MINUTES OF 20TH FEBRUARY 2019, EDGECLIFFE ROOM 104

Present:

Elizabeth Ashford, Franz Berto, Taylor Cooperman, Aaron Cotnoir, Adam Etinson, Antonio Falduto, James Harris, Katherine Hawley, Lisa Jones, Ryan Miller (Mature Student Rep), Katherine Moulton (Student Rep, Senior Honours), Rachel Neighbour (Student Rep, 2nd Year), Papa Obeng (Student Rep, 2nd Year), Walter Pedriali, Simon Prosser, Sophia Rommel (Philosophy School President & Convenor), Barbara Sattler, Kevin Scharp, James Skinner (Student Rep, MLitt) Tristan Skinner (Student Rep, 3rd Year), Justin Snedegar, Jens Timmermann, Kyle Van Oosterum (Student Rep, 3rd Year)

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1. Apologies for absence.

Berys Gaut, Renee Langenhuijsen (Conversion Diploma Rep).

2. Approval of minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2018 were approved.

3. Matters arising from the above minutes.

The Chair (Student President) informed the committee that the SSCC feedback survey included new questions on equality and diversity, how students thought they could apply what they had learnt in the modules, and whether students thought the modules afforded sufficient opportunity to work in groups. The justification for these alterations is the emphasis placed on equality and diversity, and that the latter two questions correspond to areas where the department receives lower scores on NUS surveys.

Staff Business:

4. Director of Teaching (Preliminary Notes)

The Director of Teaching outlined the MEQ results and the External Examiners Report. Regarding the MEQ results, she noted that a sufficient number of students submitted feedback for every module offered by the department, and that the feedback was largely positive. However, there were a couple of modules where coursework feedback was given late. The Director of Teaching highlighted that in
both cases this was due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. illness) and that this was abnormal. The Director of Teaching summarised the reports submitted by the two external examiners. The first commented that St Andrews delivered excellent undergraduate teaching. The second commented that they were impressed by the breadth of the undergraduate curriculum, found the assessment practices satisfactory, and that the written feedback students received was of the highest quality. The second examiner also queried whether we may be over-examining students at the sub-Honours level; however, it was noted that Philosophy is in line with St Andrews University assessment practices here. The Director of Teaching commented that she was happy with the time and effort the external examiners had put into the report.

The Director of Teaching also extended her thanks to all the class reps for taking on these important roles, and emphasised the importance of closing the feedback loop after the meeting to reassure students that their feedback was important.

**ACTION:** Module convenors who have yet to do so are to send emails to students giving their responses to the feedback contained within the MEQ. The School President will liaise with the Union Department of Education and to find out whether the External Examiners Report should be made public.

**Student Business:**

5. **First Year Report**

5.1 **PY1012 Reasoning:** Most students appreciate how engaging the lecturers make the material, especially complimenting Walter Pedriali’s lecturing style. Tutorials are noted as very helpful to their learning. Students would appreciate if the lectures were recorded, especially as different students find the lectures either too fast or too slow. Students noted that the lecturers often do not follow the prescribed readings, and that MMS is disorganized, as the prescribed exercises for tutorials are not clear. Students feel that learning the fundamentals of argumentation and analysis is applicable to the real world. Most students said tutorials offered chances for them to work together, but some found tutorials too big. A couple of comments were made referring to inclusivity in tutorial discussions. Lastly, students suggest including more Eastern philosophy, across the board.

The Module Coordinator thanked the First Year Rep for her report. He commented that he is not able to address the number of students in the tutorial, had already addressed the issues of the classroom discussion, and is not willing to record lectures due to the decrease in attendance this causes.

**ACTION:** The Module Coordinator will liaise with tutors over the issue of inclusivity in discussions, and reorganise the MMS website so that the assigned readings for each week are clearer.

5.2 **PY1013 The Enlightenment:** Students find the module’s content very interesting, are happy with the amount of assigned reading, and appreciate the lecturers’ unpacking of the readings. Students would appreciate more essay guidance, and some were unhappy with the lack of Panopto recordings, as they are helpful for note-taking. Almost all students feel that they are applying their learning, from critical thinking skills to seeing the real life implications of what they are studying in their lives outside of the classroom. Almost all students find sufficient opportunities to work with other students, especially in tutorials. Almost all students who identified as an underrepresented group (highest group
identified with are ‘women’) feel included, however, a desire to have a more diverse reading list was expressed.

The Module Coordinator this module addressed the feedback, explaining that this courses uses a reader that includes female philosophers, and that later weeks will see a focus on race and gender (as highlighted to students at the beginning of the course).

**ACTION:** Recording of lectures is ultimately at the discretion of individual lecturers, and concerns about attendance are a key factor in this decision. Further discussion about this can be held at TLA.

### 6. Second Year Report

**6.1 PY2012 Meaning and Knowing:** Lectures are well-structured and clear, and the summaries at the end of the PowerPoints are very useful. Most students find the readings quite challenging. Most students appreciate working together with others during tutorials. Some students find tutorials confusing and lacking in structure, with some noting that they feel as though tutorials do not improve their understanding. Students have also noted that the due dates between PY2012 and PY2013 are very tight. Students find that they can apply skills developed in this class in tutorials, as well as in everyday life (practical skills, and analyzing where knowledge comes from and aiding their decision making). Students who identified with an underrepresented group do not feel isolated/discriminated against, although comments were made about how there is little extra support for students with learning difficulties during lectures.

The Module Coordinator thanked the Student Rep for their report, and explained that the topics students write their essays on are covered in the first three weeks and that the Coordinator had suggested that students begin writing their essays early to manage the tight deadlines effectively.

**ACTION:** The Module Coordinator is to encourage students with learning disabilities to come to their office hours, and additional guidelines for tutorials are to be formulated.

**6.2 PY2013 Moral and Aesthetic Value:** Lectures are engaging and well structured, content is very interesting, and students like how real artworks are used as examples, in order to understand abstract ideas. Students feel that there is not enough guidance as to which parts of the reading they should focus on in tutorials, and find the reading quite complex. Moreover, students would like slides to be available on MMS (not just on the recordings). Students who study art history found the skills which they learn in this class very applicable to their art history modules. Further, most students said that this module helps them understand how to craft their own arguments, and benefits students when thinking about their own tastes in their personal lives (including changing one’s outlook on beauty in the world around us). Some students feel as though tutorials are enough for group work, whilst others desire more group work aside from tutorial discussions. Students who identified as female appreciate that they have a female lecturer (and tutors), and the readings by women philosophers. There is, however, a feeling that anyone who is not a white man is underrepresented in terms of the philosophers studied, however, students understand that this is an academia-wide and historical issue.

The Module Coordinator thanked the Student Rep for their report, and explained that the readings will become more diverse as the module progresses, that she thought the readings were of an appropriate difficulty (given that guidance questions are also supplied), and that she had encouraged students to begin writing their essays early to manage the tight deadlines.
ACTION: The Module Coordinator is to explore the possibility of, in addition to recording the lectures, putting her lecture slides on MMS.

7. Honours Report

7.1 PY3200 Reading Philosophy 2: Texts in Ethics, Metaethics, Religion, Aesthetics and Political Philosophy: Most students love this module, praising its structure, content and format as engaging and helpful. The reading list was also described as useful and engaging. However, almost all respondents stated that there is a large disparity of effort in group projects. All students worried about the group marking of presentations, especially regarding others ‘dragging them down’. Students also state that there has been a lack of guidance regarding the argument analysis task and with their presentation skills. All students who identified as certain racial minorities feel included and represented in workshops, some women felt included whilst others did not, and some students felt that there is are particular biases towards particular students, though this complaint was not fully elaborated.

The Module Coordinator thanked the Student Rep for their report, and explained that part of the challenge posed by group presentations is to negotiate all the group members putting in equal amounts of work, and that past experience with this module shows that while students initially worry about this, they later tend to be satisfied overall with the group work experience. It was noted that lots of guidance for the argument analysis task was provided in the module outline, and that a sample analysis was due to be provided also (as announced).

ACTION: Group Coordinators are to highlight that all group members are to put in equal amounts of effort and issue a warning to those who are not, and that students are able to report other students who are not putting in sufficient effort. The sample argument analysis is to be released soon.

7.2 PY4607 Continental Philosophy: Students think the lectures are clear and interesting, and enjoy both the subject matter and the readings. Some concern was raised about how early the interpretation criticism essay was due in the semester, and felt that there was a lack of guidance on it. Several students thought that the interpretation and critical thinking skills developed in the module could be applied beyond the scope of the module. Students who thought that there was not much chance to work with others did not consider this to be a problem, although a couple of students thought that group presentations might have been handy. Students who thought that they did have enough chance to work with others in the module generally focused on the benefits of the small class for allowing discussion.

ACTION: The Module Coordinator is to consider the timing and guidance on presentations.

7.3 PY4611 Classical Philosophy: The lecturer is highly engaging, helpful and responsive. Lectures slides and visual aides have been very helpful. Students felt they could use more context for some readings (especially those unfamiliar with ancient philosophy), and some readings were perceived to be more relevant than others. Students felt that they could apply skills learnt in other modules to this module, and tutorials are perceived as helpful for collaboration with others; not many requests for group presentations. All students who identified with certain racial minorities and as women feel included and represented in workshops.

The Module Coordinator thanked the Student Rep for their report, and explained that an hour had been spent covering the context within which The Republic was written.
**ACTION:** The Module Coordinator will try and to incorporate more context into their lectures.

**7.4 PY4614 Philosophy of Mind:** Great teaching style with clear and well-organised lectures, interesting subject matter and good notes on MMS, engaging quick pace, and interesting links made between philosophy and psychology. Some students would prefer a one hour lecture and a two hour tutorial, and find the class and tutorials too big. Students find this module helpful for gathering sources and knowing in preparation to be a published philosophy and practicing general critical thinking. Tutorials are helpful for students to work together, in general. A few students commented that they feel (unintentionally) excluded in tutorials due to some cultural or religious remarks made.

The Module Coordinator thanked the Student Rep for their report, and explained that an extra tutorial had already been scheduled at the start of semester. Reducing the class/tutorial size would require an additional tutorial hour, which the Module Coordinator could not accommodate in his workload. The Module Coordinator also commented that the religious issues were likely the result of the discussion of Cartesian immaterial souls, but the Coordinator would try to formulate the issues more carefully in future.

**7.5 PY4624 Philosophy of Art:** Great lectures covering fascinating topics, which are very relevant to daily life; “PY4624 is my dream module!” Students like the freedom to research any topic in the group project. Some students are worried about the take home exam, others would like a two hour long tutorial, suggest that presentation groups should be limited to three people (although all students find the projects excellent and enjoyable in terms of working together with others). Students believe that the topic means that they can think about their learning when they engage with art outside of the classroom, they are being taught how to approach new issues in life, apply critical thinking skills, and readings are good ‘spring-boards’ for tutorial discussions. Several female students noted a general issue with ‘males versus female’ dynamics (though this was not elaborated).

The Module Coordinator thanked the Student Rep for their report, and explained that the worries about the take home exam were perfectly normal, but plenty of advice would be provided for it. She also commented that the class discussions seemed to be fairly balanced.

**ACTION:** The Module Coordinator noted the point about size of the research/presentation groups, but this was not presently adjustable as groups were already under way with work.

**7.6 PY4634 Philosophy of Logic:** Students think this module is a very interesting and challenging one, and they are very positive about the choice of topics and readings chosen. There is concern that the lectures’ pace is too fast, and several students expressed a desire for a greater overall course structure with links being made between different topics. Students thought the analytical skills developed in the module could be applied to other topics or to everyday life. Students thought there was little opportunity for collaboration outside of seminars and that there could be more chances for open discussion within seminars.

The Module Coordinator thanked the Student Rep for their report, and explained that a significant amount of time had already been spent covering the how the course content relates to other parts of philosophy, and that the second half of the course would also cover the ‘bigger picture’ themes covered in the first half.
ACTION: The Module Coordinator is to try and facilitate discussion by prompting and encouraging students to talk whilst ensuring the discussion remains structured.

7.7 PY4643 Philosophy of Law: Walter Pedriali’s jovial manner and the time he takes for his students’ work is highly appreciated, especially given the often dense and tricky subject matter. The appendices to the lecture slides are loved, students appreciate that the slides are put online for revision purposes, that there is no exam, and they appreciate the seminar method of having the lecturer leaving the room while student discussion gets started. Some students wondered whether the lectures’ pace could be slowed down, and the weekly readings are seen as a little too long given their density. Many aspiring lawyers find this module incredibly helpful in terms of their future career-path(s), and the tutorial discussions are seen as a great way to apply the (transferable) skills learnt in this module. Most people said that the amount of student collaboration was perfect, although a few students desired a group presentation. Some students find that the module feels a little ‘cliquey’ at times, but others feel welcomed, especially due to Walter’s friendliness and support.

The Module Coordinator explained that the length and difficulty of the assigned reading (20 pages a day, for 5 days a week) was appropriate, especially given that there are very few readings that are less than 60 pages in the philosophy of law. Moreover, the Module Coordinator was pleased that students appreciated the appendices at the end of the lecture slides, and had already incorporated guides to future weeks into them.

ACTION: The Module Coordinator is to look out for the ‘clique’ and address any issues that arise from this by encouraging a discussion between everyone.

7.8 PY4658 Timely Topics in Political Philosophy: Students greatly appreciate the reading list’s quality and breadth. Students find the module very well taught and note that the content is wonderfully delivered. Adam Etinson is commended for being enthusiastic and interactive; his teaching style ‘fits the reading list well’ and students like his use of the whiteboard. Students also enjoy the chance to do a long project on a current issue that matters, and the ‘timely intervention’ task is noted as particularly interesting. In general, students are concerned about the 80% weighting of the essay, and some students find the issues too western whilst others wanted more British political issues. Some students also mentioned that they would like lectures to focus on something other than the readings, as they perceive seminars to be the place to discuss the readings. Explaining complicated issues would also be helped by a short handout. Students found skills learnt in this module to be applicable in the ‘real world’ and in terms of bolstering their employability. Adam’s question and answer style lectures were identified as a good opportunity to allow students to collaborate, with someone suggesting splitting groups into opposing groups during the seminar to stimulate more discussion. Most students said that they dislike group-work and appreciate that there is no group presentation. Most students who identified as minorities said that they felt included and welcomed. There were a few suggestions that the reading list is too male heavy, and one student suggested that a male and a female lecturer could teach this module together.

The Module Coordinator thanked the Student Rep for their report, and explained that it was intentional that the final essay is so heavily weighted, and that when he had consulted students on this, they said they would prefer the essay to be more heavily weighted. The Coordinator also appreciated that students like his use of the whiteboard.
ACTION: The Module Coordinator will address the Western and male dominated reading list in future years, and will consider arranging for a female staff member to teach one of the weeks. Moreover, the Module Coordinator will explore the idea of using lecture handouts and dividing students into opposing positions for the seminars.

8. MLitt Report

8.1 Student Feedback on the Survey. In general, students filled out the forms thoroughly. However, many were somewhat perplexed by the applicability question. Though not strictly the topic of the survey, a significant proportion of students used the feedback forms as an opportunity to voice their dissatisfaction with the department consistently failing to release the feedback for their marked work on the date specified on MMS. The MLitt Director assured the MLitt Rep that this would not happen again.

8.2 Equality & Diversity. By and large, underrepresented students felt respected and welcome in St Andrews. Some women felt the seminars were dominated by male students. One student reported that a lecturer had implied their religion was philosophically suspect.

8.3 PY5102 Current Issues in Philosophy II. Students gave overwhelmingly positive feedback about Dr Ball’s clear lectures, his enthusiasm, the lecture handouts, and the topics covered. Students’ negative feedback was, by and large, confined to three issues: 1) a significant proportion of students disliked the fact that the lecture and seminar are on different days, and reported that they would prefer them to be one after the other; 2) the discussion in the seminars was not sufficiently focused on the readings, and that the discussion ought to be more guided; and 3) Professor Cappelen has yet to provide a full reading list for the philosophy of language half of the module. The majority of students thought that either the course content had no application outside of philosophy or that the content could be applied to writing their essays. Students felt that the discussion in seminars was sufficient.

The Module Coordinator thanked the Student Rep for his report, and explained that it was not possible to schedule the lecture and seminar on the same day.

ACTION: The Module Coordinator will ensure that future seminar discussions are more focused and structured, and will email Professor Cappelen about the reading list for the weeks he is teaching.

8.4 PY5310 Philosophy of Mind. Students gave very positive feedback about Professor Wheelan’s teaching, enthusiasm, and the topics covered. Students complained that the module outline was only made available on the day of their first seminar. Students would also like some sample questions and lecture handouts. Students thought the module content could be applied in conversations with other philosophers and in their essays. Students felt that the discussion in seminars was sufficient.

8.5 PY5312 Aesthetics. Students gave positive feedback about the lecturer’s enthusiasm, the way they marshal the discussion, and the focus on creativity. One student disliked that they have to deliver two presentations. Students thought the module content could be applied in their essay. Students were satisfied with the chance to work with others afforded by the group presentations.

8.6 PY5204 Moral and Political Philosophy in the 19th Century. Only one student provided feedback on this module, but they reported that they had enjoyed the module thus far. No negative feedback. The student reported that the content helped understand their relation to the world around them. The student felt the opportunity afforded by seminar discussions was sufficient.
8.7 PY5325 Texts in Contemporary Metaphysics. Students gave positive feedback about the topic (social metaphysics) and the course structure. A significant proportion of students would prefer it if the lecturer gave more input in the class discussion, helped guide the discussion more, and would clarify difficult points. One student objected to the inclusion of feminist viewpoints. Students said that the content of the module applied to current social and political affairs, and could be applied when writing their essays. Students were satisfied with the chance to work with others afforded by the group presentations.

ACTION: The Module Coordinator will provide greater input during seminar discussions.

8.8 PY5318 Political Philosophy. Students gave overwhelmingly positive feedback about the course content, and appreciated the lecturer’s availability outside the classroom. Students would prefer it if the lecturer gave more input into the discussion to help focus it on the key points. One student also thought insufficient guidance had been given on what was expected for the essay. Students reported that the focus on real-world issues, such as climate change and poverty, meant that the module content could be applied to how they lead their own lives. Students were satisfied with the chance to work with others afforded by the group presentations and seminar discussion.

The Module Coordinator asked for clarification about MLitt students’ expectations for seminars. The Student Rep explained that, with the exception of this module, MLitt students generally wished for lecturers to provide greater input during discussions, and to ensure that the discussions were structured and focused.

8.9 PY5213 Texts in the History of Political Philosophy. Students gave positive feedback on the module’s focus on the context within which Locke wrote, the course structure, and the content. Students would prefer it if seminars were more focused on group discussion. Two students reported that they found the module coordinator intimidating. Students felt that the module content could be applied in understanding contemporary politics and when writing their essays. Students reported that there was insufficient opportunity to work with other students due to the lack of discussion in seminars.

8.10 PY5212 Formal Epistemology. Students gave positive feedback about the content, lectures, and the lecture notes. Students gave negative feedback about the incomplete module outline, and some students complained that the content was too difficult. Students felt the content could be applied in their research and when writing their essays. Students felt there was insufficient opportunity to work with other students due to the fact that not many other students contributed to discussion.

ACTION: Professor Timmerman will email the Module Coordinator and ask them to complete the reading list for the rest of the module.

8.11 PY5214 Wittgenstein. Students gave overwhelmingly positive feedback about the focus on the context within which Wittgenstein wrote, the lectures, and Professor Sullivan’s enthusiasm. Students would prefer it if the classes were more structured, and if Professor Sullivan would indicate which readings on the reading list they ought to prioritise. Students felt that the content could be applied to philosophy more generally as it enabled them to understand the origins of analytic philosophy. One student remarked that thinking like Wittgenstein is an invaluable skill in and of itself. The student felt the opportunity afforded by seminar discussions was sufficient.

9. Mature Student Report
9.1 Report by Ryan Miller.

The Mature Student Rep reported there was nothing to report.

10. Evening Degree Report

10.1 No report submitted.

11. Equality and diversity

11.1 Sophia Rommel: Findings from the E&D question

Sophia will discuss feedback regarding the E&D Question further with the staff E&D representative. She has also sent the E&D findings to Dr. Ball (for the School-wide E&D meetings which Sophia also attends), Dr. Jones and Professor Hawley. Sophia also noted the importance of continually addressing E&D in the Department and that SSCCs were a good way to do this. The Department cannot let E&D issues ‘slip through the cracks’.

Sophia will send a compiled document of responses for the three new questions to Dr. Jones to use for further analysis and changes, and Sophia will also meet with MAP and Dr. Jones at some point in this Semester.

12. Matters for noting

12.1 Date of the next SSCC meeting: to be confirmed.

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<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Send emails to students giving their responses to MEQ feedback.</td>
<td>Module Coordinators.</td>
<td>Ideally to be completed before Spring Break.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Email tutors about inclusivity in tutorial discussions.</td>
<td>Module Coordinator.</td>
<td>Before Spring Break.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Organise readings on MMS.</td>
<td>Module Coordinator.</td>
<td>Before Spring Break.</td>
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<td>5.2</td>
<td>Discuss lecture recordings at TLA.</td>
<td>School President and Director of Teaching.</td>
<td>At the next TLA meeting.</td>
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<td>6.1</td>
<td>Encourage students with learning</td>
<td>Module Coordinator.</td>
<td>Immediately.</td>
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<td><strong>disabilities to come to office hours.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Consider posting lecture slides to MMS in addition to providing recordings.</td>
<td>Module Coordinator.</td>
<td>Immediately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Address the issues regarding equal effort and group presentations.</td>
<td>Module Coordinator.</td>
<td>Week 5.</td>
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<td>7.2 - 7.7</td>
<td>Address various ‘minor’ issues about modules.</td>
<td>Respective Module Coordinators.</td>
<td>Immediately.</td>
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<td>7.8</td>
<td>Consider bringing in female staff member for teaching one of the weeks.</td>
<td>Module Coordinator (Dr. Etinson).</td>
<td>As soon as possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Contact Professor Cappelen about his incomplete reading list.</td>
<td>Module Coordinator.</td>
<td>Immediately.</td>
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<td>8.10</td>
<td>Email module coordinators and ask them to complete the reading list.</td>
<td>MLitt Director.</td>
<td>Before Spring Break.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>Send three new questions’ findings (in the form of a write-up) to the relevant staff members.</td>
<td>Sophia Rommel</td>
<td>Completed.</td>
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