MINUTES OF 30 OCTOBER 2013

Present:
Katie Allan (Secretary), Sarah Broadie, Dan Cavedon-Taylor, Patrick Greenough, Katie Harrington, James Harris, Lisa Jones, Eleanor Mullin (Student Rep, 2000 level), Nazareno Pocapaglia (Student Rep, 2000 level), Simon Prosser, Ian Robertson (Student Rep, MLitt), Barbara Sattler, Stephanie Staples (Philosophy School President & Convenor), Dongwook Yoo (Student Rep, 4000 level).

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1. Apologies for Absence

Charlotte Beardsworth (Student Rep, 3000 level), Aaron Cotnoir, Katherine Hawley, Brian McElwee, Bens Sachs.

2. Minutes of the Philosophy Staff/Student Liaison Committee meeting held on 20 February 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2013 were approved and adopted.

3. Matters arising from the above minutes

3.1 Continental Philosophy (item 6 refers)
The Head of Philosophy reported that teaching in the department is research-led and there is no capacity to teach stand-alone modules in Continental Philosophy. However this content is covered to some extent within existing modules such as the honours module on Rousseau on Human Nature, Society & Freedom. The Director of Teaching confirmed that the department is currently in the process of reviewing its undergraduate teaching programme and this issue will be one of many being considered.

3.2 Philosophy Careers Event (item 7 refers)
The School President reported that the event held last year was very successful and will take place again in semester 2.

STAFF BUSINESS

There are no items of staff business.

STUDENT BUSINESS: GENERAL MATTERS

4. Peer Support: Creating Facebook groups for each class

The School President proposed that Philosophy students create Facebook groups for each class as a valuable student resource to discuss issues in an informal setting. The Director of Teaching emphasised that staff should not be involved with this development and that Facebook should not be used by staff as a method to disseminate module information to
students. However, it was agreed that this might be a useful tool to facilitate informal student discussion and that a Facebook group could be established for each module. The School President was asked to report back on this development at the next meeting.

5. **Creating an (optional) introductory essay class for new honours students**
   
The School President reported that there had been a number of requests from Junior Honours students for a session on essay writing skills designed to help bridge the gap between sub-honours and honours level. Students would find a session on how to write essays in Philosophy of more use than generic essay writing guidance.

   The Director of Teaching noted that guidance is provided in the Student Handbook, including links to on-line resources, and that students are encouraged to consult with academic staff during office hours on such matters. It was agreed that the use of model essays can be very useful and the department should consider how this practice can be extended, for example by building up a collection of sample essays. It was further agreed that Module Co-ordinators will be encouraged to give essay advice well in advance of submission deadlines and to make use of office hours to meet with students.

6. **Third year compulsory honours modules**

   The School President reported that a number of students have asked why the 3000 level modules are compulsory and what is their intended purpose. The Director of Teaching reported that the department is currently conducting a review of the undergraduate curriculum and the review is looking at what the department teaches, how it teaches and what is required of the philosophy curriculum. The purpose of core modules is to cover certain core areas of Philosophy and it is not always possible to cover these core topics at sub-honours level due to the flexible structure of the philosophy single and joint honours programmes. There is likely to be some change to the core modules in future years as a result of this review.

**STUDENT BUSINESS: MODULE SPECIFIC**

7. **PY1005 Mind & Reality**

   The Student Rep reported that this module has received very positive feedback from students especially regarding the quality of the lectures. Some students reportedly felt that the material was sometimes covered slowly but there was mixed views on this amongst the cohort.

8. **PY1105 Ethical Controversies**

   The School President reported that she had received very positive feedback about this module and students felt the module was well-structured and stimulating.

9. **PY2001 Formal & Philosophical Logic**

   The Student Rep reported that this module has received positive feedback regarding the lectures but some students had requested clarification about work required in tutorials. The Director of Teaching encouraged students on the module to raise this with the Module Co-ordinator directly.

10. **PY2003 Ancient Philosophy**

     The Student Rep reported that this module has received very positive feedback from students. A small number of students noted concern that there is only one question set for the second essay and they would have preferred to have a choice of questions. The Module Co-ordinator noted that less choice on essay questions does allow for greater freedom on the examination
paper as it reduces the need to guard against overlapping material on essays and examination answers.

The Student Rep also noted the low level of student attendance at lectures on this module. The Module Co-ordinator stated that she had noticed this as well but emphasised that attendance was not compulsory and Student Reps could not take any action to address this with their peers.

11. **PY3701 Language & Reality**

The Student Rep reported that student feedback on this module was very positive and students were enjoying the lectures. The lectures are well structured but cover a lot of material and some students have found them difficult to follow. The Module Co-ordinator noted that the module is weighted at 30 credits and is at Honours level and therefore students should expect to allow additional time for their own independent study.

**STUDENT BUSINESS: MLITT MATTERS**

12. **PY5101 Current Issues I**

The Student Rep reported that some students have been frustrated with the management of class discussions on this module with many students not really participating in discussion and then a feeling that discussion is being derailed by a minority of participants. It was noted that this can be attributed in part to different knowledge levels within the groups from previous undergraduate study.

The Director of the MLitt reported that the modules are not streamed by ability because this is not considered appropriate, with the exception of certain logic modules, and students must be encouraged to participate in classes. This issue will also be addressed in PY5102 Current Issues II in semester 2 by the addition of more groups to reduce the numbers participating in each group.

13. **Edgecliffe Common Room**

The Student Rep reported that students would welcome the provision of facilities in the common room in Edgecliffe for making drinks. The kitchen is for staff use only and while postgraduate students have been making more use of the common room they would make more use of it still if they could make a drink. It was agreed that the department would look into options.

**MATTERS FOR NOTING**

7. **AOCB**

There were no matters for noting.

8. **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting is **Wednesday 19 February 2014 at 2pm.**