

## **FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY**

### **Guide for Seminar (Discussion) Group Leaders**

The Faculty organises two kinds of undergraduate seminar (discussion) groups: compulsory fortnightly seminar (discussion) groups at Part IA, and various six week seminar (discussion) group courses which students can choose to sign up to at Part IB.

All group leaders will be invited to attend the Faculty's session on Small Group Teaching & Seminar (Discussion) Groups, which will be run by the Undergraduate Co-ordinator at the start of Michaelmas Term. Please contact Janette Dutton ([philpostgrad@phil.cam.ac.uk](mailto:philpostgrad@phil.cam.ac.uk)) in the Graduate Office for more information.

**Part IA** seminar (discussion) groups run fortnightly during Michaelmas and Lent Terms (4 sessions in each term, on alternate Mondays at 10am or 1pm). In Michaelmas Term, topics covered fall under the syllabus of Part IA, Paper 1 (Metaphysics), and in Lent Term, the topics covered fall under the syllabus of Part IA, Paper 2 (Ethics & Political Philosophy). Each session is devoted to a pre-set text from a reading list agreed on by the Faculty as well as academic skills. The reading list is also available to both students and group leaders on Moodle and the links to this are included in the undergraduate student handbook.

Attendance at IA seminar (discussion) groups is compulsory. These groups have the same formal status as college supervisions. Each IA group is made up of approximately 10 students. Students are allocated to groups ahead of the start of Michaelmas Term, and wherever possible, groups are made up of a mix of genders, and with students from a range of Colleges.

#### **IA Seminar (Discussion) Group Aims**

The overall aim of these groups is to complement one-to-one supervisions and lectures by giving students the opportunity to discuss some of the material in the Part 1A syllabus in a group setting, acquiring skills of philosophical reading and discussion in the process, as well as focussing on skill sets such as essay writing. An important goal is for students to learn how to be good citizens in a seminar setting with their peers. The job of the group leader is to structure the session, ensure everyone participates, and foster a good discussion culture.

More specifically, the sessions aim to:

1. ensure that the material assigned for each session is adequately covered.
2. foster a co-operative rather than competitive environment for discussion.
3. encourage open-minded exploration of ideas, without losing focus on the key issues.
4. encourage participation by all members in the group and actively try to overcome any barriers that might inhibit some students.

**Part IB** seminar (discussion) groups are devoted to one particular paper within the IB syllabus. They take place over six weeks in Lent Term, in weeks 2-7. Students sign up to these popular groups voluntarily, but attendance is compulsory once signed up. The number of students that sign up to these groups will vary, but would normally go from a minimum of 3 students, to a maximum of 12. If there is sufficient demand, two groups may be arranged for certain papers. Leaders of these groups will be asked to compile their own reading list, as a basis for discussion. These reading lists will then be made available to students via Moodle.

### **IB Seminar (Discussion) Group Aims**

The overall aim of these groups is to complement one-to-one supervisions and lectures by giving students the opportunity to discuss some of the material in the Part 1B syllabus in a group setting. The job of the group leader is to structure the session, ensure everyone participates, and foster a good discussion culture.

More specifically, the sessions aim to:

1. ensure that the material assigned for each session is adequately covered.
2. foster a co-operative rather than competitive environment for discussion.
3. encourage open-minded exploration of ideas, without losing focus on the key issues.
4. encourage participation by all members in the group and actively try to overcome any barriers that might inhibit some students.

The Faculty considers it important that everyone should feel free to speak in each of the groups. Methods for helping to ensure this will be covered during the session for small group leaders. Group leaders can also contact the Undergraduate Co-ordinator for further guidance.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Leaders are able to access the [SSD Moodle page](#) which allows them to see which of their students have a Student Support Document. Group leaders are asked to take note of any recommendations included in the SSD that may be relevant to how the group is carried out. Further support in this area can be obtained from the Faculty Office or the Undergraduate Co-ordinator. More information can also be found here:

<http://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/teaching-disabled-students>

### **Attendance at Seminar (Discussion) Groups**

Part IA groups are open to Philosophy Faculty students. Philosophy students get priority for Part IB groups, but if there is space, PBS (Psychology and Behavioural Sciences) students can also sign up if their timetable allows. Attendance at Part IA groups is compulsory, and once students have signed up to a Part IB group, attendance is also compulsory. For this reason, if students do not attend or do not do their work, it is very important that group leaders notify

the relevant directors of studies as soon as this emerges, and that they note it on the students' end of term reports.

### **Payment for Seminar (Discussion) Groups**

Payment for group leaders is via CamCORS. Where groups leaders do not already have a CamCORS account, they should go to this link:

<https://www.ois.cam.ac.uk/casc/camcors/project-update> There is a link to applying for a supervisor account under the question 'Why do I need to apply for a supervisor account every year?' Any kind of seminar (discussion) group / logic class leader role counts as a supervision as it is part of the supervision of philosophy students.

Rates of payments for group supervisions (which are how seminar (discussion) groups are viewed for payment purposes) can be found here:

<http://www.seniortutors.admin.cam.ac.uk/university-guidance-andprocedures/supervisions>

Graduate students can arrange for all payments for seminar (discussion) groups to come to them via their own college, by selecting the "Pay my College" payment option, which makes it easier to keep track of payments. When submitting reports on CamCORS, group leaders should submit one report per student, using the ordinary supervision section on CamCORS but noting the size of the group (normally 6 or more) and stating how many sessions the student attended and how their general contribution was, and whether there were any problems that the DoS should be aware of. (e.g. lack of confidence, never talked, talked too much, etc).

Seminar (discussion) group leaders are paid regardless of whether the student attends on any given week (and regardless of whether the student notified them of their absence in advance). But it is important that group leaders flag any absences in their reports.

It is important to write supervision reports and submit them ten days before the end of Full Term. They are usually discussed with the undergraduate in the company of the Director of Studies and/or Tutor, so try to make helpful suggestions for improvement. Most colleges will also release the report for the students to read themselves online. If you have submitted your reports promptly, you should expect to be paid by the colleges for which you have supervised within a few weeks.