

Philosophy Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) 2018/19

Wednesday 21st November 2018
1pm, 7.01, Dugald Stewart Building
MINUTES

Student Representation; Year 1: Andrea Gimeno Solaz, Year 2: Jose Luis Nera, Year 3: Ruby Sullivan, Year 4: Freya Gordon

Staff Representation; Dr Nick Treanor, Dr David Levy, Dr Alasdair Richmond, Dr Brian Rabern, Dr Guy Fletcher

SSLC Convenor: Dr Bryan Pickel, UG Teaching Director

In attendance; Emma Nelson (Student Support Office), Alison Lazda (Undergraduate Teaching Office), Shian Holt (Head of Student Support and Enhancement)

Apologies: Dr Debbie Roberts, Siena Wotherspoon (year 2 rep), Rebecca Joyce (year 3 rep), Rebecca Phipps (year 4 rep)

1. **Events and Initiatives** – the Convenor talked briefly about some of the events and initiatives that have been happening;
 - a. Philosophy lunches
 - b. Pre-honours reception in Playfair Library

2. **Actions from previous meeting**
 - a. Debbie Roberts to remind students of discussion forums at lectures and via learn announcement – **completed**
 - b. Bryan Pickel (BP) to investigate whether the fact that MML and K&R are second year courses can be made clearer on the DRPS/PATH entry for the course – **in progress. Wording for DRPS entry is with the Teaching Office and this will be implemented shortly.**
 - c. Students are encouraged to raise [space issues] during the TPR - **in progress. Surveys and requests for participation aimed at pre-honours students will be sent out soon.**
 - d. Teaching Office to compile list of Y4 students taking Y3 courses and give to Y4 reps – **completed**
 - e. Following receipt of above list, reps to survey students – **completed**
 - f. Student reps to communicate to peers that they can email staff for appointments outside of office hours – **completed**
 - g. BP to start a department discussion on the timing of release of mid-term questions for honours courses. **Status: Department agrees that Year 3 essays will be released by Week 2/8. We are investigating how to structure the deadlines for next year.**
 - h. Students reps to let their peers know about PPLS Student Initiative Fund – **completed.**
 - i. Teaching Office to check that communication about the Philosophy and Linguistics lunch was sent out, as this should have happened – **completed**
 - j. BP to send word count policy to student representatives – **completed**

3. Philosophy Hires

Philosophy is hiring several permanent lecturers and professors over the next few years. This year, we anticipate two hires in social and political philosophy and two in topics in the history of philosophy. Last year, we appreciated student involvement in our hiring decision. We will be making announcements about how students can play a role in our hiring process again this year.

4. Marking and Feedback Policies in Philosophy

The Convenor circulated a document that explains the marking and feedback policies in Philosophy including moderation, double marking, the role of external examiners, and the support and training provided to post-graduate tutors. This document will be finalised with input from the Chair of the Philosophy UG Exam Board before being disseminated further.

5. Year 4 Report

- a. Feedback from survey of year 4 students taking year 3 courses – students noticed the difference in class size but there wasn't a consensus on whether the classes were noticeably easier than their year 4 courses. Students were glad to have the option of taking them, especially those who were abroad in year 3 and previously couldn't pick courses covering these topics. Philosophy of Religion is a particularly popular course that students are enjoying.
- b. The year 4 reps (partnered with PhilSoc) took advantage of the funding available via the Student Initiative Fund to host a successful pub quiz.

6. Year 3 Report

- a. It was clarified that years 3 and 4 are weighted equally when it comes to final degree awards – 20 credits is worth the same in each year.
- b. The rep received some positive feedback about Feminism and Themes in Epistemology.
- c. There was positive feedback about lecturers who have set aside time for essay preparation sessions. Students feel that this is a different type of learning and does not take away from the teaching of further content.
- d. Students are still not clear as to why their lectures are not being recorded. **ACTION – BP to help produce a statement on the department's stance on lecture recording policy.**
- e. There have been delays in marking and feedback for some courses.
- f. There is some confusion as to the difference between pre-honours and honours essays and this could be clarified.
- g. Philosophy of Language – the tutorials are all exercise based and don't leave much room of discussion.
- h. Late Modern Philosophy – students are unsure of the narrative of the course and where it's heading.

7. Year 2 Report

- a. There was good feedback about the tutors on MML and Philosophy of Science.
- b. There was positive feedback on the lecture recordings for Philosophy of Science.

- c. Year 1 students taking Philosophy of Science are a little unclear of whether there are the same expectations when it comes to essay writing given that the course is taken by a mixture of year 1 and 2 students. It was clarified that all Philosophy pre-honours courses are categorised as level 8 courses. This means that the courses are of the same calibre.
- d. It was reported that the lecture recordings for Philosophy of Science are now up-to-date.
- e. There was positive feedback on the pre-honours reception held in the Playfair Library.

8. Year 1 Report

- a. Students wondered whether the essay deadline for M&V could have been pushed back a week so that it is more in line with when the topics covered in the assignment are being taught.
- b. Students felt that the Kant section of the course was rushed and that it was a bit much to cover in one week.
- c. Students wondered whether it would be better to cover theories before applied ethics. It was clarified that the course had been deliberately set up to have more variation in when topics are taught.
- d. Students would like more essay guidance in tutorials. There was a discussion about the various different essay help available (e.g. PhilSkills, PhilPALS, and the PPLS Writing Centre). It's unclear to what extent students were aware of these but would prefer the essay guidance to be covered in class instead. Further discussion looked at the use of formative vs summative assessments. The student reps general preference was a larger number of assessments that carried less weight each towards the overall course mark. **ACTION – BP to start a department discussion about where department essay support sits – should this be facilitated externally to classes? This is likely to take a long time and begin after the upcoming TPR.**

- 9. The meeting closed at 2.15pm. The Convenor thanked everyone for attending. Next meeting – Wednesday 13th February.

10. Action Points

- a. BP to help produce a statement on the department's stance on lecture recording policy.
- b. BP to start a department discussion about where department essay support sits – should this be facilitated externally to classes? This is likely to take a long time and begin after the upcoming TPR.