PRESENT:

Katie Allan (Secretary), Jessica Biggs (Student Rep, 1000 level), Josie Buerger (Student Rep, 1000 level), Colin Caret, Beth Curzon-Edwards (Student Rep, PhD), Annabell Gesang (Student Rep, 1000 level), Ephraim Glick, James Harris, Ole Hjortland, Ben Hoffman (Student Rep, Honours), Holly Johns (Student Rep, Honours), Lisa Jones, Matthew Knotts (Student Rep, MLitt), Simon Prosser, John Skorupski, Amy Taggart (Student Rep, Honours), Qi Tian (Student Rep, 1000 level), Jens Timmermann, Deborah van Herstraeten (Student Rep, 2000 level), Sloan Woods (Student Rep, 2000 level).

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1. Apologies for Absence

Sarah Broadie and David Walker.

2. Minutes of the Philosophy Staff/Student Liaison Committee meeting held on 24 March 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2010 were approved and adopted.

3. Matters arising from the above minutes

3.1 Contact Hours (item 5.4 refers)

The Director of Teaching summarised the discussion from the last meeting for the new members of the committee.

3.2 Honours Matters (item 5 refers)

The Director of Teaching reported that a number of new measures and small improvements had been made to Honours modules as a result of feedback from students at the last meeting. Examples include the introduction of blogs for discussion on PY3701 Language and Reality and PY4601 Paradoxes and the implementation of autonomous study groups to meet outside class time on PY4624 Philosophy of Art.

3.3 PY4612 Advanced Logic (item 5.1 refers)

As a result of student feedback about this module last semester, some changes were introduced immediately during the last few weeks of the semester. In particular there was an increase in the number of example classes provided. It was confirmed that this module content and delivery is being thoroughly reviewed before the module runs in future.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

4. Election of a Student Convenor

The Director of Teaching confirmed that no election to this position would take place due to the introduction of School Presidents. All students were encouraged to vote in the election via the
STUDENT BUSINESS

5. Sub Honours Matters

5.1 First Level Modules

The 1000 level student rep reported a concern about the crowded access and exits to the Buchanan Lecture Theatre during the changeover period between lectures. The Director of Teaching agreed that the area could become crowded and reminded students that there are additional doors into the lecture theatre at the side of the hall.

It was also reported that some students had reported that occasionally lectures are running over the end time of 6pm. This will be addressed to ensure that classes finish on schedule.

A number of students reported that the lecture handouts available on MMS for PY1105 Ethical Controversies were too brief. The Module Co-ordinator confirmed that this was the case and that the notes are intended to be a brief summary of the lecture designed to be useful only to those students who have attended the lecture. This is intended to encourage students to attend lectures.

5.2 Second Level Modules

The 2000 level student rep reported that students are very satisfied with PY2002 Metaphysics and Science and PY2003 Ancient Philosophy and have no further feedback at this point in the semester.

However, the student rep reported that students continued to be concerned about the workload for the 10-credit module PY2001 Formal and Philosophical Logic. The Module Co-ordinator confirmed that in the past he has asked students on the module to self-report how many hours per week they spend working for the module and the responses have not indicated that students are working greater hours than expected. This may be a matter of student expectations about workload and it was noted that for a 10 credit module students are expected to spend 7–8 hours per week (including class hours) studying and for 20 credit modules this is 15 hours per week. The Module Co-ordinator also suggested that the nature of the subject taught on this module requires a different type of work and application than other, more essay-based, philosophy modules.

Another 2000 level student rep reported that for PY2003 Ancient Philosophy only one essay question had been set. This has caused difficulties in terms of the availability of resources from the Library as the whole class requires the same books. It was agreed that this will be looked at before the second essay.

6. Honours Matters

6.1 Timetabling Issues for Joint Degree

It was reported that the joint degree between Physics and Philosophy had a timetabling clash between core modules in each department. This appears to have arisen due to the late scheduling of classes by Physics. The Director of Teaching will contact the Department of Physics to discuss this matter.
6.2 Request for New Modules at Honours

The Honours level student rep reported that students had expressed interest in studying modules on Ancient Philosophy and Mediaeval Philosophy at Honours level. The Director of Teaching reported that the Department is open to the possibility of running modules in new areas in future years and requested that the student rep consult with students further to see the level of potential interest in these areas.

6.3 Availability of Reading Lists

The student rep reported that students would like to have reading lists for honours modules available during the summer period. The Director of Teaching reported that indicative reading lists and preparatory tasks were added to the departmental webpage in the summer and students were emailed with this information. It was agreed that, in future, basic reading lists for autumn-semester modules would be made available earlier, at the very beginning of summer.

6.4 PY3701 Language and Reality: Tutorial Sizes

The student rep reported concern amongst students about the size of the tutorial groups on this core module with some groups having 14/15 students. The Director of Teaching acknowledged that the honours cohort this year is large and the department has increased the number of tutorial groups (from 4 last year to 6 in the current year) in response to this. It is unlikely that any further tutorial groups can be added for PY3702 Value and Normativity in semester 2 due to the complexities of the teaching load of members of staff.

The Module Co-ordinator added that 2 tutorial groups currently have only 9 and 7 students enrolled and noted that these classes are running at 9am on Tuesdays and 10am on Mondays. He advised that if students in the larger groups wish to move into one of these smaller groups then they would be welcome to do so. He went on to note that the module is using blogs and discussion boards to allow individual students greater participation.

The student rep reported that students have reported that they are unhappy with the use of blogs on this module and the requirement that they have to use them. Although another student rep noted that she had positive feedback on the use of blogs on the module and felt that in the larger tutorial groups, the blogs allowed students to see what the keys issues are before the tutorial. It was agreed that the Module Co-ordinators would provide more guidance in tutorials about the use of the blog and discussion boards so that students better understand what it required.

7. MLitt Matters

The student rep reported that he had received good feedback from students and had no specific issues to raise.

8. Research Postgraduate Matters

The student rep requested feedback on the upgrade requested to the Postgraduate Study Room. The Head of Department reported that work was in hand to improve some aspects of the room in the short term.
9. AOCB

9.1 Honours Prize Seminar

The Head of Department outlined a proposal for the introduction of a ‘prize seminar’ for Honours students run by a postgraduate tutor. The proposal is for a competition for postgraduate tutors to submit plans to run a seminar series of 5 2-hour seminars for honours students. The honours students will take the seminar on a not-for-credit basis. The winning proposal will run as the prize seminar and the postgraduate student will be awarded a monetary prize. The proposal is intended to address the desire of many postgraduate students to gain teaching experience at honours level.

If the proposal has support and there is sufficient interest from postgraduate and honours students then it is proposed that the scheme will be piloted in semester 2 of the current year. The postgraduate rep reported a lot of interest from the postgraduate students in this opportunity. It was agreed that the Honours reps would canvass students for their comments on this proposal and report back at the next meeting.

10. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 17 November at 2pm.

Katie M Allan
Senior Administrator
9 November 2010