

STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEE
Minutes

A Meeting of Philosophy Staff and Students was held on Tuesday 1 May 2012 at 12.05 p.m. in the Philosophy Board Room, Faculty of Philosophy, Sidgwick Site.

Present: Margrit Edwards (Chief Secretary), Heather Sanderson (Administrator), Jenni Lecky-Thompson (Librarian), Charlie Evans (Secretarial Assistant), Professor Jane Heal (MPhil Course Director), Dr Arif Ahmed (Undergraduate Co-ordinator), Dr Fraser MacBride (Director of Graduate Studies), Flora Sisman, Rachel Robertson, Vittoria Fallanca, Beatrice Patrick and Katharine Jenkins.

Prof Tim Crane was unable to attend the meeting.

1 Starring of items was invited.

2 No apologies for absence were received.

3 The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2012 were approved. These minutes had been previously circulated to all students via e-mail for information, and are also available to be viewed on the Faculty website.

4 Filling of Casual Vacancy in Class (f) – Student representatives on the Faculty Board:

It was agreed in 2005 that if, at the Staff-Student Committee meeting in May, it is thought that a casual vacancy may arise at the beginning of the next academic year, the undergraduates present may nominate an undergraduate to fill an undergraduate vacancy. It was explained that this was now relevant, as Beatrice Patrick, one of the two current Faculty Board representatives, will be graduating at the end of this term (Easter Term 2012). The undergraduate representatives present were therefore asked to nominate a representative to fill this vacancy, who would act as a representative until the next scheduled student elections (due to take place in late November or early December 2012). Rachel Robertson (Part IA, St Catherine's) was nominated by Vittoria Fallanca, and all the other students present agreed with this nomination.

5 New appointments:

Three lectureships

It was reported that the Faculty is pleased to be able to confirm the following Lecturer appointments, and looks forward to welcoming them here in October 2012:

Dr Angela Breitenbach (University of East Anglia)

Dr Tim Button (from here in Cambridge)

Ms Paulina Sliwa (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

6 Recycling of material in the Tripos Examinations

It was noted that following the SSC meeting of February 7th 2012, it was agreed at the Faculty Board meeting of 5th March 2012 that the new wording relating to recycling of material in the Tripos Examinations which will be included in the 2012-13 syllabus is as follows:

"The Tripos Examination aims to test the breadth as well as the depth of candidates' knowledge. Accordingly candidates should in general **not receive additional credit for recycled material**.

Obviously this rule cannot be completely hard and fast. For instance, an argument that is well known in one area of the subject certainly merits credit when reused in some novel and interesting connection. However the rule does apply if in the examiners' judgement a candidate is using essentially the same content to make essentially the same point.

The intention is also that the rule be applied proportionately. Clearly then the reuse of, say, a few sentences cannot invalidate the answer where they reappear. And it is also acceptable for a student to report in one essay a point or argument from another, as a premise for then continuing and expanding on that idea. Examiners are asked (as always) to use their judgement, to ensure that withholding of marks only applies to cases of substantial recycling."

7 Report on gender imbalances in the Faculty

It was reported that the student reps had produced a report on gender imbalance in the Faculty, which had been presented at the Faculty Board meeting held on 5th March 2012. Following this, the student representatives had had a meeting with Prof Jane Heal (Faculty Gender Champion) and Dr Arif Ahmed (undergraduate Co-ordinator). The reps circulated a document to those present, which was split into a list of possible action points following their discussions with Prof Heal and Dr Ahmed, as well as a list of some further suggestions for action which there had not been time to discuss.

Dr Ahmed reported that he had met with the current discussion group leaders in light of the proposals from the student reps. The discussion group leaders had come up with four or five suggestions of ways of encouraging participation within discussion groups, such as asking people to put their hands up before contributing and breaking up into smaller groups to encourage people to talk. Dr Ahmed explained that these strategies would also be mentioned at the initial briefing meeting held for discussion group leaders at the start of the academic year. Dr Ahmed also reported that the discussion group leaders did not feel there needed to be any amendments to the current aims of the discussion groups, rather that it was important for leaders to keep these aims in mind and make sure that they are implemented in the running of the discussion groups. Dr Ahmed also confirmed that if there are sufficient leaders available, then the Faculty will run six slightly smaller discussion groups next year, rather than five.

There was some discussion over whether it would be a good idea to include papers written by female authors on the list of readings for the IA discussion groups. It was felt that it would certainly be helpful to keep in mind this possibility, as currently all the readings are by male authors. It was noted that the readings for IA discussion groups for 2012-13 have already been agreed at Faculty Board, but the possibility of including readings by female writers will be revisited for 2013-14. It was felt that it might be more likely for a suitable piece by a female author to be used in Lent Term, when the readings mostly fall under the topic of Ethics, which more female authors have written on.

There was also discussion of including more female authors on the main reading lists for Part IA, Part IB and Part II. Dr Arif Ahmed made it clear that he felt authors should be chosen only on their intellectual strengths rather than because of a group they belonged to, and he felt it wouldn't be appropriate to dictate which authors

should be put on reading lists. Dr MacBride explained that whilst historically there have been far fewer women writing in the profession, which makes it difficult to invariably find a woman writer suitable for a reading list or discussion group, there are also some luminous cases such as Philippa Foot, Elizabeth Anscombe and Judith Jarvis Thompson. Dr MacBride suggested that one step might be to include first names, rather than just initials on the reading lists, so that female authors would be immediately visible. It was agreed that the document produced by the reps detailing the outcome of their discussions with Prof Heal and Dr Ahmed should be circulated at the upcoming Faculty Board meeting on Monday 21st May so that all members of Faculty Board could be made aware of the feelings of students on the issue of Gender and equality.

It was felt that making students aware of female philosophers was important, and as such, Katherine Jenkins and Beatrice Patrick both reported how pleased they had been to see a display on female authors in the library. Prof Jane Heal also suggested that it might be good to have more portraits of female philosophers such as Anscombe on display in the Faculty.

There was some discussion of a paper given by Jenny Saul (Director of the Society for Women in Philosophy UK) at the Cambridge Women In Philosophy group on April 27th. It was felt that this was a very positive discussion, which also focused on ways of helping women to progress into further education, and it was felt that it might be good to make this an annual event, possibly to be led by the Faculty Gender Champion in the future.

8 National Student Survey 2011:
Philosophy Descriptive Classing Criteria

It was reported that the General Board's Education Committee considered the internal report on the results of the 2011 National Student Survey (NSS). Overall satisfaction for Philosophy had increased to 100% (compared to 96% in 2010).

The main question with a low satisfaction rating was again question 5: The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.

It was reported that it was thought that the reply from students did probably not refer to the fact that they did not know where to obtain the document but to its content, that it was not clearly written what is expected of a first class mark.

It was explained that at the Faculty Board meeting on 21 November 2011, Dr Lillehammer had agreed to rewrite the Philosophy Classing Criteria for undergraduates so that the criteria are cumulative.

It was noted that a document from Dr Lillehammer was circulated at the Faculty Board meeting on 30 January 2012. Dr Lillehammer had compared the Faculty's Marking Criteria with the criteria provided by other, similar institutions. He had made the criteria more cumulative and separated the comments from the description in each class, adding a section at the end called: "Further comments on the interpretation of classing criteria". Members of the Board were in favour of separating the comments section and thought the document an improvement.

It was noted that at the Faculty Board meeting on 5 March 2012 Dr Lillehammer reported that he will be bringing a proposal to the Faculty Board in May which includes both a refined version of the existing Classing Criteria and a new Marking Scheme that accords with the numerical Marking Schemes used in other comparable UK institutions.

9 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 further noted that from 2012-2013, Part IB and Part II course outlines will no longer exist as separate documents, but an introductory paragraph will be included on the readings lists. A sample of one of these new style Reading List and Course Outline was circulated and there was some discussion of how useful students currently find the reading lists. It was felt that there is sometimes some disparity between the reading list, the syllabus, and the topics which come up regularly on the exam papers. There was also reported to be some confusion between the different sections of the current reading lists – for example how important works listed in the “further reading” section are, etc. It was explained that supervisors should be able to help students to make the best use of the reading list. Dr MacBride then asked students to clarify what they felt the role of supervisors and lecturers was in relation to how students used the reading list. Some students reported that not all supervisors give guidance on how to use the reading list, and that additionally some lecturers provide their own reading lists which do not always tally with the content of the main reading list. Heather Sanderson explained that the new format for the reading list/course outline would include the syllabus for the paper in a box at the start of the document, then a shortened course outline, the objectives of the paper, and some suggested preliminary reading before the main reading list. It was agreed that the new format for the Reading list/Course outline for Part IB and Part II was very helpful.

10 Reading Lists:

It was noted that reading lists will be updated over the summer and will also be posted on the Faculty website.

11 Library Questionnaire:

It was reported that overall, the Library scored highly in the recent questionnaire on the satisfaction ratings in all categories. Respondents were least satisfied with the opening hours, the course readings available on CamTools, and the library environment. The highest ratings were given for the helpfulness of the Library staff, the range of books and journals, and the library website.

It was noted that comments relating to opening hours suggested some demand for the library to open from 9 a.m. during term time so that students could work or borrow books before 10 a.m. lectures. It was reported that it was therefore agreed at the Faculty Board meeting of Monday 5th March 2012 to extend the opening hours for a trial period of one year and to monitor attendance during the extra hour.

12 Lecture Questionnaires evaluation sheets:

It was noted that evaluation sheets for completed lecture questionnaires for Lent Term 2012 are now available for consultation from the Library issue desk.

It was further noted that following discussions held in the SSC meeting of February 7th 2012, the standard lecture questionnaire used to collect feedback was updated for Lent Term 2012 to include a question on the future plans of Part II students.

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. Flora Sisman suggested that it would be useful to have a clear section break between question 3 and 4, as for the first three questions, the way of scoring is slightly different than for the next four. It was also suggested that in question 8, where comments are asked for, and some examples of things to comment on are given, it might also be useful to ask for comments on how much students felt the lecture series helped to increase their overall understanding of the

paper and syllabus topics. It was agreed that question 8 would be updated to include this suggestion.

13 Part IA Discussion group readings:

It was noted that it was agreed at the Faculty Board meeting of March 5th 2012 that the current IA discussion group readings would be kept for 2012-13.

14 Session on taking Experimental Psychology

It was noted 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 what the paper is like. Current IB students who might be interested in doing this (with a session to be organized once exams have finished) were asked to contact the Faculty Office (phil-admin@lists.cam.ac.uk).

15 Arts & Social Sciences Open Days

It was noted that the Cambridge Open Days for prospective undergraduate students will be on Thursday 5 and Friday 6 July 2012. 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, given on each day by Dr Arif Ahmed, and a tour of the Faculty. Dr Arif Ahmed explained that he was looking for students to volunteer to help on the stand for two hour slots, as it is always helpful to have undergraduates on the stand to talk to prospective students. It was explained that students would receive £20 book vouchers for a 2 hour slot if it was covered by two students, or £40 if they covered the slot on their own. Students were told that they should contact Dr Ahmed (ama24@cam.ac.uk) if they are interested in doing this.

16 Dates of Faculty Board/Degree Committee meetings for 2012/2013:

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

Michaelmas Term 2012

Monday, 15 October
Monday, 19 November

Lent Term 2013

Monday, 28 January
Monday, 4 March

Easter Term 2013

Monday, 20 May

Long Vacation

Monday, 1 July 2013

17 Dates of Final Examination Meetings

Part IA – Thursday 14 June 2012
Part II – Wednesday 20 June 2012
Part IB – Friday 22 June 2012

It was noted that breakdown of marks will be sent to Directors of Studies and Tutorial Offices on the day after the final exam meeting. It was further noted that 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.

The meeting ended at 12.50pm.