

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEE

A Meeting of Philosophy Staff and Students was held on Tuesday 2 November 2010 at 1.05 p.m. in the Philosophy Board Room, Faculty of Philosophy, Sidgwick Site.

Present: Margrit Edwards (Chief Secretary), Heather Sanderson (Administrator), Professor Jane Heal (Undergraduate Co-ordinator), Jenni Lecky-Thompson (Librarian), Charlie Evans (Secretarial Assistant), Dr Michael Potter (Director of Graduate Studies), Professor Tim Crane (Faculty Chairman), Dr Hallvard Lillehammer, Zoë Johnson King, Amanda Cawston, Flora Sisman, Mat Simpson, Sebastian Nye, and Alexis Artaud de la Ferrière.

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- 1 It was agreed to continue with the starring of items. Items not starred are on the agenda for information only. People attending the meeting were invited to star any item(s) they wished to discuss.
 - 2 Apologies for absence were received from Tabatha Leggett and Stephen Duxbury.
 - 3 The minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2010 were approved. These minutes were previously circulated to all students via e-mail for information.
 - 4 Zoë Johnson King proposed that Mat Simpson be elected as Chair of the Staff-Student Committee. This was unanimously agreed on by all present.
 - 5 New appointments:
Temporary Lectureship
It was noted that Dr Serena Olsaretti will be on leave during the academic year 2010–2011.
It was further noted that Ms Maike Albertzart will provide cover for Dr Olsaretti as a temporary lecturer for 2010-11
Leverhulme Early Career Fellow:
It was reported that Dr Steinvör Arnadóttir is here until 31st August 2012. The title of her research project was noted as 'Objects and Sorts'.
 - 6 Old Library:
New students were reminded that the Old Library is a common area where undergraduate students can meet informally, have coffee/tea and discuss philosophy. Due to the nature of the location it is asked that discussions are kept fairly quiet because of the various offices adjacent to it.
 - 7 Election of Student Representatives:
Faculty Board in class (f)
It was noted that the election will be held on Tuesday, 30 November 2010, with the deadline for nominations a week earlier on Tuesday, 23 November 2010.

Council representatives

Students were reminded that student representatives will also be elected to serve on Councils of the Schools. These representatives should be elected by and from the student representatives of the constituent Faculty Boards.

It was noted that the election for Council representatives will be held on Thursday 27 January 2011 at a meeting of newly elected representatives.

8 Faculty of Philosophy – Casimir Lewy Library Committee:

It was noted that the date of the Library Committee meeting will be announced in due course.

It was reported that elections for Student Representatives take place in November/December, as mentioned above. It was further noted that the Library Committee meeting takes place in the Lent Term to ensure that newly elected Faculty Board Representatives can be present at that meeting.

It was noted that the Library Committee consists of the following members:

The Librarian
The Chair of the Faculty
The Secretary of the Faculty
The Director of Graduate Studies
The Undergraduate Co-ordinator
The Chair of the Staff Student Committee
The two Undergraduate Representatives on the Faculty Board
The Graduate Representative on the Faculty Board

9 Change to borrowing regulations in the University Library

It was reported that the University Library has changed its borrowing regulations this academic year to allow *all* undergraduates (not just third years) to be able to borrow there. The Faculty Librarian asked if there was any student feedback on this, as she explained that other Faculties had reported increased competition for certain books now that all undergraduates are able to borrow. The librarian had also learnt that whereas previously undergraduates had been able to go to the library to consult a certain book, there was now a greater chance that they would find that the book was out on loan, leading to difficulties. Students at the meeting mentioned that there had been some reports of Philosophy students encountering similar problems. Mat Simpson also reported that he had been surprised to find that the University Library does not carry a copy of Simon Blackburn's book "Truth". It was explained that unlike the British Library, the University Library does not always carry all books published in the UK, although if students are looking for a book, it is also useful to check at the desk in the main reading room if a book is at the library, but waiting to be catalogued. It was agreed that although the changes in borrowing regulations are not causing significant problems at this stage in the term, it will be important to monitor if this changes when students are preparing extended essays, etc and there would in any case be a greater need for books.

10 M.Phil. Questionnaire:

It was reported that ten of last year's eleven MPhil students returned completed questionnaires.

The following two issues were discussed:

One issue raised was the availability of online journals, as two students said online journals were scarce. It was agreed to discuss this with the Philosophy librarian, Mrs Lecky-Thompson. The Board was reminded that the subscription of the majority of journals had been centralized to the University Library.

One issue not related to the summary of returns, but an issue which had been brought to Dr Potter's attention was the fact that one student did not have the full number of supervisions for each MPhil essay prescribed by the Faculty, i.e. fortnightly supervisions during Full Term. He reminded members of the Board that this is clearly stated in the Graduate Handbook

11 Feedback to graduates on their supervisions for undergraduates:

It was reported that Directors of Studies, at their meeting on 4 October 2010, were reminded that the quality of graduate supervising depends on reliable feedback from Directors of Studies to the supervisors they employ. It was noted that such feedback is also helpful to the graduate students' own supervisors.

12 Extended Essays in Part IB/Extended Essays and Dissertations in Part II:

It was noted that examples of good work are available for perusal from the library issue desk.

(Students are asked to note that this is also mentioned on page 68 of the Undergraduate Handbook).

Students were also reminded that the deadline for application is

19 November 2010.

All titles have to be approved by the Chairman of Examiners before students leave for the Christmas break.

13 Examiners' reports:

It was noted that the reports for 2010 will be posted up on the following website along with the other reports:

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

14 Tripes Examination Reform

Mat Simpson explained that he wanted to discuss possible proposals for increased coursework options, which would then be discussed at Faculty Board later in the month. A document outlining possible coursework options, prepared by Dr Michael Potter & Dr Hallvard Lillehammer, was circulated. It was noted that this document expresses just the views of Dr Potter & Dr Lillehammer, and was not presented as the "Faculty view". Dr Potter went on to explain that he had prepared this document following discussions on the subject of possible coursework options at the SSC meeting of February 11th, 2010. The paper had not yet been acted on, because it was felt that Easter Term (2010) was not a good time to consider reforms because students were busy with examinations.

Dr Potter emphasised again that this paper had no official status at this stage, and then explained that the main thrust of this paper was to propose that if students wanted an option to do more coursework, they be allowed to do three subject papers, two extended essays in place of a fourth subject paper, and a dissertation, which Dr Potter referred to as **Option E**.

This would mean that coursework in Option E would account for 40% of the total examination. Dr Potter explained that this would require special dispensation, as the University currently stipulates that coursework should only make up a third of the overall mark. However, Dr Potter suggested that this might be granted, given that the English Faculty has already been permitted to allow their Part II students to do 40% coursework. Dr Potter went on to explain that one of the current options, which he refers to as **Option D**, (which allows students to do three subject papers, a dissertation and the essay paper), has been problematic, because of misunderstanding/misinterpretation of Option D. Dr Potter is therefore proposing that if Option E is adopted, Option D would have to go.

In response to this, Mat Simpson gave an overview of the replies he had received from students in relation to the possibility of increased coursework. He said he had heard from about 20 students, who were all in favour of more choice generally in terms of coursework. With this in mind, Mat also proposed a further coursework option, which he referred to as **Option F**, which would allow students to take two subject papers, to offer two extended essays each in place of two further subject

papers, and to do the essay paper. Mat explained that this would offer students an option of doing more coursework, without doing a dissertation, which is seen to involve more work than sitting a written examination. Dr Potter explained that from the Faculty's point of view, Option F could be a concern, because the proposed four extended essays carried an increased risk of plagiarism. Dr Potter went on to say that while plagiarism could also be a concern with Option E, because this option involves a dissertation, and would therefore not be chosen by students seeking an "easy option" he felt students taking this option would be less likely to resort to plagiarism. Dr Potter also pointed out that with the proposed option F, students could potentially complete Part II with only two written subject papers. Dr Potter said that while written papers are not the only way to examine students, they are nonetheless an important method of testing students' capacity and knowledge. Dr Potter went on to explain that while extended essays are generally deeper in their scope than written examinations, they are also necessarily narrower. He explained that it was important to have sufficient breadth at Part II level, before students graduate.

Zoe Johnson King explained that she was in favour of the proposed Option F, and felt it would be preferred from a student perspective. She felt that a lot more work was involved to do a dissertation (under proposed option E) than to do the essay paper, whereas Option F was offering students the possibility of doing more coursework, without having to do a dissertation. Dr Potter again emphasised that the Faculty would not want to encourage narrowness. He explained that students can be quite narrow in what they prepare for written examinations, and felt that if students then had the option to replace two written papers with extended essays which would be even narrower in their topics, this would not be educationally viable. Zoe Johnson King countered this by suggesting that it should be possible to specialize in Part II, as such specialization is then possible only a year later as an MPhil student. However, Prof Tim Crane explained that there is a big difference between Part II, and the MPhil year, which is essentially preparing students for PhD research. The undergraduate degree should encourage sufficient breadth of study, after which the MPhil involves more specialization.

In response to questioning from Jane Heal, Mat Simpson explained that in his view, students supported both options E and F, but showed greater support for option F. He also clarified that students did not show a great deal of support for Option D, and would be happy for this to go. The UTOs present at the meeting (Prof Heal, Prof Crane, Dr Potter and Dr Lillehammer) all indicated that they were against Option F because of the concerns already outlined. Dr Potter said that this suggested there was very little prospect of Faculty Board agreeing to it. Mat Simpson agreed that there would be more student support for option E than Option D. It was explained that Option D, while seen as a good idea when it was introduced, had produced a lot of administrative problems for the Faculty. In light of these discussions, Prof Heal explained that students should also bear in mind that it was possible that in the future the Faculty might have to move to making dissertations compulsory, as this was being supported by University Central Bodies. However, in the mean time, it was agreed that as a result of the discussions at this meeting, a firm proposal would be made at the upcoming Faculty Board meeting on November 22nd 2010 to adopt option E, and abolish Option D. The Faculty would then need to make a strong case to the University Education Section to support the increased amount of coursework which Option E would involve. Zoe Johnson King said that while she could list reasons why she felt student would support Option F, the pragmatic approach was to support Option E over Option D.

- 15 Discussion Groups for Part IB students:
It was noted that the Faculty has arranged discussion groups for Part IB for the Lent Term 2010 as follows:

Metaphysics & epistemology - Nathan Wildman - Tuesday, 4-5pm, RFB 332

Logic - Steven Methven - Monday, 3-4pm, LB12

Ethics Richard Child: - Monday, 4-5pm, LB12

Greek & Roman Philosophy - Matthew Duncombe - Friday, 2-3pm, LB12

Modern & Medieval philosophy - Michael Hannon - Friday, 3-4pm, LB12

Philosophy of Science - Nicholas Teh - Thursday, 3-4pm, LB12

Political Philosophy - Sebastian Nye - Thursday, 4-5pm, RFB 327

Students were reminded that they may sign up for as many groups as they wish, but need to bear in mind the additional work involved. Once a student has signed up, it is expected that s/he attends all the sessions.

It was noted that one Part IB Discussion Groups is already being held during this term, namely Philosophy of Probability, which is led by Nathan Wildman.

- 16 Lecture questionnaires:

It was noted that it had been agreed, at the Faculty Board meeting on 2 March 2009, that the Faculty would go ahead with a trial of online lecture questionnaires. Since the introduction of online questionnaires, there had been a noticeable decline in feedback from students and concern had been expressed over the low return of completed questionnaires. The Faculty therefore agreed, at its meeting on 1 March 2010, to go back to paper versions from October 2010.

It was noted that students are encouraged to complete the paper questionnaires which will be distributed in final lectures (in weeks 4, 6 or 8 as appropriate) in Michaelmas Term. Students are also encouraged to complete questionnaires circulated in Discussion Groups and Logic Classes. If any students miss the final lecture, or do not get the opportunity to complete a questionnaire in their lecture, it is now possible to download questionnaires from the Faculty website:

http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/u_grads/questionnaires/ugrad_questionnaires.html

It was further noted that any completed questionnaires should then be returned to the Faculty Office.

- 17 Lecture Questionnaires evaluation sheets:

Students were reminded that evaluation sheets for completed lecture questionnaires are available for consultation from the Library issue desk. It was noted that attention is also drawn to this on page 20 of the current undergraduate student handbook.

- 18 Introductory Day, 6th October 2010

It was reported that the Introductory Day for all new Philosophy students took place on Wednesday 6th October 2010. Mat Simpson was thanked for giving a very informative talk on what is involved in being a student rep. It was further noted that it is hoped that a similar talk will be given by a student rep at the next Introductory Day in October 2011.

- 19 Amoral Sciences Club

It was noted that the contact name and President for the ASC is:
Richard Cook, Trinity Hall, rc474@cam.ac.uk

- 20 Student Suggestion Box

It was reported that a suggestion has been made via the Suggestion Box that it would be useful to have lids for the paper coffee cups available from the Coffee

machine in the Old library area. It was noted that the Faculty proposes to order in some lids later in the term, and to see how popular they are.

21 Inaugural Lecture

It was reported that Professor Tim Crane will give his inaugural lecture at the Knightbridge Professor of Philosophy on Wednesday 1 December 2010, at 17.15 in the Little Hall, Sidgwick Site. The title of the lecture is: What is Distinctive About Human Thought?

22 Any other business

There was no other business raised.

The meeting ended at 13.30 hrs.