

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 1 December, 2004, 1-2pm
Midwifery Building, ELG 8

Minutes

Present: Andrew Howat (Chair), Eric Olson, Robert Stern, David Owens, Sally Smith, Anne-Marie Cox, Gemma Smith, James Brook, Gareth Rose, Matt Thomas, David Muhl-Richardson, Edward Grefenstette, Tim Fiennes, Heather Arnold. (Apologies were received from Lyndon Morant, Leif Wenar, and George Botterill.)

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were unavailable. Eric Olson apologized for this and promised to hunt them down for the next meeting.
2. It was proposed that SSC representatives visit the larger lectures to let students know who they are and to encourage them to approach the representatives with suggestions or concerns. They should also tell the students to contact the library representative (as well as the lecturer) to report any shortages of library materials.
3. Year-group meetings: The students wanted to know what last month's year-group meetings were for. Bob Stern explained that they had been intended to elicit comments from a wide range of students about various issues of concern, and that they were not meant to replace the staff-student committee. He said that few students had come and that the meetings were unlikely to be repeated.
4. Date of reading week: The second-year students thought that it would benefit them to move the autumn reading week (and hence their essay deadlines) forward by a week, so that their work is better spread out across the semester. It was noted, however, that this would be a disadvantage for third-year students, whose essays are due later. It was unclear how a change would affect first-year students. There was no consensus, and the students agreed to bring a proposal to a later meeting.
5. Library provision: Several students said that core reading materials--things they needed for writing their essays--were hard to get for some modules. There were too few copies of crucial books, and those available were on short loan. It was best if the most important materials were available to purchase, either in course packs or as books. The staff pointed out that it was possible to get more copies for the library, if only they knew which items were in short supply. Students were encouraged to approach the departmental library representative, whose role and identity should be publicized.
6. PADP (Personal academic develop plan): The students were unsure what this was, or what it was for. David Owens explained that it was a Government initiative imposed on universities, where students keep a file recording their progress through the university, including notes on skills acquired, etc. This year it had been introduced for first-year students only. The students were sceptical about its value, but were willing to be persuaded that it might be worthwhile. It would help, they said, if their personal advisors explained what the forms were for and encouraged their advisees to fill them out.
7. Other business: One student asked whether it was possible to submit essays by email. Sally Smith explained that this was possible in extraordinary circumstances, but was unworkable on a large scale. Another student said that seminar and tutorial groups

were often very large, or held in lecture theatres, making discussion difficult. Both problems are due mainly to a shortage of seminar rooms. Eric Olson promised to include this in his ARTQ report.