

# FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

## STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

A Meeting of Philosophy Staff and Students was held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at 1.05 p.m. in the Philosophy Faculty Board Room, Sidgwick Site.

Present: Clare Dickinson (Principal Secretary), Heather Sanderson (Administrator), Jenni Lecky-Thompson (Librarian), Dr Arif Ahmed (Undergraduate Co-ordinator), Prof Tim Crane (Faculty Chair), Eugene Chua, Shyane Siriwardena, Joao Pedro Borges Santos, Tara Alia Khalid, Anni Raty, Francis Smallwood, Emily Dyson, Ralph Weir, Samuel Hughes, Fabian Apel.

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- 1 Starring of items was invited.
- 2 No apologies for absence were received.
- 3 The minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April were approved. These minutes were previously circulated to all students via e-mail for information.
- 4 As previously agreed, Emily Dyson chaired the meeting.
- 5 Staffing Matters  
The Faculty welcomed Clare Dickinson, who has taken over from Jane Clare as the Principal Secretary in the Faculty Office.

- 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 was emphasised that discussions should be kept fairly quiet because of the various offices adjacent to it. It was also noted that tea and coffee are available to purchase for 50p – payment should be placed in the black honesty tin next to the coffee machine.

- 7 Election of Student Representatives:  
*Faculty Board in class (f)*

It was noted that the elections for student representatives on the Philosophy Faculty Board will be held on **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015** with the closing of nominations a week earlier on **17<sup>th</sup> November 2014**. Students were reminded that if they wish to stand, they should complete a nomination form which are available from the Faculty Office.

It was noted that Rob Cashman (Education Officer, CUSU) was available in the Faculty for a drop-in session at lunchtime on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November, in case any students were interested in talking to him about being a Faculty rep.

It was further noted that the Faculty will continue to use an online voting system for the student elections. More details about this voting system will be sent to students in due course.

### *Council representatives*

It was explained that all students on the electoral roll will also have the chance to be elected to serve on Councils of the Schools. These elections will use the on-line ballot and will be managed by the Education Section. Students were informed that the date of these elections has yet to be confirmed by the Council of the Schools, but is likely to take place on November 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup>. Students were also informed that CUSU and the Education Section will contact them directly about this.

8a) Student Workload/NSS survey

It was noted that the University has asked the Faculty to consult with students, and provide feedback on their views on student workload. It was further noted that a letter from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, and a questionnaire from the Education Section, have already been circulated to students. It was explained that the Faculty is very keen to hear students' views on this matter.

The IA reps reported that their year group quite liked the regularity of the workload (ie essays each week) but felt that this could be better supported by having additional supervisions where there might be the opportunity to discuss topics raised in lectures, in addition to the supervisions which focus on the essay which a student has produced. There was consensus among all students at the meeting that contact hours within supervisions shouldn't be cut, because contact time can be very important to students who otherwise may spend a lot of time studying independently. It was agreed that discussion groups are also very valuable, and perhaps it would be useful to have more, to counteract the amount of time students spend in the library, which can be very isolating.

Emily Dyson said that she had heard from Part II students that they feel that because of the number of essays they are required to produce, they sometimes have to compromise on intellectual honesty, because they don't feel they have the time to be able to properly think and consider arguments before producing the next essay. She also reported that people felt that exhaustion has become normalised, and that students often feel they are 'running on empty' by the end of each term. Emily also explained that she was aware that depression and anxiety are common place amongst students. However, Emily did report that a positive at the Philosophy Faculty is that students are made aware of when they have to write essays, and for whom. There was some discussion of the fact the type of institution that the University of Cambridge is causes its own problems with regard to workload – the reputation that the University has and the calibre of the students who attend mean that many students feel a certain pressure and expectation from their fellow students. Students discussed the fact that there is a culture which makes students feel as if they need to work non stop, even if this is not the reality of what is expected by the University.

Prof Tim Crane talked more about workload expectation. He explained that currently, undergraduates have 20 teaching weeks per year (two 8 week terms, and one 4 week term), and are required to write one essay per week to take to their supervisions, which equates to a minimum of 60 essays over the three year course. He explained that if each essay is about 2000 words, this means that undergraduates will write over 100 000 words during their course, which is a large expectation. Prof Crane explained that most other Universities do a lot less written work than at Cambridge, but equally he questioned whether students at Cambridge would want this to change, because this style of teaching can be very valuable. There was some discussion on whether it should be made clearer what is expected from a supervision essay, and also that supervisors could perhaps do more to provide clearer feedback on essays that students produce. Shyane Siriwardena offered to feed this back to fellow graduate students who supervise undergraduates. She also said that she would suggest to supervisors that it might help to spend some time in supervisions talking to students about themselves, rather than having all the focus on work.

There was some discussion of the reading lists provided by the Faculty. Emily Dyson reported that some students were not aware that the reading lists are just a guide of what should be read, and instead felt that they needed to read everything on the list. Prof Crane said the he felt the Faculty could do more to make sure that the reading lists for all papers make clear what is elementary reading, what is essential reading, and what is further reading. Shyane Siriwardena also said that she would encourage

supervisors to go through reading lists with students to help make clear what reading should be prioritised.

After discussing the issue of workload, Dr Arif Ahmed said that he felt it was very important to get a wider sense from students on how they felt about workload. It was therefore agreed that Heather Sanderson would organise for a Qualtrics survey to be set up and circulated to students.

- b) The Philosophy NSS 2015 results were also circulated for information. It was noted that feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> year students in 2015 about workload is on page 3 (questions 14 and 17).

9 Assessment and Feedback

Following on from the discussion of the National Student Survey, Prof Tim Crane underlined that this survey is becoming increasingly important. He explained that the Government has published a green paper on education, and that there will now be a “Teaching Excellent Framework”, which will seek to make it clearer to students what they can expect from the teaching at different universities. Prof Crane underlined how important it is for the Faculty that students respond to the National Student Survey, as response rates have not been particularly high in the past.

Prof Crane explained that one area of the National Students Survey where the Faculty seems to get a consistently low rating is the question which asks whether “Criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance”. Students were reminded that the Faculty displays its marking criteria on the Faculty website:

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

Prof Crane acknowledged that this might not go far enough in making marking criteria clear, and wondered what else the Faculty could do in this regard. Emily Dyson said that in the annual Exams and Revision session, normally held by Dr Clare Chambers, she felt that the issue of marking criteria was well addressed. However, Emily reported that the exam system itself was felt to be opaque, in that students aren’t able to find out what mark they get for individual essays within the exam. Emily also said that she would like to see some of the qualitative feedback that students receive in supervisions being applied to exam marking, because she felt that it would be helpful to have some comments justifying the mark that is given. Prof Crane explained that the University is currently reviewing the whole exam process, and as part of this is looking into whether students will be able to get their exam scripts back after exams have been sat.

On the issue of feedback, Prof Crane explained that supervision essays are currently not given a mark, because of the variety of different supervisors who assess them. Nonetheless, he explained that it is important for students to get qualitative feedback on their supervision essays, and not to feel embarrassed to ask for further feedback on their essays if they wish. It was also explained that students should speak to their Director of Studies if they feel they aren’t getting sufficient feedback. It was emphasised that the mechanisms for receiving feedback on work are there, and that students should make the most of gaining this feedback.

10 Faculty of Philosophy – Casimir Lewy Library Committee

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

Elections for Student Representatives take place in November, as above. It was reported 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.

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

11 Email lists

It was noted that the Faculty has two email lists which are used for publicising events relating to Philosophy – phil-events, which is for Philosophical events/groups based in Cambridge, and phil-bulletin, which is for philosophical events taking place further afield. Students were informed that they can find more information on these lists, and subscribe to them by visiting <https://lists.cam.ac.uk/mailman/listinfo> and entering the name of the relevant list.

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. There are also several examples on the faculty website under 'Undergraduate Exams'.

Students were reminded that the deadline for application is **12 noon on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015.**

**It was noted that all titles have to be approved by the Chair of Examiners before students leave for the Christmas break.**

**Students were also asked to note that any student who does not submit their Extended Essay on time, will have no option but to sit the corresponding exam paper. Any student who does not submit their dissertation on time will effectively fail the paper, as the deadline for submitting dissertations is after the final deadline for amending exam entries.**

13 Structure of supervisions relative to lectures

The IA reps raised the issue of the organization of supervisions. They reported that some students feel that topics of supervisions need to be organized better to coincide with when similar topics are being addressed in lectures. As was also mentioned in point 8, they also reported that some students also think more supervision contact hours are required. Tim Crane and Arif Ahmed both felt that there was no immediate way to resolve this, but also felt that a good DOS and supervisors should be able to make supervisions effective.

14 Supervisor resources

Shyane Siriwardena reported that there was some interest in putting together a database of useful readings and resources for supervisors. She explained that she had already discussed this matter with Jenni Lecky-Thompson and Arif Ahmed, and that this was a work in progress.

15 Lack of female lecturers at Part IA

The IA reps reported that, up to the end of week 4, IA students have only been taught by male lecturers (two IA courses starting in week 5 will be given by female lecturers). They explained that some female students felt disheartened by this, and felt that it gave the impression that as they were only being taught by male lecturers, there was no future for female philosophers. Prof Tim Crane explained that the Faculty has 12 permanent members of academic staff, of which 4 are female: Prof Rae Langton, Dr Clare Chambers, Dr Paulina Sliwa, and Dr Angela Breitenbach. However, by coincidence, all four are currently on research or sabbatical leave, and so their teaching is being covered by temporary members of staff. Dr Arif Ahmed said he might look into making sure there was more of a balance of male/female teaching in first year for next year, if he could be persuaded that this would make a difference for students. However, he explained that it was his view that the fact that there have only been male academics teaching IA so far does not mean that the Faculty isn't welcoming to female students, it was just that people were choosing to make this assumption. There was

quite a lot of disagreement from those present with this point of view. Emily Dyson said that she felt appearances and perceptions matter even if they're based on fallacious inferences, and Anni Raty commented that the problem with the lack of female lecturers for Part IA was the impression that it gave. Prof Crane pointed out that the concern is not about whether the faculty is *in fact* welcoming to female students, but rather about the *perception* of what it takes to be a philosopher. He said that the subject shouldn't be presented as something that's done by men for men. There was then discussion of the fact that the gender split of graduate students (who currently supervise undergraduates) is quite equal. (Students can view a list of current graduates here: <http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/people/grad-list> and can get more of an idea of the gender split amongst Philosophy staff here: <http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/people/teaching-research> . Information on the posts that female and male graduates students have gone on to can be found here: <http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/graduates/prosp-students/prosp-grad-placement> ).

Emily Dyson reported that the Immoral Sciences Club is looking at what it is like to be a woman in Philosophy, and will be presenting their findings at a forum to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> November. She asked whether the Faculty would be interested in hearing about these findings. Prof Tim Crane explained that the Faculty is working towards gaining an Athena SWAN gender equality award, and as such has a gender committee which is currently headed by Dr Tom Dougherty. Prof Crane suggested that it would be good if Emily could communicate the findings of the Immoral Sciences Club Forum to Dr Dougherty.

#### 16 Organisation of IA Logic

It was noted that the IA reps have had reports that students feel that logic worksheets should be made available sooner than the day before the deadline. It was explained that Dr Owen Griffiths, the IA logic paper co-ordinator, has now been in touch with students to clarify that worksheets are in fact available for students online:

<http://people.ds.cam.ac.uk/tecb2/teaching.shtml>

Dr Arif Ahmed underlined that Dr Griffiths had also told students in lectures about the availability of the worksheets, so that this shouldn't really have been an issue.

#### 17 Examiners' reports

Students were informed that the exam reports for 2015, including external reports, are now available on the Faculty website under "Examiner reports":

<https://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/exam-reports> It was noted that a raven login is required to access the reports.

#### 18 Discussion Groups for Part IB students:

It was noted that the Faculty is in the process of arranging discussion groups for Part IB for the Lent Term 2016 (groups will run in weeks 2-7). The topics and leaders of these groups will be:

Logic: Lukas Skiba – Monday 4-5pm

Metaphysics & Epistemology: Alexander Greenberg – Thursday 10-11am

Ethics: Dan Brigham – Mondays 2-3pm

Early Modern Philosophy: Alex Moran – Friday 10-11am

Greek & Roman Philosophy: Carlo Rossi – Tuesday 10-11am

Philosophy of Science: Carlo Rossi – Wednesday – 11am -12pm

Political Philosophy: Jens van't Klooster – Monday 1-2pm

It was explained that students may sign up for as many groups as they wish, but need to bear in mind the additional work involved. It was noted that once a student has signed up, it is expected that s/he will attend all the sessions.

19 Lecture questionnaires

Students were encouraged to complete the questionnaires which will be distributed in final lectures (in weeks 4, 6 or 8 as appropriate) in Michaelmas Term. Students were also encouraged to complete questionnaires circulated in Discussion Groups and Logic Classes. Students were informed that if they miss the final lecture, or do not get the opportunity to complete a questionnaire in their lecture, it is possible to download questionnaires from the Faculty website:

<http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/questionnaires/ugrad-questionnaires>

20 Lecture Questionnaires evaluation sheets

Students were reminded that evaluation sheets for completed lecture questionnaires are available for consultation from the Library issue desk.

21 Sample Answers

Students were reminded that there are now several sample answers to Tripos Exam Questions available on the Faculty website: <http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/ugrads-exam-folder/sample-answers> It was noted that these have been updated to show a wider range of marks, and that the Faculty hopes to keep adding to these sample answers.

22 Social Committee for undergraduates

It was reported that following on from discussions at the Open Meeting of the SSC on October 20<sup>th</sup>, Heather Sanderson has been in touch with Eugene Chua, to confirm that the Faculty would be able to provide £100 per term in 2015-16 (i.e. a total of £300) towards the cost of some social events that the committee arranges.

It was noted that the Social Committee would need to email Mrs Sanderson a brief proposal of what event(s) they are proposing and when. It was further noted that the Committee would also need to provide the Faculty with a copy of the invitation email to students, and also receipt(s).

22 Graduate Social Events

It was noted that following on from a discussion at the Open Meeting on October 20<sup>th</sup>, it has been agreed that the Faculty would be able to contribute £10 per head for Philosophy grad students who go to the dinner that the student rep organises in the Lent Term.

23 Outreach events for Sixth Form students

It was reported that there was some discussion at the SSC meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April of additional measures the Faculty could take in terms of outreach, and encouraging more students to apply.

It was noted that Prof Richard Holton organized a 6<sup>th</sup> form Philosophy Conference in March 2015 for Year 12 students and accompanying teachers. It was further noted that following on from this a Philosophy of Mind 6<sup>th</sup> form Teachers Workshop was held on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2015. It was explained that Prof Holton is also looking into producing some inspirational web-based materials.

It was also noted that the Faculty took part in Philosophy and Theology Masterclasses (with the Divinity Faculty in 2013/14 and in 2014/15). It was explained that these are arranged by the Cambridge Admissions Office. It was reported that the Faculty would like to have a Philosophy Masterclass in 2015/16.

24 Borrowed papers

It was reported that first year PBS students would like clarification on why they are required to take a certain number of Philosophy papers. Prof Tim Crane explained that one of the options open to Psychology and Behavioural Studies students is to take two Philosophy papers (although PBS students are in no way required to take Philosophy).

Prof Crane said that any PBS students requiring further clarification could contact him directly.

25 Cambridge Open Days for prospective undergraduates:

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015

Thanks to everyone who helped with the Arts Open Day, particularly Prof Alex Oliver and Ms Charlie Evans for the organisation and the smooth running of the events for these two days.

Next year's Open Days will be on 30<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

26 Sutton Trust Summer Schools

It was reported that the Faculty was jointly involved in running the summer school with the Faculty of Divinity which took place from 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

Warm thanks to the graduate students who took part in giving talks:

Adam Bales

Shyane Siriwardena

The Sutton Trust provided for each student to be paid £50.

The Board agreed the Chair's proposal for a similar arrangement with Divinity for 2016.

27 Introductory Day, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015

It was reported that the Introductory Day for all new Philosophy students took place on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015. Francis Smallwood was thanked for giving a very informative talk on what is involved in being a student rep. It is hoped that a similar talk will be given by a student rep at the next Introductory Day in October 2016.

28 Amoral Sciences Club

It was noted that the contact names and Presidents for the ASC are:

Clemens Oellinger-Guptara

Jonathan Krude

More information can also be found at: <http://amoralscience.webs.com/>

29 General Board Learning & Teaching Review

Students were informed that a Learning & Teaching Reviews usually take place every 6 years. It was reported that the next Review for Philosophy takes place in 2015/16. It was further noted that the date for the Review Committee visit is Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016. A selection of staff and students will be involved on the day. More details will follow nearer the time.

The meeting ended at 2.05pm.