the direction of travel with a roadmap comprising a series of steps or actions to progress change management, involving shifts in orientation, cumulative learning outcomes

and key performance indicators. In case our successors are now about to turn tail, shed their robes and run (or 'take the iteration offline'), this is our way of encouraging colleagues with an addiction to what Janet Street-Porter described in a recent Sunday newspaper as Official Bollocks to make a solemn Lenten resolution to give it up, for ever.

The Proctors and Assessors form a Trinity distinct in Persons but one in substance; or, to put it another way, three silos but one synergy. For that reason, though I speak as one I do so (except where noted otherwise) for the three together, each having contributed to the whole. In recent Orations Proctors have sometimes attempted to answer the question 'What do Proctors do?' To commemorate the fact that this year, unlike last, we succeeded in electing a Professor of Poetry, I offer this definitive verse summary (though not in the style of Professor Hill). Colleagues who recognise its origin and wish to hum the tune may not do so without written permission from the Proctors.

*Going forward in the morning  
we proceed our bands to tie,  
thus, Proctorial selves adorning,  
minds to business we apply,  
and depart without a care  
to the Kremlin in the Square.  
First we sit on some committees  
where we doodle and pen ditties  
and learn a dozen acronyms a day.  
PRAS, PRAC, JRAAB and the JRAM,  
we know all about the RadCam  
and we positively love the OIA.  
Then we sally forth to luncheon, where we  
thrive  
on prodigious quantities of ninety-five,  
after which it's time to have a little rest  
because by then we're feeling very stressed.  
Then we put on gowns luxurious  
and issue warnings spurious*

to persons who—how curious!—have not  
 obeyed the regs,  
 And we take up battle stations  
 to patrol examinations  
 and confiscate shampoo and flour and dozens  
 of fresh eggs.  
 After which, our pockets lining  
 With the proceeds of our fining  
 We repair to seek refreshment in a local  
 hostelry,  
 and then attend a dinner  
 (we have not got any thinner)  
 Where we give ourselves entirely to  
 unbridled revelry.  
 Oh our colleagues may admire  
 our remarkable attire,  
 but the burdens they are heavy and we're  
 given lots of grief.  
 and the only consolation  
 is to hear, post this oration,  
 Dr Gasser's iteration of a sigh of pure relief.

Speaking in my own person, I must next inform you of a most ingenious paradox. The last time the Proctorship came to St Catherine's, in 1998, I was too old to be eligible. When it returned in 2010 I was young enough. The only logical explanation I can think of is that I have inadvertently been away exploring the remotest parts of the universe and am either a Time Lord or a living example of the Einsteinian word made flesh. I do not think I can be the former, as Time Lords have two hearts and Proctors are known to be heartless, so I shall opt for the latter. I think, therefore, I am the first Proctor in the 800-odd years of the office to become eligible during service to draw an old-age pension. Given the coming abolition of the compulsory retirement age and the consequences this may have for us, I may be but the first among many. Despite this, I was the only Person of the Trinity who ascended Magdalen Tower on a May morning when 'summer' was distinctly not 'icumen in', before descending to enjoy a particularly sustaining breakfast and so to bed.

The *captatio benevolentiae* now concluded, we must turn to more serious matters. Like all its sister institutions, Oxford is in the middle of a particularly unsettling period, not helped at all by a political rhetoric which appears to be driven more by political expediency than by issues of principle, by the last-minute publication of the guidance from OFFA and by the continuing delay of the promised White Paper. The reduction of Higher Education to bare economic self-interest is not a vision we accept and the continued location of the sector in the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills does not give us confidence that our leaders understand its function in

national life. The Browne Review, which was intended when announced to lead to a consensual and secure funding future for Higher Education, has merely provided a pretext for political manoeuvring on all sides concerning the future of the sector. We are appalled that public funding is to be removed for the teaching of the humanities and social sciences, as though their contribution to human civilization were some kind of luxury rather than its lifeblood. Institutions which make long-term investments in people, students, tutors and researchers alike, deserve to be treated better by government, not for reasons of self-interest and self-preservation but because they cannot become the liberating, life-enhancing, creative and innovative communities they are intended to be in the face of constantly shifting government directives and ever-growing bureaucratic impositions. Many of us protested about the weighting given to impact in the REF and much good did it do us. There it stands, at twenty per cent, across the board. We believe it is time for universities to stop being so supine in their compliance with the latest poorly thought out mantra from Whitehall and to start explaining their principles and values to the public in a positive sense. We have weathered storms in the past by sticking to our principles, and it is those principles which must pilot us through this one.

Because these woes are weighing heavily on us, we think it the more important in this Oration to draw attention to the achievements we may justly celebrate and to affirm the values we embody. One of the greatest of the former must surely be the transformation of the Bodleian on a scale exceeding that of any other library known in the world. The first manifestation of this, the new Book Storage Facility, was opened last October. I shall not forget the epiphanic moment when the Vice-Chancellor and Bodley's Librarian appeared together in a hoist on high, like some theatrical *dei ex machina* descending to sort out the tangled affairs of mortals. The bar-coding of the collection and the transfer of books to the Swindon outpost and back to Oxford when readers request them are proceeding apace. And, like the Windmill Theatre in the Second World War, with which it may otherwise have not too much in common, the Bodleian may boast 'We never closed'. The Proctors and Assessor were suitably awed by their ascent to the Gormenghastian fastness of the Archive Room in the Great Tower and by their Orphean descent into the nether world of strange contraptions below Radcliffe Square and the Broad. We suffered our own minor disruption in the summer,

when we were carted off to Babylonian exile in New Barnett House before returning to our newly refurbished offices. Our successors will have to live with our choice of artwork, but at present, it's still a case of bare ruin'd walls where late sweet pictures hung.

It has been a great pleasure to work with Andy Hamilton during the early period of his Vice-Chancellorship. You should see him working the crowds as he emerges from degree ceremonies. His firmly rooted academic values and his belief in consensual decision-making have been very welcome. We have said farewell to our much-admired and loved Registrar, Julie Maxton, and welcomed a former PVC, Ewan McKendrick, to follow in her steps. PVC, incidentally, stands for photovoltaic cells as well as for polyvinyl chloride. There have been other photovoltaic developments, some in the form of musical chairs, some by infusion of new blood. Tony Monaco will leave us in the summer, as he takes up his new post as President of Tufts University. Tony has been a fine servant of the University, assiduous in his attention to an extremely demanding portfolio and always sensitive to the needs of the whole institution, not just those parts of it which current funding arrangements favour. My predecessor expressed some frustration with the slow pace of SPRIG. We are pleased to report that SPRIG has now sprouted. We have heard a number of complaints that the considerable resources of the Development Office have not always been used to best effect in support of the University's priorities, particularly at divisional level, and we know that our new PVC (Development), Nick Rawlins, is committed to the recalibration of the Campaign. We would like to encourage our academic colleagues to consider service on University committees when vacancies arise, so that the culture of the usual suspects, among whom we must now number ourselves, may be tempered and refreshed by the kind of questioning which is the natural way for academics to assure themselves that possible flaws in the argument are being addressed. The tick-box culture which we all rightly deplore is not sufficient to guard the University against risk or bad decision-making. A truly participatory democracy such as ours makes demands on time and energy. But without the commitment of colleagues to serve it will not flourish as it should.

Another great success story is the Press, the contribution of which to our common endeavour has been especially munificent. We wish to pay tribute in this House to all those who have made this possible. We have

seen something of the workings of the Press from within, and are full of admiration for the energy and vision of those who lead it and the commitment of all who work for it. We were privileged to join the Delegates' visit to New York last July. In the evenings the Junior Proctor was able to display his detailed knowledge of New York night life and the Senior Proctor found himself in establishments which no Nonconformist clergyman ought ever to visit. Nor should such a person ever sing the Latin Litany in the University Church, as this one did. But what is transgression but the crossing of boundaries and therefore the *sine qua non* of interdisciplinary study? We note with pleasure the Heritage grant of £3.4 million awarded to the University Church for a full restoration project. It is not as widely known as it should be that the Old Library in St Mary's, which dates from 1320, was the very first building the University (as opposed to the colleges) built. We have been stimulated by attendance at University Sermons—the Assessor preached one—and commend the annual Inter-collegiate choral Evensong, at which the massed ranks of college chapel choirs give the Office a wonderfully full-throated treatment. By contrast, the termly Latin Communion is an oasis of calm. We have taken part in many degree ceremonies, both on the cat-walk in the Schools and in the Sheldonian, which, now restored to its original Wren colour scheme, looks more magnificent than it has done for many decades. One cannot help but notice that every graduand comes forward with a broad grin. The Proctors remain to be persuaded that the introduction of a large number of weekday degree ceremonies across a fortnight in July from 2013 is the best solution to the problems of backlog and of overseas students who, understandably, wish to graduate before they have left the country, or that colleges have quite grasped what they are letting themselves in for. We have been enormously impressed by our museums, institutions of which the University is rightly proud, custodians of treasures beyond price, yet facing an even more uncertain funding climate. They are perhaps the most visible part of the public face of the University, and their contribution to access, teaching, research and impact must not be underestimated. Though we missed some of them because sterner duties beckoned, we have engaged in perustrations of the beautiful open spaces of the Parks and the continually evolving Botanic Garden. We have also witnessed the transformation of OUSU into an independent trust, a process not without its birth-pangs but now complete. Despite all the controversies about fees, we have

enjoyed a first-rate working relationship with successive officers of OUSU and are full of admiration for their willingness to engage with us positively over a wide range of issues and for their commitment to the values we share, of which more shortly.

We turn now to some matters which have given us cause for concern over the year. The occupation of the Radcliffe Camera at the end of November proved to be a testing time. The University's security service, the Proctors' Officers and the library staff acted well beyond the call of duty and we wish to record our appreciation of their contribution to what in the end proved to be a less disruptive experience than in many other universities. Why, we even had a visit from the Cambridge Proctors to seek enlightenment on what might be termed protest management. Those who breach Regulations would be advised to remember that the outgoing Senior Proctor has specialist knowledge of the techniques of the Spanish Inquisition, and will be available at normal consultancy rates.

No sooner had we entered office than ash clouds spewed forth from an Icelandic volcano and wrought havoc with planned doctoral vivas. The snows of early winter had a similar effect. We brought a paper to the Education Committee about broadening the permission for vivas to be held by video conferencing in certain circumstances, rather than each request requiring separate Proctorial permission. We have been concerned to note that a growing number of examiners have sought dispensation from attendance at examiners' meetings—even final meetings—on non-urgent grounds. We remind colleagues that the formal responsibilities they undertake as examiners must be treated with the utmost seriousness; otherwise, the integrity of the whole examination process becomes exposed to challenge. We are worried that the number of plagiarism cases referred to us may only be the tip of the iceberg, because it is essential that the reputation of the degrees this University confers be jealously guarded. The great majority of these cases come from international students at the Saïd Business School. The School has worked very hard, with some Proctorial prodding, to ensure that students are fully informed of what is expected of them, but we have still had to deal with too many pieces of submitted work which are seriously plagiarised or show only the barest grasp of good practice in the citation of source material. Our year's experience dealing with plagiarism cases has also suggested to us, as it did to our immediate predecessors, that serious consideration needs to be given to the

operation of the system as a whole. With this in mind, we presented as part of our annual report to the Education Committee a series of specific recommendations and more general questions concerning the future operation of the University's regulations on plagiarism. We hope that our successors will be able to work with the Committee on these points. A summary of the disciplinary cases and complaints we have handled will be appended to the published version of this Oration.

Any university works at its best when it is an academic democracy, and one of the key aspects of Oxford as a democracy is its federal nature. Like all federal structures—think of the United States or the European Union—there are sometimes tensions between the component parts. Frequently, these are beneficial, but sometimes they go too far. We say this to explain why, as Proctors who are strong believers in the central importance of colleges within Oxford, we have nonetheless been disturbed by the attitude now adopted by a few colleges in the area of so-called student 'complaints'. Like most UK universities, Oxford does not permit challenges to examiners' academic judgement about the quality of candidates' work. However, in a tiny range of cases (generally, where a candidate is absolutely on a borderline) we allow for examiners to be asked to check that there has not been a technical error in compiling the overall mark in a paper or determining the overall classification of a degree. Such requests are made to the Proctors by candidates' colleges, and colleges are told each year that requests will only be allowed in the very few cases where genuinely plausible grounds are shown. In consequence, College Offices need to make clear to disappointed candidates that they cannot demand marks checks willy-nilly. Most colleges quite properly do this, but we have noticed that a small minority now seem content to pass to the Proctors almost every request they receive, regardless of its plausibility. The result is a huge expenditure of time in the post-examination period responding to a deluge of groundless requests. In one afternoon in late July, for example, the Junior Proctor received from one college eight identically worded requests for different candidates' marks to be checked because their 'expectations' had not been met. No detail was supplied and no borderline was involved. Colleges play a crucial role in defending the interests of their junior members. In this case, as in many others, however, it is hard to tell whether the college was just passing the buck in an attempt to calm an upset student who might better have been told that unmet

expectations are a sad but all-too-common part of life. By failing to serve, as they should, as a filter for marks check requests, certain colleges have been placing a needless and very time-consuming burden on all involved in the examination process. We hope that colleges will think carefully about where the boundary lies between justifiable advocacy on behalf of their examination candidates and unjustifiable or frivolous queries which should be disposed of at local level.

While the Proctors sometimes see students at their worst, the Assessor reports that he is privileged to see them at their best, for part of his role is sit on, and frequently chair, a number of panels and committees handing out awards for a variety of achievements. 2010 was the first year of the Vice-Chancellor's Civic Award Scheme. While Oxford has long rewarded academic and sporting achievement, little had been done until recently to recognize students who put time and effort into volunteering. The Civic Award Scheme was set up to recognize 'exceptional and inspirational individual achievement and personal commitment to improving the state of society and our world'. The Oxford Hub, which coordinates charitable activity among students, did most of the hard work of devising the scheme and shortlisting the nominees; the Assessor's role was merely to chair the committee that selected the winners, all of whom were alarmingly impressive, dedicating huge amounts of time to local and global causes ranging from education and the environment to healthcare and international development. The selflessness, dedication, drive and initiative of some of our students in these areas is truly humbling. The Proctors intend the fines they have extracted from naughty students to be recycled back into the good works sponsored by the Hub.

Equally impressive are the many applicants for the various competitive academic awards and bursaries the Assessor has to help adjudicate over the course of the year. The terms of some are odd, for example where one is meant to favour Irish monks or people from a particular county; so much so that we were unable to proceed in one case on the ground of sex discrimination. Most of them have, however, attracted many excellent applicants, resulting in fierce competition. The heart-breaking necessity of having to discard so many merely excellent applications in the hunt for the few truly outstanding ones is amply compensated by the heart-warming discovery of so many of our students performing at such a high level, clearly

dedicated to and highly enthusiastic about their studies, while at the same time engaging with just as much enthusiasm in sport, music, volunteering or other extra-curricular activities. One does sometimes wonder how these over-achievers find time to eat and sleep, but it's hard to end a term of office as Assessor without recognizing that one of the greatest strengths of this University lies in the quality of its students.

If the Assessor encounters students at their best, he can also come across them at their most unfortunate, through applications to Hardship Funds or other forms of appeal. It would be nice to be able to say that such students are also students at their best, struggling against a sea of unforeseen misfortunes to do their best regardless. Sometimes that is the case, but unfortunately not always. One is sometimes left wondering whether a student ever had sufficient funds to embark on a particular postgraduate course in the first place, or whether it really counts as unexpected hardship when funds borrowed to swell a bank balance for the purposes of giving a financial guarantee have to be repaid. Every now and again one is reminded of Mr Micawber attempting to discharge his debts by issuing his creditors with an IOU. The current system for dealing with student hardship works reasonably well but has limitations. Every now and again there are deserving cases one would like to have been able to do more for; cases of genuine student hardship, related to disability, for example, which don't seem to fall under any of the standard criteria. A genuinely disadvantaged student can become stranded in some dreadful limbo, not eligible for any of the various forms of assistance. It would be good to have a special fund dedicated to the needs of deserving students who find themselves in this unfortunate position.

While such cases may be rare, there can be no doubt that pressure on the University's core welfare services keeps increasing. Demand for counselling for both staff and students continues to rise, as do calls on the Disability Advisory Service. Plans in train to enhance the accommodation of the Occupational Health Service and the Student Counselling Service will do something to alleviate the situation, but the pressure looks set to carry on mounting. In a funding environment in which students will soon be paying more for their degrees, we need to make sure that they are being adequately supported not only financially, in the form of bursaries, fee waivers and hardship funds, but also in the quality of support services they receive. This will, in our opinion, require a review of student

support services, to ensure that they are adequately resourced to meet growing demands. One such area, childcare, is already expanding, through its ability to generate revenue. The much-needed provision of a fourth nursery is not the only welcome development. One anomaly in childcare services has been that the salary sacrifice scheme available to staff has not been available to students, since they don't have any salary to sacrifice, with the perverse result that student parents, usually the least able to pay, end up having to pay more than staff for their childcare. This is now being addressed through a scheme to recycle some childcare funds into support for student childcare. Equally welcome is the decision to make students a priority group on the waiting list for childcare places. It would also be good if before long it also proved possible to give some priority to early career women academics with childcare needs.

The University faces a quite different challenge in environmental sustainability. Here the issue is not only our moral responsibility towards the environment, but the security of our energy supply. An ambitious Carbon Reduction Commitment has been actively discussed in Council and its committees. But in 2010 the University ranked only eighty-ninth out of 104 higher education institutions in the Green League—a league table of universities according to environmental performance published by the student environmental organisation People and Planet. Our new buildings may be more energy-efficient, but the greater amount of research which happens in them means that we are using more energy and emitting more carbon. These issues will need to become more central to our strategic thinking, particularly with the risk of a hike in both energy prices and carbon tax over the next decade. The nature of the carbon tax has already changed so that it's no longer partly recycled as a reward for good performance. In the future what government short of funds will long be able to resist the temptation to increase carbon taxes in the name of green politics? We need to consider possible investment in generating renewable energy that could lead to substantial savings for the collegiate University. We hope the University will not be deterred from pursuing these ideas by the perverse incentive that doesn't allow HEIs to enjoy the full financial benefit of such investments while counting them against their carbon reduction commitment.

The Proctors and Assessor have been well supported all year by the members of their office staff. Linda Mason and

Ilaria Gualino keep careful watch over examination matters and their advice has been invaluable. Cecilia Neilson has been tenacious in her pursuit of evidence in plagiarism cases, and Clare Brennan has dealt with a wide range of Clubs matters. Caroline Barnes has handled the administration of the office with great aplomb. There is a lot of laughter in the office, not least at the Friday morning staff meetings. Then there is Dr Gasser. What can we say about the rock on which the whole operation is founded which has not been said before or is entirely inadequate for the purpose? If in the realm of Platonic Forms or Ideas there be such a thing as the very essence of Clerkship to Proctorhood, then Brian is its living manifestation. Not only we but the whole University owe a great debt of gratitude to Brian and his colleagues. Without his extraordinary dedication, Proctors—even the Assessor—would quickly revert to Roguery and the whole operation dissolve back into primeval chaos. If you find these allusions to Platonic and Biblical myth too arcane, then let me simply say, he is legend. We are also very grateful to our Pro-Proctors, Angela Brueggemann, Karl Sternberg, Peter Southwell and Andrew Timms, who have cheerfully and willingly assisted us across the full range of our duties, ceremonial, investigatory and disciplinary.

We have done a little gazing into the crystal ball. The JRAM is the mechanism by which we understand how money comes into the University. We are then supposed to ensure that income is distributed according to our academic priorities, but we do not properly know what these cost, because there is no corresponding mechanism for calculating this. Without that, it is hard to begin the debate we need to have, about how much we think we should be spending on what. The devolution of budgets down to departmental and faculty level undoubtedly encourages ownership and responsibility, but it has the unfortunate consequence that some come to believe that 'this money belongs to us because we have earned it'. Some of the money we earn is, for example, the result of grant applications, but some comes to us to distribute more broadly as we see best. Because we are a *university* rather than a collection of competing bodies, a more appropriate attitude would surely be: 'this money has come to us and our collective enterprise has earned it for those purposes which we shall determine'. We must then find an answer to who is that 'we' and where that determination shall be made. Valuable work has begun, notably by SPRIG, in finding more effective mechanisms to align income streams with academic policy. SPRIG was invented to

plug a perceived gap in our ability to develop strategic proposals, and it is time to think seriously about the shape and composition of a successor, because that work needs to continue. It is in areas like this, rather than the composition of Council, which still seems to preoccupy HEFCE, that our governance structures might most usefully continue to evolve.

The closing remarks of this Oration are in the first person, though the essence of them is shared by both other members of this demitting Trinity. My first experience of this University was to sit the entrance examination in Keble Hall in 1963 and my subsequent life has been spent and shaped here, save eleven years among the flesh-pots of the south coast. I end, therefore, by reflecting on the best part of half a century of involvement with it. I have in my hand the *Proctors' Memorandum* given to me when I came up to Trinity from my provincial grammar school the following year, all twelve pages of it. Those were the days when undergraduates with cars were required to attach green lamps to them, when Junior Members were required to ascertain from the keeper of any lodging-house the latest hour at which they could receive into, or entertain in, their lodgings a member of the opposite sex (diversity in such matters was but a distant dream), and when Cherwell published at the start of each academic year the climbing-in routes to the various colleges at night. *O tempora, o Procuratores*. I can think of no greater privilege than the opportunity to help fine young minds develop their full potential. We call it teaching, but it is much more than that. In the new funding dispensation, our teaching will come under greater scrutiny, and we must strive to ensure that what we claim for it is demonstrably true. Whether we are beginners in our first tutorial or internationally recognised for our research, all members of the University are united by a disinterested commitment to search out the truth and to understand all that we can about the complexities of human life and of the universe in which it has evolved. We are emphatically not a service provider dispensing ready-made products to consumers so that their private earning power will be enhanced. We do what we do in order to contribute to the public good. The benefits are not measurable in any intelligent way, though they are incalculable. We will inevitably have internal arguments and disputes, but we should never lose sight of what binds us together. When we face governmental pressures born not of principle but of short-term expediency, we must not be afraid to let our voice be heard, because we must not

risk selling this birthright for the ephemeral pleasures of a mess of pottage. In a political climate obsessed with targets, league tables and compliance with bureaucratic norms we need to speak up for the old virtues of trust, decency, loyalty and commitment. They bring out the best in all of us. I for one am fed up with being treated as if I could not be trusted to do my best and had to be persuaded to do so by the demands of compliance with this, that or the other. It's the wrong way round. Universities have their part to play in increasing social mobility, and the government's overall aim is laudable. But we are at the end of a process which begins even before children enter the educational system at all, and to expect universities to remedy the failures of successive governments to address the origins of social deprivation is the wrong way round.

We could say much more, but will trespass on your patience no longer. We shall not miss the burden of office but we shall miss the companionship, and the privilege of poking our academic noses for just one year into the wonderful variety of activities which inhabit these ancient and modern stones and of getting to know and appreciate those who work so hard across every part of our common life to make everything tick. So, to adapt words we have uttered often enough during our period of service, *supplicanti venerabili Congregationi Doctorum et Magistrorum Regentium Procuratores et Assessor, quippe qui fere omnia compleverint quae per statuta requiruntur, ut haec oratio ad Universitatis Ephemeridem admittatur*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The Proctors and the Assessor, who will indeed have fulfilled almost everything that is required by the Statutes, ask the venerable Congregation of Doctors and Regent Masters to admit this Oration to the *University Gazette*.

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**Proctorial Year 2010–11**


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Totals for previous year given in brackets.

**Summary of Disciplinary Cases**

(Where students were charged with more than one offence relating to the same incident, the case is reported under the most serious of the charges.)

**BREACH OF STATUTE XI CODE OF DISCIPLINE**

*Forgery/falsification of university document and/or dishonest behaviour:* 2 (4)

The Student Disciplinary Panel imposed a fine of £200 on a student who had engaged in dishonest behaviour towards the University.

A further case has been referred to the Student Disciplinary Panel.

*Misuse of Property (Information Technology facilities):* 2 (3)

In one case, the Student Disciplinary Panel imposed a fine of £400 and ordered that restrictions be placed on the offender's access to the University's IT network and facilities.

In one case, the Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing imposed a written warning as to the offender's future conduct and ordered him/her to pay £50 compensation to a University department.

*Engaging in activities likely to cause injury or impair safety and/or disorderly behaviour:* 3 (3)

In one case, the Student Disciplinary Panel imposed a written warning as to the offender's future conduct.

In one case, the Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing dismissed the charges brought against a student member of the University.

In one case, the Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing imposed a fine of £300 on an offender.

*Inciting or conspiring with other persons to engage in any of the conduct prohibited under the Code of Discipline:* 2 (0)

In one case, the Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing imposed a fine of £100 on the offender.

In one case, the Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing imposed a fine of £75 on the offender.

**BREACH OF RULES COMMITTEE REGULATIONS**

*Behaviour after examinations:* 8 (5)

The Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing imposed one fine of £250 on one offender who incited or conspired with other student members to breach the Regulations of the Rules Committee.

The Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing charged a further seven offenders and imposed fines as follows: a fine of £230 on one offender who was also found guilty of failing to disclose his/her name; a fine of £100 on one offender who was also found guilty of obstruction; four fines of £80; one fine of £20.

In one case, the Proctors gave the offender a written warning about his/her future conduct.

*Immediate Fines:* 23

Twenty-three Immediate Fines were imposed—one fine was later withdrawn: one fine of £120; eighteen fines of £80; one fine of £40; one fine of £30; two fines of £20.

In one case, a student who appealed to the Student Disciplinary Panel against the imposition of an Immediate Fine had his/her appeal dismissed.

**BREACH OF THE PROCTORS' DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS**

*Academic misconduct: (including plagiarism):* 7 (12)

In two cases, the Student Disciplinary Panel ordered that the offender should be failed in the examination and expelled from the University with immediate effect.

In two cases, the Student Disciplinary Panel ordered that the Examiners should fail the pieces of work concerned. The offenders were permitted to re-submit work on a different topic.

In one case, the Student Disciplinary Panel ordered that the Examiners should fail the piece of work concerned. The offender was permitted to re-sit the examination on a different topic. The Panel also imposed a fine of £250.

In a further case, the student was found not guilty.

One further case is pending.

In a further seven cases which were investigated, the Proctors were satisfied that candidates did not intentionally or recklessly breach the Proctors' Disciplinary Regulations for University Examinations

in respect of work which they submitted for examination. The Proctors decided that these cases could be dealt with more appropriately within the normal academic process.

In one case carried forward from the previous Proctorial year the Student Disciplinary Panel ordered that the offender be failed in the examination and expelled from the University with immediate effect. The offender applied for but was refused leave to appeal to the Student Appeal Panel against penalty of expulsion imposed by the Student Disciplinary Panel.

*Unauthorised materials in an examination room:* 2 (7)

The Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing imposed a fine of £30 on one candidate who took a mobile phone into a University examination.

In a further case, the Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing imposed a fine of £40 on a candidate who took a Blackberry into a University examination.

*Total cases where charges were brought:* 26 (41)

**OTHER MATTERS**

A student member of the University's appeal to the Student Disciplinary Panel was not upheld. He/she applied for but was refused leave to appeal to the Student Appeal Panel against an ongoing Suspension Order.

Two further cases concerned students who appealed to the Student Disciplinary Panel against the imposition of Suspension Orders. These cases are ongoing.

The Proctors dealt with 208 (266) new cases of students reported by libraries for non-payment of fines and/or non-return of books. Replacement costs recovered for non-returned books: £2,055.52; library fines imposed: £5,203.29. Total amount recovered: £7,258.81.

No fines were imposed on student organisations registered with the Proctors for failing to comply with administrative provisions in part 1 of the Regulations of the Rules Committee.

**Summary of Complaints Cases**

During 2010–11, the Proctors received a total of 124 complaints for investigation under the provisions of Statute IX and the relevant Council Regulations, compared with 152 the previous year. In addition, they completed the investigation of complaints left over from the previous Proctorial Year. In four of the new cases where the Proctors had prior involvement or other potential conflict of

interest, the Vice-Chancellor appointed other members of Congregation to deal with the matter in their place. In summary:

*Taught-course examinations (undergraduate and postgraduate):* 105 (131)

Of these new cases, nineteen involved a straightforward marks check and did not lead to further action. The Proctors upheld a total of thirty-four complaints relating to new cases, in whole or in part. Twenty-one cases remain under consideration.

*Research student matters:* 8 (8)

The Proctors upheld three of these complaints, in addition to three complaints from previous years or continuing previous complainants' claims. Three cases remain under consideration.

*Equal Opportunities:* 0 (0)

*Harassment:* 6 (2)

Three cases remain under consideration. One case is being dealt with under the Proctors' disciplinary procedures.

*Maladministration:* 2 (4)

The Proctors upheld one of the complaints and although the second complaint was dismissed they made separate arrangements to put the complainant back in touch with the University department concerned for an alternative resolution of the problem. One case carried forward from the previous year was upheld.

*Quality of/access to teaching, learning, support facilities:* 0 (3)

Some of the cases reported elsewhere include representations about matters such as quality of supervision.

*Suspension/rustication:* 0 (0)

*Student Union:* 1 (3)

The complaint remains under consideration.

*Other:* 2 (1)

The complaints are still under consideration.

*Total new complaints:* 124, of which 38 were upheld in whole or in part, with appropriate redress being provided; 56 were dismissed, withdrawn, or required no further action; and 30 remain under consideration.