

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

A Meeting of Philosophy Staff and Students was held on Tuesday 30 April 2013 at 1.05 p.m. in the Philosophy Faculty Board Room, Sidgwick Site.

Present: Jane Clare (Principal Secretary), Heather Sanderson (Administrator), Jenni Lecky-Thompson (Librarian), Charlie Evans (Secretarial Assistant), Professor Tim Crane (Faculty Chair), Hallvard Lillehammer (Undergraduate Co-ordinator), Prof Huw Price (Director of Graduate Studies), Benjamin Phillips, Peter Zhokovsky, Adam Lalak, Vittoria Fallanca, Mike Hastings, Shyane Siriwardena.

1 Starring of items was invited.

2 Apologies for absence were received from Neal Carrier.

3 The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2013 were approved. These minutes were previously circulated to all students via e-mail for information, and are also available to be viewed on the Faculty website.

4 New appointments:

It was reported that the Faculty is delighted to announce that Professors Richard Holton and Rae Langton will be joining the Faculty from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in September 2013.

It was also reported that Dr Raphaël Ehrsam (Université Paris 1 Sorbonne) has been appointed to a Temporary Lectureship to provide cover from 1st October 2013 until 30th June 2014, for part of the period when Dr Angela Breitenbach will be on leave during her Leverhulme Research Fellowship.

It was noted that Dr Louise Hanson (University of Oxford) has been appointed to a 5-year College Lectureship in Philosophy for Fitzwilliam and Churchill Colleges, starting in September 2013.

5 Retirements

It was reported that Professor Raymond Geuss will be retiring from the Faculty on 31st December 2013.

It was further noted that Mrs Lesley Lancaster, Graduate Secretary, will be retiring on 31st May 2013, but that her last day in the post was Monday April 29th. Students were informed that Miss Katrina Wilson will be taking over as Graduate Secretary from Monday 20th May. If students have any graduate queries in the mean time, they are asked to visit the Faculty Office, or email phil-admin@lists.cam.ac.uk. It was noted that Mrs Enid Kuznets, Library Assistant, will be retiring on 30th June 2013. It is hoped that this vacancy will be filled shortly.

6 Tripes Examinations

Students were reminded that all undergraduates have been emailed a copy of the exam timetable. Students were also reminded that the final version of the Philosophy Tripos Exam timetable can be found on pages 209-211 of the document at:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/students/studentregistry/exams/timetable/>

7 National Student Survey 2012:

It was reported that the General Board's Education Committee again considered the internal report on the results of the 2012 National Student Survey (NSS). Prof Tim Crane explained that the NSS is a series of questions which students in their third year, and graduate students, are asked to complete. Students are encouraged to take part in the survey, as the results provide a good form of publicity for the University (if this is felt to be deserved) and also offer feedback that the Faculty can act on. Heather Sanderson explained that relevant students should all have been emailed a link to take part in the 2013 survey, and that posters have also been put up in the Faculty advertising the survey. It was noted that this was the fifth year that Cambridge had met the threshold participation rate of 50% for publication of the University level results on the Unistats website (www.unistats.com), with a 53% response rate, which was slightly lower than last year (55% in 2011).

It was reported that overall satisfaction for the University of Cambridge was lower at 92% (compared to 94% in 2011). It was noted that overall satisfaction for Philosophy was lower at 84% (compared to 100% in 2011 and 96% in 2010). It was reported that responses to some of the questions were discussed at the meeting of the Faculty Board on November 19th 2012.

MAIN SURVEY QUESTIONS (54% response rate, 25 out of 46 students)

Question 5: The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.

It was noted that as in previous years, this was again the main question with a low satisfaction rating.

The satisfaction rate in 2010 was 58%, in 2011: 53%, in 2012: 44%.

It was noted that at the Faculty Board meeting on 21 November 2011, it was thought that the reply from students with regards to this question did probably not refer to the fact that they did not know where to obtain the document but to its content. It was explained that Dr Lillehammer has subsequently updated the criteria, giving a cumulative description of how marks are earned across different classes. Prof Tim Crane encouraged students to look at the new marking criteria, which can be found on the Faculty website at:

http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/u_grads/u_grads_exams.html

Students were also reminded that as noted on page 15 of the Undergraduate Handbook:

http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/u_grads/ugrad-handbk12-13.pdf

examples of good work are available in the library, to further illustrate marking criteria.

It was reported that at the Staff-Student Committee meeting on 7 February 2012 (item 11 – Potential Workshop for Undergraduates on how to "Self-Mark") it was agreed that the Faculty would post actual exam essay scripts on the Philosophy website including the grade and some explanation. It was noted that Dr Ahmed has obtained permission from several Part IA students and that some anonymised samples have now been posted on the Philosophy website. Heather Sanderson asked whether students have found these examples useful, and the consensus was that they had. It was suggested that it would be helpful to also have examples of Part IB and Part II essays online, and that the Faculty will perhaps ask students if they are willing to give permissions for Part IB and Part II examples to be posted up on the Faculty website following Tripos 2013 exams.

The meeting was informed that the Philosophy's Marking Criteria had been proved easy to use at the graduate Teaching Skills Workshop. However, Prof Tim Crane

explained that he understood that students were anxious about being able to understand marking criteria, since they are only assessed during exams at the end of the academic year, rather than having continuous assessment. Shyane Siriwardena suggested that supervisors could assist by pointing students to where they could find the marking criteria on the website. She also suggested that supervisors needed to focus more on the positives of a piece of work, and not just what had been done badly. There was discussion of the fact that some supervisors are reluctant to give a marked assessment for students during the year, in case the supervisors themselves haven't fully understood the marking criteria, and also so as not to give students any false expectations in regards to what marks they could expect in exams. It was felt that the Faculty should encourage supervisors to give marks when they submit supervision reports, which the DOS could then discuss with the student. Tim Crane suggested that this issue should be discussed at the upcoming Faculty Board Meeting on May 20th, and that perhaps following this, supervisors training at the beginning of the year would incorporate more detail on marking criteria and how to interpret them.

Question 12: Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices. The 2012 result of 60% was quite a significant drop from 79% in 2011.

OPTIONAL SURVEY QUESTIONS (39% response rate)

Question 2: The range and balance of approaches to teaching has helped me to learn.

The 2012 result of 50% was a very significant drop from 92% in 2011.

Question 7: My feedback on the course is listened to and valued.

The 2012 result of 50% was lower than the 64% in 2011.

It was noted that 14 out of the 25 respondents gave comments.

It was reported that the Faculty was very disappointed by some of the students' comments, since the Faculty actively engages and fosters consultation with students. It was noted that students are encouraged to bring their views to the regular Staff-Student Committee meetings.

It was explained that some issues were thought to relate to the frequent change in Directors of Studies in some Colleges. It was also explained that some new Directors of Studies who are not familiar with the system need more help and support in the guidance they are able to provide for their students. It was reported that Professor Crane asked that the Faculty continue to support Colleges who have difficulties in recruiting Directors of Studies in the best possible way.

It was also noted that Dr Button asked at the Faculty Board meeting what steps the Faculty had taken in response to the gender issues raised by some students during the last academic year. It was reported that he was reassured that all the agreed action points had been implemented.

8 Course Outlines:

It was noted that Part IA course outlines for the coming academic year are currently being updated and will be available from the Philosophy website by end of May/beginning of June. It was also noted that Part IB and Part II course outlines no longer exist as separate documents, but are combined with the reading lists.

9 Reading Lists:

Students were reminded that reading lists will be updated over the summer and will also be posted on the Faculty website.

10 Library Questionnaire:

It was reported that satisfaction levels with the library were extremely high, with a slight increase in satisfaction levels in several areas. It was also noted that there was a significant increase (28%) in satisfaction with opening hours due to 9am opening on weekdays, which have been trialed for 2012/13. It was noted that it was agreed at the Library Committee meeting to open at 9am during term time on a permanent basis. Students were informed that a full summary of the questionnaire is available from the library blog: <http://lewylib.wordpress.com>.

11 Library exam period extended opening hours

It was noted that the library will be operating extended opening hours from Tuesday 23 April until Thursday 30 May. It was further noted that the library will be open 9am to 7pm Monday to Thursday; 9am to 6pm on Friday, and 10am to 5pm on Saturday.

12 Faculty Newsletter

It was reported that the 10th issue of the Faculty Newsletter is due to be ready in late May/early June.

13 Lecture Questionnaires evaluation sheets:

It was noted that evaluation sheets for completed lecture questionnaires for Lent Term 2013 will shortly be available for consultation from the Library issue desk. Students were then asked if they had any further suggestions on how the questionnaires used to collect feedback on Lectures, Discussion Groups and Logic Classes could be improved. It was felt that the questions asked were sufficient, and students reported that they were pleased that a question is now included to ask final year undergraduates about their post degree plans. There was a suggestion that it might be better to ask students to complete lecture questionnaires during a short break in the middle of final lectures, rather than at the end when students might rush to complete questionnaires. Tim Crane said that this suggestion would be passed on to lecturers. He also underlined how useful it is if students make comments on questionnaires, rather than just giving numerical ratings, as this gives lecturers more concrete feedback which they can act on.

14 Part IA Discussion group readings:

It was noted that it was agreed at the Faculty Board meeting of March 4th 2013 that two readings should be removed from the Part IA reading list:

Meditations on First Philosophy: First and Second Meditations, R Descartes, and *The Paradox of Punishment*, Reading: Alan H Goldman.

It was further noted that suggestions for additional readings will be discussed at the next meeting of the Faculty Board on May 20th 2013.

15 Feedback Scheme for Graduates who supervise Undergraduates

It was reported that Shyane Siriwardena has agreed to take over from Amanda Cawston in organising this scheme. Shyane explained that this scheme exists so that graduate supervisors can peer evaluate each other. However, this year, only three students have taken part. Shyane explained that she is keen to get more graduate students involved next year, and hopes that more experienced supervisors will get involved who can act as mentors to those graduate students who are new to supervising. Shyane asked the undergraduate students present at the meeting if they had any feedback on whether they felt comfortable with having a second supervisor sitting in on supervisions to carry out the evaluation, and also if they felt

anything was missing from supervisions at the moment that the scheme could perhaps work to improve. No students at the meeting had been in a supervision where their supervisor had been assessed, so they were unable to offer feedback on this issue. However, they did suggest that it would be useful to get more feedback (ie written comments) on essays produced for supervisions. Heather Sanderson mentioned that Shyane, along with three other graduate students, ran a workshop for IA students on how to write an essay. Shyane reported that she hopes to run this workshop again next year. There was some discussion over whether it would be helpful to have a workshop for 2nd and 3rd years. It was suggested that it might be helpful to have a workshop that focused in on how to answer particular styles of essay questions, or how to approach an extended essay.

16 Session on taking Experimental Psychology

It was reported that in previous years, some IB students taking Experimental Psychology have arranged a session where they can talk to IA students who are considering taking Experimental Psychology as a IB option, to give them a feeling for the paper. It was noted that if any current IB students would be interested in doing this (with a session to be organized once exams have finished) they are asked to contact the Faculty Office. Benjamin Phillips indicated that he would be interested in doing this, and said that he would try and contact some other students about running this session. It was noted that an email about this prospective session will also be sent out by the Faculty Office.

17 Arts & Social Sciences Open Days

It was reported that the Cambridge Open Days for prospective undergraduate students will be on Thursday 4 and Friday 5 July 2013. It was noted that on each day there will be an information stand located in the Law Faculty Foyer from 10am – 4pm, as well as a course presentation and a tour of the Faculty. Dr Hallvard Lillehammer explained that prospective students and their parents are always very keen to be able to speak to current students at this event. It was noted that if any students are interested in volunteering to help on the stand for one or more two hour slots, they are asked to contact Dr Hallvard Lillehammer.

18 Dates of Faculty Board/Degree Committee meetings for 2013/2014:

It was reported that the following dates for Faculty Board and Degree Committee meetings for the academic year 2012–2013 were agreed:

<u>Michaelmas Term 2013</u>	<u>Lent Term 2014</u>	<u>Easter Term 2014</u>
Monday 14 th October	Monday 27 th January	Monday 19 th May
Monday 18 th November	Monday 3 rd March	

Long Vacation

It was further noted that the Long Vacation date will be announced as soon as the Board of Graduate Studies have finalized the dates for their meetings for the academic year 2013–2014.

19 Dates of Final Examination Meetings

Part IA – Friday 14 June 2013

Part II – Wednesday 19 June 2013

Part IB – Friday 21 June 2013

It was reported that a breakdown of marks will be sent to Directors of Studies and Tutorial Offices on the day after the final exam meeting. Directors of Studies will inform students of their marks for individual papers. Students were informed that if they are unable to contact their Director of Studies to receive their marks, they should contact the Tutorial Office of their College. It was noted that the Faculty Office is unable to disclose marks to individual students.

20 Lighting Sensor in the Graduate Centre and other improvements

It was reported that the lighting motion sensor in the Graduate Centre has been adjusted so that it is more sensitive.

It was noted that blinds have also been fitted in the Graduate Common Room and the Board Room, which should be useful when data projectors are being used. It was further noted that a permanent data projector has been installed in the Board Room.

21 Event Reminder

It was noted that Professor Michael Potter will now give his Inaugural lecture “Logic and Assertion: How are they related” in Michaelmas term. Time and venue to be announced.

22 There was no other business

The meeting ended at 13.40.