

STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEE

Minutes

A meeting of the Philosophy Staff and Student Committee was held on Tuesday 28th April 2015 at 1.05 p.m. in the Philosophy Faculty Board Room

Present: Jane Clare (Principal Secretary), Heather Sanderson (Administrator), Jenni Lecky-Thompson (Librarian), Charlie Evans (Secretarial Assistant), Prof Alex Oliver (Undergraduate Co-ordinator), Prof Richard Holton (Faculty Chair), Dr Arif Ahmed (Chair of Examiners), Dr Angela Breitenbach (Mphil Co-ordinator), Shyane Siriwardena (Chairing the meeting), Sheanna Patelmater, Jasmine Walter, Tessa Standen, Melissa Botes, Elina Karastie, Francis Smallwood.

1 Starring of items was invited. Dr Arif Ahmed explained that he was at the meeting to discuss any items relating to exams if students wished to discuss this. As no students wished to star any points relating to exams, Dr Ahmed left the meeting at this point.

2 Apologies were received from Sophia Cruwell and Chris Lynch.

3 The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2015 were approved. These minutes were previously circulated to all students via e-mail for information.

4 New appointments

The following new appointments were reported:

a) **Temporary Teaching Associate** (cover for Tim Button whilst on Leverhulme research leave)

Dr Owen Griffiths has been appointed from 1st October 2015 until 30th June 2017. Prof Richard Holton explained that Dr Griffiths studied at the Faculty as an Undergraduate, as well as at postgraduate level, so is very familiar with how Logic is taught at the Faculty, making for a smooth transition while Dr Button is on leave.

b) **Temporary Lecturer** (cover for Tim Crane whilst working on Templeton research project)

Dr Alex Grzankowski has been appointed from 1st July 2015 until 30th June 2017.

c) **2 Postdoctoral Research Fellowships** (Tim Crane's Templeton project)

Dr Craig French and Dr Raamy Majeed have been appointed from 1st July 2015 until 30th June 2017. Prof Richard Holton explained that there are likely to be several workshops running in conjunction with the Templeton project, which should make it an exciting time for students.

d) **Part-time Research Project Administrator** (Tim Crane's Templeton project)

Ms Chris Meyns has been appointed from 1st July 2015 until 30th June 2017.

e) **Temporary Lecturer** (cover for Angela Breitenbach's SCAS/CRASSH Profutura Fellowship)

Dr John Filling has been appointed from 1st July 2015 until 30th June 2018. Prof Holton explained to students that Dr Filling specialises in Hegel and Marx, so that although the Political Philosophy syllabus has changed slightly, there should still be the same number of lectures on Marx in 2015-16. Elina Karastie reported that she had been in touch with students to let them know about Dr Filling's appointment, and that they were very pleased that Marx would continue to be taught. Prof Holton also explained that Dr Filling may teach on Nietzsche. It was also noted that the Faculty

will be making two more appointments shortly.

5 Tripos Examinations

It was noted that all undergraduates have been emailed a copy of the exam timetable. Students are reminded that the final version of the Philosophy Tripos Exam timetable can be found on page 143 of the document at:

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

Students were reminded that the Philosophy Faculty uses a numerical marking scheme. Students were also reminded that details of the current marking guidelines and criteria are now also available on the Faculty website at:

<http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/IA/curr-students/ugrads-exam-folder/ugrads-exams/markings-criteria-new>

Part IA students were reminded that past exam scripts and sample answers are available on the Faculty website.

6 Deadline for handing in Part II Dissertations

Students were reminded that the deadline for submitting dissertations for Part II is **Friday 1st May at 12 noon**. It was noted that if students miss this deadline without prior approval from the Chair of Examiners, the paper will be failed as the final deadline for amending exam entries has already passed.

7 National Student Survey 2015

It was noted that the deadline for completing The National Student Survey is Thursday 30th April. It was reported that all part II students have been emailed a link to the survey. It was explained that the NSS is an independent survey asking students to rate the quality of their Higher Education experience, and the results of this survey help prospective students, their families and advisors to make study choices. Students were strongly encouraged to take part in this survey, and it was noted that 2 prizewinners will be drawn from undergraduates that take part.

8 Postgrad Survey

It was noted that the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2015 is now open to students for feedback about their experience on the University's postgraduate programmes. It was further noted that students will have been sent a link to this survey, and are encouraged to complete it.

9 Reading Lists

It was noted that combined Course Outlines/Reading lists will be updated over the summer and will also be posted on the Faculty website.

10 Library Annual Report 2013-2014

(*circ.*) The above report was noted.

11 Library exam period extended opening hours

It was noted that the library will be operating extended opening hours from Monday 27 April until Thursday 4 June. It will be open 9am to 7pm Monday to Thursday, 9am to 6pm on Friday, and 10am to 5pm on Saturday.

12 Proposed syllabus changes for Tripos 2015-2016:

It was noted that following discussions at the SSC meeting of February 3rd 2015, and the subsequent Faculty Board meeting of 2nd March 2015, two small amendments

have been agreed to the initial changes proposed to Part IA, Paper 2 Ethics and Political Philosophy, and Part IB, Paper 7 Political Philosophy. These changes are as follows:

- 1) 'Anarchism' to be added to Part IA, Paper 2
- 2) 'Equality: egalitarianism; libertarianism; the value of equality' to be replaced by 'Equality: egalitarianism; labour, property & theft; the value of equality.'

13 Faculty Newsletter

It was noted that the 12th issue of the Faculty Newsletter is due to be ready in mid May.

14 Lecture Questionnaires evaluation sheets

It was noted that evaluation sheets for completed lecture questionnaires for Lent Term 2015 are now available for consultation from the Library issue desk.

It was further noted that if students have any further suggestions on how the questionnaires used to collect feedback on Lectures, Discussion Groups and Logic Classes could be improved, this would be very welcome.

15 Part IA Discussion Group readings

It was noted that following discussion at the Faculty Board Meeting of 2nd March 2015, a slight amendment was made to the Lent Term readings as follows:

Week 5: Hobbe's account of ~~rights~~ and political obligation.

16 Student Elections Michaelmas Term 2015

It was noted that in response to feedback from several Faculties during the Michaelmas 2014 election of student members, the General Board's Education Committee have reviewed the Regulations surrounding the elections, and agreed to two changes.

Firstly, it was reported that there has been a change to the setting of the election date. From 1 October 2015, the earliest date an election may be held will become 20 October; the latest date an election may be held will remain the last day of Full Lent Term. It was noted that The Education Committee continues to recommend that all Boards adopt a common date, but it was explained that the Faculty could change this date if students felt there was a reason to do so. However, it was agreed that the current date (normally at the end of November) works well as it gives new students a chance to get to know their proposed reps, and also gives newly elected reps the chance to attend the second Faculty Board meeting of Michaelmas Term. Therefore, it was decided that the Faculty will continue to use the date suggested by the Education Committee.

Secondly, it was explained that the Education Committee has agreed to the introduction of two new electoral schemes to allow for a total of four student members. Students were asked if they would like to move from having two undergraduate representatives and one graduate representative to having two undergraduate reps and two graduate reps. Shyane Siriwardena reported that she had consulted her fellow graduate students about this possibility, but had not received any responses. Shyane explained that she felt the current system of having two undergraduate reps, and one graduate rep works well, as it is proportionate to the number of undergraduates and postgraduates that there are in the Faculty. Shyane also explained that she felt that an MPhil or PhD student could equally well represent the graduate students, so it was agreed that the Faculty won't move to having two graduate representatives.

17 Session on taking Experimental Psychology

It was reported that in previous years, some IB students taking Experimental Psychology have arranged a session to 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 organised once exams have finished) they are asked to contact the Faculty Office.

18 Arts & Social Sciences Open Days

It was noted that the dates of the Cambridge Open Days for prospective undergraduate students are Thursday 2 and Friday 3 July 2015. 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. Prof Alex Oliver explained that manning the information stand is very helpful for prospective students who are visiting the University, and he encouraged students to volunteer to do this. It was also explained that the Faculty provides Amazon vouchers to students who are able to help at the Open Day. Shyane Siriwardena explained that she had previously helped out on the Faculty Information Stand, and that it usually involved current students sharing their experiences of studying at the Faculty with prospective students and their parents. 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 the undergraduate co-ordinator, Professor Alex Oliver.

Following on from the discussion of Open Days, Prof Richard Holton explained that in March of this year, the Faculty ran a Sixth Form Conference, which was attended by 100 people, and he explained that the Faculty are keen to run other outreach events, in order to broaden the spectrum of students that apply to study Philosophy, and to help maintain the number of applicants. He explained that he would be keen to hear from any current students who have ideas on potential outreach events or activities. Prof Holton also said that it would be very helpful to get a sense from current students on what led them to apply to the Faculty, and how they chose their College. Elina Karastie said that she would be willing to approach students about this once the exams are over. Prof Holton said that he would also like to look into providing more online resources for Philosophy A-level students. Jasmine Walter reported that she might be able to help the Faculty with making a video to attract potential students.

19 Dates of Faculty Board/Degree Committee meetings for 2015-2016

The following dates for Faculty Board and Degree Committee meetings for the academic year 2015–2016 were noted:

Michaelmas Term 2015
Monday 19th October
Monday 23rd November

Lent Term 2016
Monday 25th January
Monday 29th February

Easter Term '16
Monday 16th May

Long Vacation
27th June 2016

20 Dates of Final Examination Meetings

The following dates were noted:

Part IA – Tuesday 9th June 2015
Part II – Friday 12th June 2015
Part IB – Tuesday 16th June 2015

It was noted that breakdown of marks will be sent to Directors of Studies and Tutorial Offices shortly 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.

21 Faculty of Classics

It was noted that the subtitle of the Faculty of Classics Paper Part II B2 is changing to 'Aristotle's world, from turtles to tragedies'.

22 Any other business

Borrowed papers

Tessa Standen re-visited the possibility of Part II students being able to borrow either the "English Moralists" paper from the English Faculty, or the "Sociology of Gender" paper from the HSPS Faculty. Tessa explained that she felt that the Faculty's argument that the fact that the English Faculty's paper calls for students to write exam essays in a different style to that which Philosophy students are taught to use, was not a sufficient reason for students to be prevented from taking the paper. She explained that third year medical students at the University are allowed to take a subject less obviously related to medicine, such as Anthropology, Management Studies or Philosophy, and she felt that there would be a greater difference between the exam styles of Medicine and Philosophy, than between Philosophy and English. She also explained that a lot of other Faculties allow students to borrow papers. Prof Richard Holton explained that the possibility of allowing students to borrow both of these papers had been discussed at Faculty Board; Dr Tim Button had looked into the English Faculty Paper and was concerned that the exam style wasn't suitable, and Prof Rae Langton and Dr Clare Chambers had looked into the HSPS paper, but had felt it was much more of a sociology paper. Prof Holton went on to explain that at a recent away day for the School of Arts and Humanities (which the Philosophy Faculty is part of) there was enthusiasm for the idea of there being a big list of papers that could be shared between Faculties within the school. Heather Sanderson explained that there is currently a working group looking at this, as well as exploring the possibility of joint degrees. Heather Sanderson also explained that the next meeting of the Council of the School will take place on 13 May 2015, when there will be further discussion of the possibility of sharing papers, based on what the working group has discovered. Prof Holton explained that Faculty Board will also discuss the possibility of shared/borrowed papers in light of this, but as the next Faculty Board meeting takes place on 18 May 2015, there may not be time to take on board any information from the School meeting, and put in place any changes for Part II papers for 2015-16. Prof Holton also explained that the Faculty needs to consider how many Philosophy papers students need to take in order to be considered to have done a proper Philosophy degree, and also whether it's acceptable to allow students to take borrowed papers that the Faculty feel might be damaging the student's degree. Heather Sanderson also underlined that there are a lot of logistical considerations when deciding on whether to allow borrowing of papers, such as whether the number of students allowed to take a paper would need to be capped based on teaching resources, room availability etc. However, students will be kept informed of the outcome of the School's working group on borrowed papers.

Reading lists

Melissa Botes explained that some students had asked for it to be made clearer on reading lists which are the most important texts, in particular for Dyslexic students who need to prioritise which texts they study. Shyane Siriwardena explained that

supervisors should be able to help students identify key texts from the reading list, and said that she would contact other graduate students to remind them of this, and to suggest that if supervisors are unsure of which texts to recommend, they can contact the paper co-ordinator. Prof Holton explained that the Faculty preferred to provide choice on the reading list, rather than being too prescriptive. Heather Sanderson also explained that Jenni Lecky-Thompson would shortly be updating reading lists, and would ask for supervisors input when doing this.

Syllabus changes

Students asked whether the Faculty could do something to make it clearer how the syllabus has changed from one year to another, as it can be confusing when students are revising and looking at past papers to know which topics are still on the syllabus. Heather Sanderson explained that when there is a significant change to the syllabus, the Faculty produces a mock, sample paper to help with revision (these are available on the Faculty website). It was noted that small changes to the syllabus do not necessarily impact on what questions will come up in the exams. However, it was suggested that the Guide to Course/Syllabus for each year could be posted up along with the past exam papers, to help students identify how the syllabus has changed. Prof Alex Oliver also explained that revision supervisions should be used to help identify which questions on past papers are still relevant to the current syllabus. It was also suggested that the past exam papers available online went so far back as to be confusing, so it was agreed that it was only necessary to have 8 years of previous papers, which would be updated on a yearly basis. Prof Holton also suggested that if there was found to be an easy way to produce a document explaining recent changes to the syllabus, this would be done.

Gender Pronoun Policy

Elina Karastie asked whether the Faculty could establish a policy on the use of Gender Pronouns, as she was aware of some students getting negative feedback from supervisors on their use of gender pronouns in essays. Shyane Siriwardena said that she would contact supervisors to remind them that they shouldn't penalise students for how they choose to use gender pronouns in essays. Jane Clare explained that Arif Ahmed had confirmed that for exams, extended essays and dissertations, students could use gender pronouns as they wished, and would not be penalised in any way. Jane Clare and Elina agreed that they would work together to include a sentence about gender pronoun use for the Undergraduate Handbook. In this context, Prof Holton suggested that students might find it useful to look at Geoff Pullam's Lang Log posts
<http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/~gpullum/langlogposts.html>

The meeting ended at 13.38h.