

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
STUDENT-STAFF COMMITTEE

Minutes

for the meeting on **Tuesday 9th May, 12.05 p.m.** in-person

Present: Professor Alexander Bird (Chair of Faculty), Professor Arif Ahmed (Chair of Examiners), Dr Neil Dewar (Undergraduate Coordinator), Heather Sanderson (Faculty Administrator), Ellen Hammersley (Principal Secretary), Anna Simpson (Postgraduate Secretary), Jo Marcus (Casimir Lewy Librarian), Marta Bax (Graduate Student Rep), Gerard Kornacki (Undergraduate Student Rep), Eli Bertuccioli (Undergraduate Student Rep), Joanne Wells (Administrative Assistant).

- 1 * *Circs*
 Starring of items was invited.

 EDI review of decisions reminder.
 The Student-Staff Committee considered agenda items and confirmed that equality, diversity, and inclusion would be considered.
- 2 Apologies for absence.
 Sarah Fine sent apologies.
- 3 * The minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2023 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: Neil Dewar
 Chair of Examiners (Tripos): Arif Ahmed
 MPhil Course Director: Sarah Fine
 Subject Convenor (Undergraduate Admissions): Richard Holton
 Director of Postgraduate Admissions: Alex Oliver
 Director of Postgraduate Studies: Michael Potter
- 5 Staff news:

 Will Hornett will continue in the Faculty next year (2023-24) to provide temporary replacement cover whilst Alexander Bird is on leave (Leverhulme Research Fellowship).

 Congratulations were extended to Cecily Whiteley who has been appointed to a permanent academic position at the University of St Andrews, from September 2023.

6 Undergraduate Teaching and Support Arrangements 2023-24

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

www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/undergraduate-teaching-and-support-arrangements-including-exam-updates

7 * Marking and Assessment Boycott

The UCU has called a marking and assessment boycott which began on 20 April 2023 and is currently due to run until the end of September 2023. (Subject to early resolution or extension.)

On exams in general: The Faculty and University are working on the assumption that exams will be going ahead as planned and advertised. Students should continue to prepare as normal. Exam timetables and deadlines for submitted work remain unchanged.

On exam paper content: In the light of supervisions having already taken place, Faculty Board has decided that questions related to lectures impacted by strike action will not be removed from exam papers. This is consistent with past practice.

On marking mitigations: Faculty Board will discuss whether further mitigation is appropriate at its next meeting on Monday 22 May 2023.

For further information see the University's page for students:

<https://www.industrialaction.admin.cam.ac.uk/guidance/information-students>

The following points/questions were raised by the student representatives, and the comments/action points are given below:

- The Guide to Courses includes all potential syllabus content, even if not taught in a given year. Greater clarity is needed for students and their supervisors that they may choose a topic not covered in lectures.
Comment: Independently of industrial action, currently not all topics mentioned in the Guide to Courses need be covered in the lecture list. Such topics can, however, be covered in supervisions, coursework (extended essays and dissertations), and exams. This can be advantageous for students choosing extended essays in Part IB and Part II of the Tripos as it allows for a greater scope of choice.
Action Point: Faculty Board to consider amending the GTC so that exam questions are focused on taught material only but allow coursework and supervisions to continue to utilise the entire syllabus.
- How and to what extent would vivas be affected by the boycott?
Comment: If there are not enough examiners available to conduct the vivas, they may be dispensed with. Discussion is ongoing and a decision has yet to be determined.

- What are the possible outcomes for students if exams cannot be marked?
Comment: Should issues arise due to the industrial action, the Faculty would prioritise Part II of the Tripos and MPhil. Any decisions relating to graduations and late classifications will be taken in line with the University guidelines. The University is committed to marking all exams and coursework.
Action Point: *The Faculty would conduct a student survey to ascertain student preference and the harm delays may cause.*
- If marking is delayed, how might this affect the provision of teaching in Michaelmas Term?
Comment: Teaching in Michaelmas Term should not be affected, but there is potential flexibility to move teaching to later in the term or to Lent Term if deemed necessary.

8 * Philosophy Tripos Examinations/Marking Criteria in 2023

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

The Guidelines for Examiners and Assessors (including Marking Criteria) Tripos Examinations 2023 were updated and shared, and have been added to this webpage:

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

It was recommended that students look at the marking criteria.

Arif Ahmed will be holding an in-person Q&A session for all undergraduates about exams on **Thursday 18th May at 2pm-3pm** in **Lecture Block Room 3**. This session will not be recorded due to its participatory nature.

9 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 under “Sample Answers” on the following web page:

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

10 Well-Being Service Updates for Students during Exams

A Guide to ‘Getting Through Exams’ can be found [here](#).

This has guidance and information on any concerns you may have 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 stress can also be found on the Student Support pages [here](#) and on the [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 well-being ebooks.

In addition, there are two workshops on Exam Preparation being run by the student counselling service to help you prepare for Exams. You can sign up to these and other workshops and groups [via the UCS website](#).

11 circ Proposed Syllabus Changes for 2023-24

The Guide to Courses for 2023-24 was re-circulated and was approved at Faculty Board on 6th March 2023.

12 Reading Lists.

Faculty Caucus meetings are being held in May to review reading lists for the next academic year. Suggestions were welcomed for 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. Email suggestions should be emailed to philosophy@lib.cam.ac.uk including the relevant part and paper number.

13 circ Library Updates

This term, the Library will be open Monday to Friday 9am until 6pm and 11am to 5pm on Saturdays. Please see the [Library webpages](#) for further details.

We'll be offering a regular serving of Philosotea every Friday this term between 11:30am and 12:30pm in the Old Library. Take a break and come along to get to know other Philosophy folk over a cuppa and treats on us. We hope you can join us!

14 Upcoming MPhil Deadlines

Final changes to dissertation titles - noon, Tuesday 9th May 2023
Submission of dissertation – 9am, Monday 19th June 2023

15 Cambridge Open Days for Prospective Undergraduates

The 2023 Cambridge Open Days for prospective undergraduate students will be hybrid with both virtual and in-person elements. The live Open Days will be held on Thursday 6th July and Friday 7th July 2023.

16 Green Impact

The Faculty's Green Impact workbook has now been submitted to the Sustainability Team for review. A student auditor visited the Faculty on Wednesday 10th May. The Faculty is hoping for a Silver Award for this academic year 2022-2023.

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Any other business

The following points were raised by the student representatives:

- A 1A student has voiced concern over the limited amount of opportunities for oral presentations in the Tripos. It was noted that, at present, postgraduate students lead an annual voluntary workshop outside of term time. The undergraduate students in Part IB/Part II are able to present on an extended essay or dissertation topic followed by a Q&A. The Undergraduate Coordinator indicated more formal oral presentation skills and practise could be included in the IA Seminar (Discussion) Groups.
- There appear to be no past papers on the Faculty website for Part IB, Paper 5 Early Modern after a syllabus change in the previous academic year. This relates specifically to Du Châtelet and Descartes.
- **Action Point:** This request would be forwarded to the relevant academic to ask for sample papers.

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Date of next meetings

The next SSC meeting will be in Michaelmas Term on Monday 6th November 2023.