

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
STUDENT-STAFF COMMITTEE

Minutes

for the meeting on Monday 9th May 2022, 12.05 p.m. by Zoom

Present: Professor Alexander Bird (Chair of Faculty), Professor Arif Ahmed (Chair of Examiners), Dr Jessie Munton (Undergraduate Coordinator), Professor Michael Potter (Director of Postgraduate Studies), Dr Sarah Fine (MPhil Course Director), Heather Sanderson (Faculty Administrator), Ellen Hammersley (Senior Administrator), Anna Simpson (Postgraduate Secretary), Jo Harcus (Casimir Lewy Librarian), Gerard Kornacki (Undergraduate Student Rep), Izzy Solomon (Graduate Student Rep), Joanne Wells (Administrative Assistant).

* *Circs*

- 1 Starring of items was invited.
- 2 No apologies for absence were received.
- 3 * The minutes of the meeting held on 7th February 2022 were approved. These minutes were previously circulated to all students via e-mail for information

4 Academic Administrative responsibilities:

The following academics are now overseeing the following areas:

Chair of Faculty Board: Alexander Bird
Undergraduate Co-ordinator: Jessie Munton
Chair of Examiners (Tripos): Arif Ahmed
MPhil Course Director: Sarah Fine
Subject Convenor (Undergraduate Admissions): Julia Borcherding
Director of Postgraduate Admissions: Angela Breitenbach
Director of Postgraduate Studies: Michael Potter

5 Staff news:

Joanne Wells was appointed as the new Administrative Assistant and commenced her duties on the 29 March 2022.

The Library team currently have two staff vacancies due to be advertised in June. Please bear with them while they're short-staffed this term.

6 Teaching and Support Arrangements 2021-22

The current protocols for students are available on the website here:

<https://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/teaching-2021-22>

Jessie Munton suggested adjusting the small group teaching arrangements for undergraduates. As increasing the contact hours for teaching staff would be impractical, ideas for improving the existing arrangements were considered. Possibilities could include basing the IA and IB discussion groups on more central course themes although adding to student's workload would need to be avoided. It was also proposed increasing the number of students in supervisions. The Graduate Student Rep suggested a document with questions that could arise in the discussion group be emailed to students in advance, to encourage them to consider the session prior to it taking place, without increasing their workload.

A student survey carried out by the Undergraduate Student Rep about teaching arrangements has been completed and, overall, students appeared to prefer more small group discussions rather than more supervisions. However, they felt discussion groups needed more structure. Reducing groups numbers from 10 to 4-5 would potentially be more effective, allowing all to engage and express their views. A consideration would be to tailor the discussion groups to a particular question with readings..

Dr Munton will discuss with group leaders what, in their opinion, is/is not working at present. To make progress before the next Student-Staff Meeting, training for group leaders can in the meantime be 'tweaked' with any bigger structural changes taking longer.

Tripos Examination Update

Mitigation

The Faculty has not planned to make any adjustments to the examining process following industrial action earlier this academic year. College teaching, including supervisions, was unaffected. As for lectures and supporting materials, our evidence was that disruption was relatively mild and would not prevent a diligent student from being able to answer the required number of questions on any of the Tripos exam papers.

Q&A with the Chair of Examiners

Professor Ahmed reiterated that students are warmly invited to a Q&A session on Zoom for all philosophy exams on Tuesday 17 May. The 3 sessions are as below:

12 noon - 1pm will focus on Part IA exams

1pm - 2pm will focus on Part IB exams

2pm - 3pm will focus on Part II exams

Zoom invites will be sent out in advance to all students, staff and DoS. It was noted that candidates of all parts are welcome to drop in and leave as they wish.

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Philosophy Tripos Examinations/Marking Criteria in 2022

Students were reminded that the Philosophy Faculty uses a numerical marking scheme.

The Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors (including Marking Criteria) Tripos Examinations 2022 were updated and shared, and have been added to this webpage:

<https://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/ugrads-exam-folder/guidelines-examiners-assessors>

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Expected Mark Release Dates.

A breakdown of the marks will be sent to the Director of Studies and Senior Tutors beforehand. DoS will be able to inform individual students of the breakdown of their marks for individual papers. If a student is unable to contact a DoS they could contact the College Tutorial office of the College. The Faculty office was not able to give out breakdowns for individual students.

By the end of the following days:

- 17 June for Part IA,
- 28 June for Part IB
- 23 June for Part II.

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Tripos exam scripts available on the Philosophy website – Update

Students were reminded that several sample exam scripts were added to the website, anonymised and had the permission of the authors. They can be found on the following web page:

<http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/ugrads-exam-folder/sample-answers>

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Well Being Service Updates for Students during Exams

A new Guide to '[Getting Through Exams](#)' has now been published here.

This has guidance and information on any concerns you may have had about your exams and tips on how to de-stress before the test. It is important to remember to take breaks and practise self-care alongside your studies to support your physical and mental wellbeing. Additionally, sources of information on managing exam stress can also be found on the [University Student Wellbeing](#) page and [Student Minds](#) website.

The Philosophy Library also has a wellbeing collection, located at the back of the reading room, offering books on a range of topics including mindfulness, managing stress, overcoming perfectionism and much more. This [online reading list](#) also provides access to a collection of wellbeing ebooks.

Disabled students who had not already applied for exam arrangements and needed to do so, could find information about the process, who to contact and what would be needed for an application, as well as links to further information.

In addition there were two workshops run by the Student counselling service to help you prepare for Exams;

- No panic! Managing exam stress and anxiety
- Exam preparation (Not subject specific)

You could sign up to these and other workshops and groups [via the UCS website](#).

12 circ Proposed Syllabus Changes for 2022-23

The syllabus changes circulated in the Staff Student Committee Meeting 7th Feb 2022 were approved formally by Faculty Board. The latest version of the Guide to Courses for 2022 to 2023 was circulated.

13 Reading Lists.

Faculty Caucus meetings are being held in May to review reading lists for the next academic year. Suggestions of further readings that would improve and diversify our reading lists, to reflect the best recent research, and important work by members of under-represented groups were welcomed. Suggestions were emailed to philosophy@lib.cam.ac.uk including the relevant part and paper number.

Following feedback from student representatives at the recent Library Committee meeting, a consistent system for highlighting recommended/required readings will be used for next year's lists. Reading lists for 2022/23 will be produced over the summer and will be available for the start of the new academic year.

14 circ Library Updates

This term, the Library will be open Monday to Friday 9am until 5pm and 11am to 5pm on Saturdays. Please see the [Library homepage](#) for further details.

Jo apologised that the minutes of the Library Committee meeting held on Monday 25 April aren't yet ready for circulation due to being short-staffed. Jo will aim to circulate the draft minutes by the end of this week.

The main item discussed was improvements to the online Faculty reading lists. Jo is planning to conduct some online testing with Faculty staff this term and with students over the Summer to assess how effective work undertaken to improve the usability of the online lists has been and to identify any further issues that need to be addressed. A

call for student participants will be circulated by email towards the end of term.

As 9-15 May is [Mental Health Awareness Week](#), Hebe has created a display of wellbeing resources available to borrow from the Philosophy Library (see also Item 11). To encourage you to practice some self-care and take regular breaks from revision, the Library will also be offering in-person Philosotea sessions this term, starting at 11am on Friday 13 May. Come and join them for a chat over a free cuppa and treats in the Old Library on the third floor. Further dates will follow shortly by email.

15 *

Feedback on Library and Faculty Student Spaces.

At the recent Library Committee meeting, feedback was invited on a proposal to convert the existing Librarian's Office into additional study space. Suggestions on what the space might be used for, e.g. a bookable group study room, a library lounge for more relaxed study and discussion or something in-between, are invited. Please email your thoughts and suggestions to library@philosophy.com.

This led to a discussion about the use of other student spaces in the Faculty. Feedback was sought following the last Library Committee Meeting as to whether the placement of tables in the postgraduate and undergraduate areas would facilitate group working in the department.

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Upcoming MPhil Deadlines

Final changes to dissertation titles - noon, Monday 9th May
Submission of dissertation - noon, Monday 20th June

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Postgraduate Offer Holders' Event

The offer holders' event was held on 28th March 2022. Some current postgraduate student helpers were needed, and information was sent out. Thanks were extended to the PhD students who attended and provided tours of the Faculty for prospective MPhil and PhD students at this well received event.

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Cambridge Open Days for Prospective Undergraduates

It was reported that the format of the 2022 Cambridge Open Days for prospective undergraduate students would be hybrid with both virtual and in-person elements. The live Open Days would be held on Thursday 7 July and Friday 8 July 2022. We are seeking current undergraduate and postgraduate student helpers for events on the day. An email will follow.

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Any other business

No other items were discussed.

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Date of next meetings

Proposed SSC meetings for the next academic years are as follows:

Michaelmas Term 2022-23

Monday 7 November 2022

Lent Term 2023

Monday 30 January 2023

Easter Term 2023

Monday 24 May 2023