

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEE

A Meeting of Philosophy Staff and Students was held on Thursday 5 May 2011 at 12.05 p.m. in the Philosophy Board Room, Faculty of Philosophy, Sidgwick Site.

Present: Margrit Edwards (Chief Secretary), Heather Sanderson (Faculty Administrator), Dr Arif Ahmed (Undergraduate Co-ordinator), Jenni Lecky-Thompson (Librarian), Charlie Evans (Secretarial Assistant), Dr Michael Potter (Director of Graduate Studies), Professor Tim Crane, Amanda Cawston, Flora Sisman, Mat Simpson (in the Chair), Stephen Richards.

- 1 Starring of items was invited.
- 2 Apologies were received from Simon Blackburn.
- 3 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2011 were approved. These minutes were previously circulated to all students via e-mail for information.

4 New appointments:

Temporary Lectureship

It was noted that Dr Serena Olsaretti will be on leave for another year during the academic year 2011–2012. It was reported that Dr Maike Albertzart will continue to act as a temporary lecturer to cover for Dr Olsaretti's absence.

Bertrand Russell Professorship,

It was noted that the Faculty of Philosophy has announced that Professor Huw Price, currently the Challis Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney and ARC Federation Fellow, has been appointed to the Bertrand Russell Professorship with effect from 1st October 2011. He will succeed Professor Simon Blackburn following his retirement. It was reported that Professor Price is well-known for work in many areas of philosophy, especially the philosophy of physics, the philosophy of language and metaphysics. He has made substantial contributions to the study of time, truth and the nature of meaning.

Visiting Leverhulme Professor

It was noted that Prof Frank Jackson has now arrived at the Faculty as visiting Leverhulme Professor, and will stay until 30th June 2011.

Visiting Professor

It was further noted that Professor Michael Smith, McCosh Professor of Philosophy, Princeton University, will visit the Faculty on June 6th and 7th. His areas of specialization are ethics and metaethics.

5 Tripos Examinations – Rubric for the Essay Papers

It was reported that at the Staff-Student Committee meeting on 15 February 2011 it was pointed out that the rubric for the essay paper is ambiguous. As a result of this, students were informed that the following rubrics for Tripos 2011 were agreed at the Meeting of the Faculty Board on 7th March 2011:

Part IA

Write a philosophical essay on one of the following topics.

Part IB

Write a philosophical essay on one of the following topics. Your essay must not overlap substantially with the content of any extended essay that you submitted for assessment in place of taking another paper.

Part II

Write a philosophical essay on one of the following topics. Your essay must not overlap substantially with the content of any extended essay or dissertation that you submitted for assessment in place of taking another paper.

6 Philosophy Tripos Examinations — method of assessment.

It was noted that a firm proposal for the new option of submitting 40% coursework in Part II from 2011–2012 will now be agreed with the Education Section. Students were reminded that the possible 40% coursework component will allow students to submit a dissertation in place of Paper 12 (the essay paper) and two extended essays (in place of a subject paper). Students were also asked to note that this new option means that from 2011-12, students will no longer be able to submit a dissertation **and** sit the essay paper. However, it was noted that the option to submit two extended essays (in place of a subject paper) and sit the essay paper will remain.

7 Part II References

(Item 12, SSC minutes of 15/02/11)

It was noted that the issue of the choice of supervisors for Part II students (and the impact this has on references for applying for graduate study) was discussed at the meeting of the Faculty Board on 7th March 2011. It was further noted that it had been agreed to include a paragraph advising Directors of Studies to organize supervisions early on in the 'Guide for Directors of Studies'. It was reported that it had been pointed out at Faculty Board that students may also request a particular supervisor via their Director of Studies.

8 Undergraduate Documentation

It was noted that Dr Arif Ahmed, undergraduate Co-ordinator, had asked the Student Representatives to consult with students to discover how useful they found various items of documentation produced by the Faculty (the Undergraduate Philosophy Prospectus, the Philosophy Handbook, and the Course Outlines displayed on the Faculty website). It was further noted that at this stage, Dr Ahmed is initially proposing to remove the Course Outlines from the Undergraduate Handbook, to avoid duplication (as these are also available on the Faculty Website). It was reported that Dr Ahmed is also proposing that reading lists produced this summer (for 2011-12) have a prefatory paragraph which includes some recommendations of preliminary readings, so that in the future there would be no need to have course outlines, as all information would be covered on the reading lists.

Flora Sisman reported that she had received 13 responses relating to the usefulness of Faculty Documentation. (A copy of a document detailing these responses was passed to the Faculty Office). Flora reported that 7 students out of 11 had said that it would still be useful to have course outlines separated from reading lists. Students had also commented that having just the course outlines alone is useful for when they are choosing options. Flora also reported that students would like to have recommended editions of set texts on the reading lists that are sent out to new IA students, rather than these recommendations being made in the first lecture of term. With regards to the Undergraduate Prospectus, five students out of eight said they had found

the Faculty Prospectus useful over the general University Prospectus. It was also reported that students found the Faculty's prospectus much more user friendly, compared to the pdf version produced centrally.

The usefulness of the Undergraduate Handbook was then discussed. Flora Sisman reported that from consulting with students, she had found that the least useful sections of the handbook were the sections on Aims and Objectives, Costs and Societies, and on the Careers Service. Other sections were found to be useful. Tim Crane explained that one problem for the Faculty is that the website has grown over time, along with documentation, so that if changes are made that need to be communicated to students, they currently have to be changed in several different places. Tim Crane felt that it would make more sense for all such information for current students to be displayed in one area of the website. Michael Potter went on to explain that the production of the Handbook pre-dated the Faculty website. Michael Potter proposed that the Undergraduate Handbook should be abolished, and all information, including syllabus details, be made available online. Tim Crane agreed with this proposal, and said he would second it. However, Margrit Edwards felt that Directors of Studies should be consulted, as they also use the handbook heavily, as do Faculty Office staff, when responding to queries. There was discussion over whether the handbook might be most useful for Freshers/first year students. Flora Sisman commented that she certainly found it useful during the first year, and Margrit Edwards commented that it might be more useful for new students to be given a document with all relevant information in one place, rather than having to look for this on the Faculty website.

Following this discussion, it was agreed that if the handbook were replaced by an online version, it would need to be laid out clearly. Mat Simpson suggested that it would be helpful for the online version to have a contents page, so students would know straight away what information it contained, and therefore what information they were expected to know about. It was suggested that if the handbook did go online, Freshers should be given a link to it as part of their Freshers Pack, possibly in a post card format, as is currently done with the Library Guide. Arif Ahmed concluded that he would take a proposal to Faculty Board to start moving forward with transferring the Undergraduate Handbook online, and a decision would then be made in the future on when it was felt that the online version was sufficiently good enough that the hard copy version of the Handbook could be abandoned. Mat Simpson commented that the student reps would continue to canvas student opinion in light of this proposal about moving the handbook online.

Following some discussion, it was also agreed that course outlines will be removed from the Handbook while it still exists as a hard copy document (as Course Outlines are also available for students on the Faculty website).

Dr Ahmed then explained that he proposed to eventually abolish course outlines altogether, and move towards having reading lists which include a prefatory paragraph at the beginning of the document (it would be too late to make this change for 2011-12, as course outlines are already being updated). It was indicated that students would be in favour of this proposal. However, Michael Potter said he would not be in favour of this for IA course outlines. Dr Potter pointed out that IA course outlines are sent out to new students once an offer has been made, and that if these were sent out combined with a reading list, this could be intimidating. It was then agreed that a proposal would be made to Faculty Board to amalgamate course outlines with reading lists for Part IB and Part II with effect from 2012-13, but that it would be important to take care with the presentation of the resulting documents so that they would be user friendly.

9 Statutes and Ordinances:Part II, Paper 6 (Philosophy of science)

It was reported that this paper is currently suspended and in the rules the Faculty states:

'Paper 6 has been suspended for 2011.'

It was noted that the Faculty Board agreed, at its' meeting on 16 October 2006, to review this annually. It was further noted that at the Faculty Board meeting of March 7th 2011, Flora Sisman asked the Faculty to amend this to read 'until further notice' as it was otherwise misleading. It was explained that students might think that the Faculty had plans to reintroduce this paper when in effect there were no such plans.

It was noted that it had been agreed to amend the Statutes and Ordinances so as to read:

'This paper is suspended until further notice.'

10 Ordinaries and the Ordinary BA Degree:

It was noted that at the Faculty Board meeting of 7th March 2011, it was reported that changes to the regulations for the Ordinary BA Degree have now been approved by the Regent House, with effect from 1 October 2011, as follows:

- (i) allowances towards the Ordinary BA Degree will no longer be awarded by the Applications Committee or by Examiners.
- (ii) students who:
 - (a) obtain Honours in a combination of any two examinations for Part I, Part IA, or Part IB, which must be in different Triposes, *and*
 - (b) have obtained honours in the second one of these examinations in their final year of study; *and*
 - (c) have completed nine terms in residence will be entitled to the Ordinary BA Degree. For these purposes Affiliated Students will be deemed to have the equivalent of a Part I as well as three terms residence before they arrived;
and
- (iii) candidates who achieve Honours in Part I but fail at Part II, and who have completed nine terms of residence, will be entitled to apply to the Applications Committee to be declared to have deserved the Ordinary or Honours Degree, depending on supporting medical or other evidence.

It was further noted that the full Report can be viewed at Reports — Cambridge University Reporter 6204
<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6204/section7.shtml>

11 Course Outlines:

Students were informed that 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.

12 Reading Lists:

It was noted that reading lists will be updated over the summer and will also be posted on the Faculty website. If Faculty Board agrees to it, the reading lists will include a prefatory paragraph as well as some recommendations for preliminary readings (see item 8).

13 Library Questionnaire:

It was reported that the Library questionnaire ran between 24 January until 4 February 2011

(a period of two weeks). It was noted that there were 66 respondents (slightly higher than in 2010), of these, 63 were Philosophy students or staff. This represented approximately 33% of current philosophy students and staff.

– The vast majority of respondents (97%) were very satisfied with the range of books in the collection.

– It was clear that there was an issue with some users having difficulty finding the resources they required online.

– As in previous years, the lowest satisfaction rating (82%) was given for library opening hours. Some users would prefer the library to open earlier in the morning and some later in the evenings. Users were pleased with the longer opening hours on Saturdays.

The librarian has agreed to trial opening the Library from 9 a.m. by staffing the library herself between 9–10 a.m., during weeks 1–4 of the Easter term, whenever possible.

It was reported that overall, the Library scored highly on the satisfaction ratings in all categories. The highest ratings were given for the helpfulness of Library staff, the range of books and journals, and the library website.

14 Other library news

Students were reminded that from Tuesday 26th April, and for the first four weeks of Easter term, the library opening hours for Monday to Friday will be **9am – 7pm**. Students were also informed that there is now a scanner located in the library for their use.

15 Lecture Questionnaires evaluation sheets:

It was noted that evaluation sheets for completed lecture questionnaires for Lent Term 2011 will shortly be available for consultation from the Library issue desk. Students were asked if they had any suggestions on how the questionnaires used to collect feedback on Lectures, Discussion Groups and Logic Classes could be improved. No suggestions were made, although Mat Simpson reported that a student had commented that it is sometimes difficult to just use the numerical scale to respond to a question. It was pointed out that there is also a comments section on the questionnaire, and students may use this if they want to make a comment on the questions requiring a numerical mark.

16 Part IA Discussion group readings:

It was noted that at the Faculty Board meeting on Monday 7th March 2011, a document listing the readings for the IA discussion groups which take place in the Michaelmas and Lent Terms, was circulated. It was noted that 'The Paradoxes of Time Travel' needed to be amended as Time is no longer on the IA syllabus. It was noted that Dr Arif Ahmed and Dr Fraser MacBride had agreed to recommend a replacement Metaphysics reading to the Faculty Board. Students had been asked for any suggestions for other readings. Mat Simpson said there had been two suggestions:

'What is it like to be a bat?' by Thomas Nagel

'Mind, Brains and Programs' by John Searle.

17 Sharing of lectures with HPS- Provision of reading material.

(Item 10, minutes of the SSC meeting of 15/02/11)

It was noted that all students have now been given access to the HPS CamTools site so that they can access HPS readings.

18 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2010

It was reported at the Faculty Board meeting held on March 7th 2011 that the PTES is an online survey tool developed by the Higher Education Academy, designed to allow institutions to collect feedback on the taught postgraduate experience in a convenient and comparable format, with the objective of enhancing the taught postgraduate student experience.

The University of Cambridge was one of 76 institutions that chose to use PTES in 2010, between mid-February and the end of May. A total of 32,638 research students across the UK completed the survey, giving an overall response rate of 14.8% — with 2 Philosophy respondents.

The Philosophy MPhil does not currently comply with the requests for a HEFCE Research Degree and is therefore classified as a 'Taught Experience'. The conditions for a HEFCE Research Degree are that all MPhil students must submit a dissertation. The dissertation must be examined by an external examiner and the examination must include a viva, also with an external examiner.

In order to avoid duplication, it was agreed to strongly encourage the Faculty's MPhil students to take part in the annual PTES survey and to discontinue the Faculty's own end of year questionnaire (currently used in June).

The Faculty's two questionnaires about supervisions are to continue:

- a) first questionnaire to be handed in with the first essay at the end of Michaelmas Term;
- b) second questionnaire to be handed in with the second and third essays at the end of Lent Term.

19 Philosophy Wiki

It was noted that the link to the Philosophy Wiki will be removed from the Philosophy Faculty website, as the information on there has now been superseded by the Philosophy events calendar, as well as information circulated on the phil-bulletin email list.

20 Faculty Newsletter:

It was reported that Issue 8 (May 2011) of the Annual Faculty Newsletter will be published this month.

21 Arts & Social Sciences Open Days

It was noted that the Cambridge Open Days for prospective undergraduate students will be on Thursday 7 and Friday 8 July 2011. It was further 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.

22 Dates of Faculty Board/Degree Committee meetings for 2011/2012:

It was reported that the following dates for Faculty Board and Degree Committee meetings for the academic year 2011–2012 were agreed:

Michaelmas Term 2011

Monday, 17 October
Monday, 21 November

Lent Term 2012

Monday, 30 January
Monday, 5 March

Easter Term 2012

Monday, 21 May

Long Vacation

It was 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 2011–2012.

23 Inaugural Lecture:

It was noted that Professor John Marenbon will give an inaugural lecture on 30 November 2011. The time, venue and title will be announced in due course.

24 Leverhulme lectures

It was noted that Professor Frank Jackson will give the following public Leverhulme lectures in Easter Term:

Thought Experiments	Wednesday 27th April
Reference for Representationalists	Monday 2nd May
Reductionism in Ethics	Wednesday 11th May
A Priori Physicalism (or what to say about Mary)	Monday 16th May

All lectures will take place in the Little Hall, Sidgwick Site at 5pm

25 Any other business.**Part IB, Paper 1, Contextualism**

Mat Simpson reported that he had had a query from a student taking Part IB, Paper 1, who had written one of their four essays last term on Contextualism, and wanted to know whether this was seen as a whole topic that could be revised for the exam. Mat explained that he had only been able to find one question in past exam papers 'Can the sceptic be refuted' that seemed to fit into this topic. Tim Crane commented that while contextualism is relevant to both the topic of scepticism and of knowledge, contextualism was not a topic in its own right. Tim Crane did however comment that if you understood the topic of contextualism, you should be able to apply it to various questions in the exam in the exam, although he underlined that it would be important to answer the question as set.

Possibility of students suggesting lectures

Flora Sisman reported that students had commented to her that they would like to be able to suggest possible lecture topics, as some students were disappointed this year that there were no Causation lectures. Michael Potter pointed out that Faculty Board reps see the draft lectures lists that are circulated at Faculty Board, and would be welcome to get student feedback on these drafts. While discussing lecture coverage, Stephen Richards suggested that it would be helpful if the Philosophy Faculty would put on one IB Philosophy of Science lecture series themselves, rather than just have the lectures covered by HPS. Students commented that it would be particularly helpful if the Faculty could put on lectures to cover the topic of Scientific Realism. It was also suggested that it might be useful to have a more general Philosophy of Science lecture put on by Philosophy, to bring the whole subject together. Students commented that HPS lectures were given from a different standpoint, and that the structure of HPS lectures was not felt to be useful for Philosophy students wanting to be able to put together an essay. Students commented that the quality of HPS lectures varied, and that the lectures were not always in line with the syllabus. Students also reported that HPS lectures were being aimed at two very different types of students, and that there was also a feeling that lecturers weren't always aware that there were Philosophy students present. Tim Crane responded by explaining that there is a transitional stage at the moment with regards to Philosophy of Science, especially given that Dr Peter Smith is retiring, and Prof Huw Price will only be in Cambridge for one term in 2011-12. However, it was reported that Arif Ahmed has been negotiating closely with HPS, with the aim of gearing the HPS syllabus to mesh better with Philosophy. It was also reported that in 2011-12, HPS lectures would be given by Tim Lewens, who has always received positive feedback from Philosophy students, and otherwise there would be new

lecturers, which it was hoped would lead to a more positive experience for Philosophy students. Tim Crane also raised the possibility of Philosophy students being able to borrow an HPS paper, as there are not enough members of staff in the Philosophy Faculty to be able to support the Philosophy of Science paper. Mat Simpson stated that student reps would continue to ask for feedback from students about HPS lectures, during this transitional period.

The meeting ended at 12.40pm