MINUTES OF 17 February 2016

Present:

Katie Allan (Secretary), Sally Allmark (Philosophy School President & Convenor), Derek Ball, Jude Bernard (Student Rep, 2000 level), Sarah Broadie, Aisling Crean, James Harris, Peter Hella (Student Rep, 2000 level), Ursula Guy (Student Rep, 1000 level), Eleanor Heagney (Student Rep, 2000 level), Luisa Hill (Student Rep, Honours level), Brian Ho, Madeline Hyde (Student Rep, MLitt), Mateo Jaramillo (Student Rep, 1000 level), Lisa Jones, Corinne Latti (Student Rep, 1000 level), Anita Mezza (Student Rep, 1000 level), Walter Pedriali, Ben Sachs, Barbara Sattler, Joe Slater (Student Rep, PhD), Justin Snedegar, Daniel Souter (Student Rep, 2000 level), Anthony Sowole (Student Rep, ID1004), Mark Thakker, Jens Timmermann, Ieva Vasiljeva (Student Rep, Honours level),

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1. Apologies for Absence

Aaron Cotnoir, Berys Gaut, Patrick Greenough, Theron Pummer.

2. Minutes of the Philosophy Staff/Student Liaison Committee meeting held on 4 November 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2015 were approved and adopted.

3. Matters arising from the above minutes

3.1 Attendance at Sub-Honours Lectures (item 4 refers)

The School President reported that the School Reps had circulated a survey to sub-honours students regarding attendance at lectures and received between 60 – 70 responses. The main reason given by those who responded for non-attendance was the 5pm lecture slot, although the Director of Teaching noted that this applied to only one module whereas attendance was poor across all sub-honours modules. The School President noted that there did not seem to be one clear reason for the non-attendance other than that some students felt no sense of obligation to attend lectures. The committee considered the benefits and disadvantages of recording attendance at lectures and what the resulting data could be used for: for example, correlating attendance - to degree intention, examination performance and then to final module mark. No decision was made but staff remained concerned at the time input to recording attendance and the impact this would have on lectures in terms of reducing teaching time.

3.2 Examination Feedback (item 10.1. refers)

The Director of Teaching reported that the Philosophy examination feedback session for semester 1 took place in week 2 and that all modules had generic examination feedback available for consultation by students. The session seemed to be better attended by students and the generic feedback valued.
STAFF BUSINESS

4. Last Semester’s MEQ’S

The Director of Teaching reported that the MEQ’s for semester 1 have been read by all module co-ordinators and discussed in detail at the semester 1 Board of Examiners meeting in January where any changes or improvements to module provision were noted. The MEQ’s provide staff with valuable information which is used as part of the continuous review of teaching provision in the department.

There remains concern with student participation with MEQ’s which fell during the transition to on-line survey completion and has not recovered to levels seen under the previous system of using hardcopy. There has been some improvement with a few modules seeing a 50% participation rate but the department would like to see this further improved and the Director of Teaching asked Student Reps to continue to promote participation to students in semester 2.

5. National Student Survey (NSS) 2016

The Director of Teaching reported that the NSS 2016 is about to be launched and all final year students will have received an email from the university in recent days about the 2016 survey. All 4000-level Student Reps were asked to encourage all students to participate in the survey.

6. ID4002 – Advertisement of the module for those entering Senior Hons next year

The Director of Teaching reminded the committee of the module ID4002 Communication & Teaching in Arts & Humanities which will be running next session and is a vocational module based in a local school and is about communicating Philosophy to school children. Entry to this module is by application and interview only, i.e. outside the standard Advising process, and any student who might be interested in taking this module should look out for an email to be circulated shortly by the Director of Teaching. All 3000-level Student Rep are invited to circulate this information and to promote the module to students.

STUDENT BUSINESS: PhD REPORT

7.1 Jobs seminars/workshops well-received

The Student Rep for the PhD programme reported that the seminars in semester 1 were very well-received and popular with students.

7.2 General PhD Philosophy Meeting

The Student Rep proposed that a general meeting could be arranged for this semester for PGR students to provide feedback directly to the staff running the programme. It was suggested that a vacant slot in the research seminar programme on Friday 29 April at 4pm could be utilised. The Head of Department agreed to discuss this with the Director of Graduate Studies and respond shortly.

7.3 Conference Travel Funding

The Student Rep enquired about the possibility of increasing the annual travel fund allowance for PGR students. The Head of Department confirmed that this would not be possible in the foreseeable future but reported that more information will be included in the Student Handbook next year about alternative funding opportunities to support students with research activities and/or academic travel.
7.4 Website Issues

The Student Rep raised a number of issues in connection with the SASP and the Departmental webpages and it was noted that in general the look and feel of the webpages cannot be changed at the present time. However, the Senior Administrator reported on the university-wide project which is underway with the purpose of re-designing the content and look of the entire university’s webpages which will address some of the issues raised in the longer term.

In the shorter term, it was agreed that information about the PGR Friday Seminar Series will be added to the events section of the Departmental webpage and the Student Rep will liaise with students with a view to reviewing the content, including missing content, about active reading groups operating within the department.

STUDENT BUSINESS: MLITT REPORT

8. The Student Rep for the MLitt programmes reported that all of the option modules have been well-received and had a lot of positive feedback from students.

The core module PY5102 Current Issues II had been reported by some students with little prior background in the Philosophy of Language to be quite challenging with some students finding the material inaccessible. These concerns have been raised with the module coordinator who has made changes on the basis of the feedback and who has also moved back the essay submission deadline to allow for more time.

The Student Rep also noted that some students found the coursework word length of 2,500 words to be too short and restrictive and more in line with expectations at undergraduate level and students would like to see the word count increased to 3,000 words. The Director of MLitt Programmes confirmed that this matter would be referred for consideration to the next meeting of the SASP Joint Committee in June.

STUDENT BUSINESS: HONOURS REPORT

9.1 PY3702 Value and Normativity

The Student Rep reported that the feedback on this module was very positive. There was praise from students for the interactive nature of the lectures and the readings and discussions in tutorials were considered very engaging and clear. The lecturing staff were praised for their approachability, engaging manner and for being good at explaining concepts.

9.2 PY4611 Classical Philosophy

The Student Rep reported that there was no module-specific feedback for this module.

9.3 PY4612 Advanced Logic

The Student Rep reported very positive student feedback and the lecturer was praised for his enthusiasm, his clear delivery of the material and his approachability.

9.4 PY4618 Animals, Minds and Language

The Student Rep reported that there was no module-specific feedback for this module.

9.5 PY4625 Philosophy and Public Affairs: Global Justice

The Student Rep reported that this module was well-received by students who consider the content to be interesting and varied with an ample range of materials on the reading list. A
small number of students reported that they felt more could be done to facilitate discussion in tutorials and a staff member teaching on the module indicated that they would reflect on this feedback during the remainder of the semester.

9.6 PY4632 Contemporary Philosophy of Language

The Student Rep reported that this module received very positive student feedback. The lectures were considered to be very clear, engaging and well-taught with strong use of references.

9.7 PY4646 Mediaeval Philosophy

The Student Rep reported that there was no module-specific feedback for this module.

9.8 PY4645 Philosophy and Literature

The Student Rep reported that this module received very positive student feedback. The content is interesting and encourages students to critically engage with the material. The students enjoy the diverse range of assessment on the module, the interactive nature of the lectures and the small group sizes in tutorials.

STUDENT BUSINESS: SECOND YEAR REPORT

10.1 PY2012 Meaning & Knowledge

The Student Rep reported that this module received very positive student feedback and students enjoyed the lectures, although some students reported finding the pace of the lecture to be a little fast. The location for the lectures in the Irvine building is not popular with students but it is recognised this is out of the control of the department. Students were pleased to see that a number of female philosophers included on the reading list for the module and some students indicated that they would be interested in seeing more eastern philosophy included.

10.2 PY2013 Moral & Aesthetic Value

The Student Rep reported that this module received very positive student feedback and students enjoyed the lectures which are interactive and engaging, although some students indicated that they would find more of a summary/conclusion at the end of each lecture to be helpful. Some students also indicated that they would like to see a specific reading list for each lecture and more help with tutorial readings supported by guidance on how to read philosophy, especially for those students with less prior experience of studying philosophy. The module co-ordinator indicated that he would reflect on this feedback and also provide more verbal guidance about readings. Overall, students felt that this module was good preparation for studying philosophy at honours level.

STUDENT BUSINESS: FIRST YEAR REPORT

11.1 ID1004 Great Ideas

The Student Rep reported that low attendance by students at lectures was noted by those students who were attending. Nevertheless, those who are attending regularly enjoy the lectures. Students requested more on-line resources for the module, beyond the readings and lecture notes currently provided.
11.2 PY1012 Reasoning

The Student Rep reported that students were enjoying this module and responding well to the module content which they have found to be stimulating and engaging. The module co-ordinator was praised for his enthusiastic lecture delivery supported by detailed slides and good summary of the lecture at the end. Students requested a glossary of terms which they would be able to refer to and the module co-ordinator confirmed that he would be able to provide one.

11.3 PY1013 The Enlightenment

The Student Rep reported that there was a high rate of student satisfaction with the module. Clarification on the duration of the examination was requested and the module co-ordinator advised that he will circulate confirmation of this via email immediately. Some students suggested that lectures could be enhanced if time was set aside at the end for questions. Students also indicated that they would like more guidance on requirements about extra readings on the module. The module co-ordinator confirmed that he will be happy to provide more detailed reading lists and extra readings but the module is following a core text book which is supplemented with a secondary reading list. The module co-ordinator will remind students of the secondary reading list provided in the module guide issued to all students at the start of the semester.

MATTERS FOR NOTING

12. Any Other Competent Business

12.1 University Teaching Awards
The Director of Teaching reminded the Student Reps that the 2016 Students’ Association Teaching Awards are to be launched shortly and asked Reps to promote these awards to students to encourage them to submit nominations on behalf of teaching and support staff in the Philosophy department.

12.2 Philosophy Undergraduate Reading Party
The Head of Department confirmed that the Philosophy Undergraduate Reading Party will take place on 15 – 17 April 2016 and information, including costs and how to register, will be circulated to all Honours Philosophy students within the next few days.

12.3 Vote of Thanks
On behalf of the committee, the Director of Teaching thanked the School President for her work on behalf of Philosophy students and the department this year and wished her well for the future.

13. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.

Katie M Allan
School Administrator
8 March 2016