

USE OF DEGREE AWARDING POWERS

Note by the Academic Registrar

- 1 It was reported to the meeting of the Senate on 18 June 2003 (SM 561) that the College Strategy Committee had agreed that the College should develop plans to award Imperial degrees and that it was hoped to invite the Senate to discuss the proposal in detail at its next meeting.
- 2 There are a number of issues that will have to be addressed by the College in fulfilment of the objective of using its degree awarding powers. There are for example legal, governance and financial considerations. This paper will confine itself to identifying the main academic implications of awarding Imperial degrees and to inviting the Senate to comment on these.
- 3 It may be helpful to the Senate to summarise the current relationship between the University of London and the College in respect of the award of degrees. In 1995 the University of London approved new Ordinances embodying a new academic framework within which Colleges of the University were authorised to confer degrees of the University on their students. In 1998 the College introduced its own regulations for the award of first degrees and taught masters degrees of the University choosing, largely for administrative reasons, to continue to operate within University regulations for the award of research (MPhil, PhD) degrees. To a large extent, therefore, the College is already carrying out the operational and regulatory functions and responsibilities of a university with regard to the award of degrees, and has systems in place to take over such of those functions and responsibilities which remain with the University of London.
- 4 The exercise of its own degree awarding powers will give the College further freedoms.
 - The College will be able to establish Imperial degrees as a unique mark of quality.
 - It will have the freedom to develop new programmes and awards without having to observe the requirements of the University Ordinances (although it would be necessary to draft a framework for College awards in place of the Ordinances).
 - The College will take responsibility for the administration of research degree examinations, which should lead to greater efficiency, although there will be attendant additional costs.

- 5 There are, however, some potential difficulties to be assessed in seeking independence from the University.
- Withdrawal from the University of London External Programme might threaten the viability of some academic programmes, for example in Agricultural Sciences.
 - The maintenance and development of joint academic programmes and other forms of collaboration with other Colleges of the University might become more difficult.
 - There will be implications of independence from the University for staff members who hold Professorships and Readerships of the University of London.
 - Independence from the University of London as a brand might be seen as a disadvantage in certain disciplines, for example Medicine.
 - The loss of access to University of London facilities (residential, library, sporting and social) might disadvantage our students.
 - The contract between existing students and the College provides for the award of degrees of the University of London.
- 6 The views of the Senate on these and any other issues not listed above would be helpful in informing the task of the project team which will be addressing these matters.