

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHICAL, ANTHROPOLOGICAL & FILM STUDIES

PHILOSOPHY STAFF/STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF 6 MAY 2009

Present:

Katie Allan (Secretary), Peter Clark, Laura Delgado (Chair), Helen Dwork (Student Rep, 2nd Year), Berys Gaut, Patrick Greenough, Dylan Dodd, Berys Gaut, Patrick Greenough, Katherine Hawley, Antti Kauppinen, Lisa Jones, Sophie McIlwrath, Edward Noel (Student Rep, 1st Year), Lily Parrott (Student Rep, 3rd Year), Simon Prosser, Alasdair Reid (Student Rep, 4th Year), Craig Smith and Heather Walker-Dale (Student Rep, MLitt).

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1. Apologies for Absence

Sarah Broadie, James Harris, Tim Mulgan, Stephen Read, John Skorupski and Elia Zardini.

2. Minutes of the Philosophy Staff/Student Liaison Committee meeting held on 25 November 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2008 were approved and adopted.

3. Matters arising from the above minutes

3.1 *PY2001 Formal & Philosophical Logic (item 3 refers)*

The Director of Teaching reported that the issues raised about this module at the previous meeting were referred to the Philosophy Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee for consideration. As a result of this discussion, it was confirmed that with effect from 2009/10 the number of lectures provided on this module would increase without a corresponding increase in the module content.

STUDENT BUSINESS

4. Sub-Honours Issues

4.1 *Return of Coursework Marks and Feedback*

While the feedback from sub-honours students was in general very positive, the student representative sought clarification on the process for the return of marks and feedback via MMS. The Director of Teaching provided a detail explanation of the marking and moderation process which accounts for the fact that feedback from the marker is available to student prior to the mark, which is only made available to the student once the moderation process is complete. It was noted that all marks are provisional pending final confirmation by the Board of Examiners at the end of each semester. It was agreed that this process would be explained in more detail in the Student Handbook for 2009/10 and that the possibility of reminding students of the process via a short message on MMS itself would be investigated.

4.2 PY2103 Rationality and Action

It was reported that some students had noted concerns about certain aspects of the organisation on this module. In particular, some students felt that lecture handouts were too detailed and that this had the effect of actually impacting negatively upon student attendance. The Director of Teaching noted the concern and the fact that there are a variety of views on the matter.

4.3 PY1106 Society Authority and Freedom

The feedback on this module was overwhelmingly positive although a few students reported difficulties in obtaining reading materials from the library, especially at key periods such as essay submission. Students also noted that there was possibly too much reading in certain tutorials and they would like more extensive feedback on their work.

The module co-ordinator advised that PY1106 was a much larger class this year than had been anticipated which may account for some of the resource problems in library provision. Library provision may need to be reviewed in future years depending on the growth in student numbers. The concern about the quantity of reading required for a tutorial related to one specific tutorial group and the module co-ordinator reported that it was not intended that the entire 150-page article be read in preparation rather it was intended that students were asked to focus in detail on specific sections of the text. This will be made more explicit in the module guide for 2009/10.

4.4 PY2001 Formal and Philosophical Logic

As recorded above at item 3.1 a number of students had raised concerns about this module at the previous meeting. The module co-ordinator confirmed that the last lecture of PY1006 Reasoning and Knowledge this semester would serve as a preliminary introductory lecture for the second year module PY2001.

5. Honours Issues

5.1 PY4624 Philosophy of Art

The feedback on this module was very positive and students were particularly impressed by the reading pack and the materials made available via WebCT.

5.2 PY3701 Language & Reality and PY3702 Value & Normativity

The key issue raised by honours students about these modules surrounded the fact that they were core modules and students were therefore required to take them as part of the honours programme.

A number of staff members responded to these concerns and emphasised that there are very important reasons why certain topics and issues must be covered within the core of an honours programme. Students were reminded that these core modules provide a core foundation of knowledge which allows for greater specialisation within the option modules which are based upon the concept that students have a common background. It was also noted that feedback via student questionnaires for PY3701 had been positive.

Some student feedback for PY3702 suggested that students found the structure of the module confusing and some felt it was hard to consolidate the information. Students also felt that some of the essay feedback could be more constructive in nature. The module co-ordinator

explained the nature and purpose of feedback and that his comments are intended to be helpful and constructive.

6. MLitt Issues

A significant number of issues were raised for discussion and the initial points were:

- Delay in feedback on essays in semester 1
- Trip to Stirling which had received mixed feedback
- Bibliography included in the word count for essays

The Director of the MLitt Programme acknowledged that there had been delays in providing essay feedback and apologised. This may have been caused by the rushed implementation of the use of MMS during semester 1 and teething problems with implementation and liaison with colleagues at Stirling. The word count for essays has been reconsidered as a result of student feedback and with effect from 2009/10 the bibliography will not be included within the essay word count limit.

It was agreed that, due to pressures of time, an additional meeting would be arranged with the MLitt Student Rep and relevant colleagues to discuss the MLitt issues further and in more detail. In general, it was noted that student feedback on the MLitt programme was very positive.

7. Staff Issues

7.1 Impact of Electronic Essay Submissions

The Senior Administrator requested feedback from students on any impact the move to electronic essay submission via MMS has had on their sense of community within the Department. The student reps suggested that this had had no impact upon their sense of community and had not reduced their visits to Edgecliffe or their access to academic staff or to support via the Departmental Office. As work was submitted via posting it into an essay box in the foyer, all said it was actually more convenient to be able to upload via MMS.

MATTERS FOR NOTING

8. AOCB

10.1 SSCC Website

The convenor reported that the webpage was not up to date and a number of committee minutes were missing. The Director of Teaching and Senior Administrator agreed to look into this matter.

10.2 SSCC Constitution

The convenor reported some student concern about the process for the election of student reps. The Director of Teaching referred her to the constitution available via the web, which details this process.

10.3 Election of Next Year Convenor

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

9. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is *to be confirmed*.

Katie M Allan
Senior Administrator
18 May 2009