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

PHILOSOPHY STAFF/STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE  

MINUTES OF 21 February 2018  

Present:  
Katie Allan (Secretary), Derek Ball, Sarah Broadie, Alex Douglas, Alison Duncan Kerr, Jerome Gano (Student Rep, 4th Year), Freya Goble (Student Rep, 3rd Year), James Harris, Bruno Jacinto, Lisa Jones, Kim Kopec (Student Rep, MLitt), Shishir Malhotra (Student Rep, Graduate Diploma), Katharine Moulton (Student Rep, 3rd Year), Walter Pedriali, Simon Prosser, Leo Rein (Student Rep, 4th Year), Ben Sachs, Kevin Scharp, Fenner Tanswell, Jens Timmermann, Antonia Zimmermann (Philosophy School President & Convenor).  

PRELIMINARY MATTERS  

1. Apologies for Absence  
   
   Josh Bernard-Cooper (Student Rep, 1000 level), Adam Etinson, Berys Gaut, Katherine Hawley, Justin Snedegar.  

2. Minutes of the Philosophy Staff/Student Liaison Committee meeting held on 11 October 2017  
   
   The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2017 were approved and adopted.  

3. Matters arising from the above minutes  
   
   There were no matters arising.  

STAFF BUSINESS  

4. Outcome of the 5-yearly review of learning and teaching  
   
   The Director of Teaching reminded the committee of the review of learning and teaching which took place in November and noted her gratitude to students in Philosophy at all levels who participated in the review meetings. The initial report from the review team has been released and the outcome of the review is that the university has ‘confidence’ in the teaching and learning activity of the department: this is the highest possible outcome of the review process. The report contains a number of recommendations for the department to reflect on and these will be circulated once the report has been finalised. The department will then need to produce an action plan in response to the recommendations.  

   The Head of Department thanked the Director of Teaching and the School President for their work in preparing for the review and ensuring a successful outcome.
STUDENT BUSINESS: MLITT REPORT

5. The Student Rep for the MLitt programmes reported that there continued to be issues in semester 2 around the atmosphere in class discussions. It was acknowledged that after concerns were raised in semester 1, staff did take the stated concerns seriously and some improvements were made. However, many students feel that not enough has been done to improve the situation. The key area of concern is the way in which male students dominate class discussion and talk over female students. This is most apparent in the core module PY5102 Current Issues II. The Module Co-ordinator noted that some students did engage more enthusiastically with the material and in class discussion and that some students were clearly more familiar with the material being covered on the module.

The Student Rep reported that many students were anxious about the impact of the forthcoming UCU strike action on their programme, particularly with regard to uncertainty about whether scheduled classes will run as planned. The Director of Teaching noted that as a courtesy to their students any staff member participating in the strike action should inform their students in advance but added that they are not required to do so. It was further noted that all students will be marked as present at any class that is not held due to strike action.

It was reported that many students this year felt that the programme did not provide enough information and guidance to support them when making applications to PhD/MPhil programmes, especially with regards to funding opportunities and key deadlines.

The feedback from MLitt students on individual modules running in semester 2 was generally very positive with students commenting favourably on the quality of teaching, helpful teaching staff and use of engaging and challenging material on modules.

Finally, it was agreed that in semester 1 next year the programme will host a workshop early in the semester on how to apply to a PhD programme. This will be supplemented by another workshop hosted early in the semester by Kevin Scharp on ‘How to be a Graduate’.

STUDENT BUSINESS: CONVERSION DIPLOMA REPORT

6. The Student Rep reported that the programme has received very positive feedback overall from students. They like the flexible structure of the programme and the wide range of modules offered, the engaging nature of the content and teaching, the friendly, helpful and support staff, the varied nature of the experiences of fellow students on the programme and the fact that they are encouraged to participate and become part of the postgraduate community.

There are some areas of concern and these include: a lack of information provided in a timely and accessible format, a better induction and welcome for students on the programme at the start of the year, a desire to have a pre-programme reading list and a sense that the diversity of the students on this programme is not something that is celebrated or valued by the department.

The Student Rep proposed that many of these concerns can be addressed by producing a Student Handbook for the programme, organising a welcome event in September, and providing students with a mentor/advisor.

After discussion it was confirmed that the department will be establishing a new role to act as Co-ordinator/Director for the Conversion Diploma programme in response to the growth in student numbers on the programme and the issues that this has raised. This person will take responsibility for overseeing the Conversion Diploma cohort. It was also noted that some of
the present concerns have not arisen in previous years, due to smaller numbers of students on this programme.

STUDENT BUSINESS: HONOURS REPORT

7.1 PY3200 Reading Philosophy 2

The Student Rep reported that feedback on this core module was very positive and students reported enjoying the broad range of topics covered, the small class size and the discussions after the weekly presentations. Some students reported that they would have preferred to do a presentation on their own rather than with a partner. Student also noted that they would like to have written guidance on how to do well on the Argument & Analysis exercise. Finally, some students reported that they felt the readings on PY3100 Reading Philosophy 1 were more challenging than those on this module.

In response, it was noted that the presentation task is deliberately designed to require working with a partner, in order to provide students with an opportunity for collaborative work. Also, that considerable guidance is already provided for the Argument Analysis task, in the form of instructions and criteria in the module outline, and a sample analysis for illustration.

7.2 PY4610 Philosophy of Perception

The Student Rep reported positive feedback from students on this module. Students noted in particular their enjoyment of the clear and engaging lecture style of the Module Co-ordinator as well as the interesting nature of the material covered. Some students felt that it would be helpful if there was more time for questions in the lectures and others wanted the supplementary reading lists to highlight ‘key’ texts. A few students wanted to see more practical elements in tutorials but it is unclear what is meant.

7.3 PY4612 Advanced Logic

The Student Rep reported positive feedback on this module and students particularly noted that the Module Co-ordinator is very approachable and supportive and that the wide range of topics covered is stimulating. Some students reported that they would like the lectures to be more structured and to focus more on advanced problems from the readings rather than background concepts. It was also reported that some students found the assessed weekly work to be stressful, others would appreciate some non-assessed work, and some felt the seminar class sizes were too large.

7.4 PY4622 Kant's Critical Philosophy

The Student Rep reported that there was no specific feedback had been received about this module.

7.5 PY4632 Contemporary Philosophy of Language

The Student Rep reported that this module has received very positive feedback from students who report that they find the material covered interesting and challenging and the lectures to be engaging. Some students felt uncomfortable with the amount of formal logic content.

7.6 PY4653 Toleration in the Early Modern Period

The Student Rep reported that this module has received very positive student feedback. Students enjoy having two lecturers who bring different perspectives and they report the
lectures to be extremely engaging. The students are enjoying the core text from the period and how this is supplemented by secondary, contemporary material. The students are also enjoying the presentations. However some students would like to have more guidance on essay topics and would like to see a more consistent use of handouts on the module. These points were noted by the lecturers.

7.7  **PY4655 Advanced Metaethics**

The Student Rep reported that students on the module are particularly enjoying the Module Co-ordinator’s engaging lecture style and passion for his subject. Some students felt that they would benefit if more time could be spent on basic concepts and other students felt concerned about the expectations on shorter pieces of assessed work.

7.8  **PY4656 The Philosophy of Love & Sex**

The Student Rep reported that this module was popular with students who are enjoying the varied perspectives provided by the readings, the engaging and supportive environment in class discussion and the use of blog posts.

**STUDENT BUSINESS: SECOND YEAR REPORT**

8.1  **PY2012 Meaning and Knowing**

The Student Rep reported that lectures on this module are very enjoyable, well explained, and that the slides and handouts are useful. Students also enjoy having specific tasks related to the reading in tutorials.

8.2  **PY2013 Moral and Aesthetic Value**

The Student Rep reported that students are finding lectures on this module interesting, although there were some concerns about the amount of content since lectures often ran over. Lecture recordings on Panopto are found to be extremely useful. Some students requested whether Powerpoint documents could be made available on Moodle. The module coordinator responded that lecture timing would be more carefully attended to, and also pointed out that slides from lectures are visible on the Panopto recordings, so would not be posted up separately.

**STUDENT BUSINESS: FIRST YEAR REPORT**

9.1  **PY1012 Reasoning**

The Student Rep reported that students find the lectures really engaging and enjoyable, and that the recording of lectures on Panopto is very useful for consolidating knowledge. Students also noted that they are learning how to argue well from the module. The 5pm timing of the lectures is not appreciated, however. In response it was noted by the Director of Teaching that the 5pm timeslot is also not popular with staff, but that this is allocated to us by the central timetabling unit and we have been unable to bring about a change in this, despite years of trying.

9.2  **PY1013 The Enlightenment**

The Student Rep reported that lectures are found to be interesting and interactive, and that the topics covered were considered stimulating. Some students reported that they felt the lectures
depended a little too much on knowledge from the Mind and World module. In response, a module lecturer clarified that any references to Mind and World topics were made purely to show connections between those modules, but that no prior knowledge of those topics had in fact been necessary.

STUDENT BUSINESS: EVENING DEGREE REPORT

10.1 The Director of Teaching noted that the Evening Degree module for this semester had been withdrawn, due to lack of uptake.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

11.1 It was noted that the module content on PY1013 was on the whole male-dominated. The module coordinator responded that it was indeed the case that philosophy in this period was largely produced by white males, and that it was a challenge to introduce more diverse perspectives. However, efforts had already been made to include more female thinkers, and to diversify the reading list – this had been done with the help of student interns, who had collaborated with staff in the curriculum design of this module in its initial year.

11.2 It was noted that students appreciated the Guidelines for Effective Philosophy Discussions that had been written by members of the Society for Women and Minorities in Philosophy, and circulated in tutorials and seminars at the start of semester. Some students felt that while these guidelines were useful in terms of curbing dominating behaviour, there could perhaps be more guidance or help for those minority students who might need further encouragement to contribute to discussion. This was taken under consideration.

MATTERS FOR NOTING

12.1 It was noted that this was the last SSCC meeting of the academic year, and the last ever for some committee members, namely Katie Allan (secretary) and Antonia Zimmermann (Student President and Convenor). Both were thanked for their hard work, as were the outgoing student representatives.

12.2 Date of the next meeting: TBC.

Katie M Allan
School Administrator
6 March 2018
## ACTION LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. MLitt report</td>
<td>SASP to organise workshop early in S1 next year, on ‘how to apply to PhD programmes’.</td>
<td>Current MLitt (PGT) convenor</td>
<td>By start of S1 2018-9</td>
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<td>6. Conversion Diploma report</td>
<td>Department to establish role of Conv. Dip. convenor.</td>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>By summer 2018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Handbook for Conv. Dip. to be produced.</td>
<td>New Conv. Dip Convenor/PGT convenor</td>
<td>By August 2018</td>
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