

## Department of Philosophy Staff-Student Committee

15 November 2007 at 3pm

### Minutes

Present: Chris Cork (chair), Steve Makin (dir. of 2nd and 3rd yr studies), Robin Scaife (graduate rep), Miranda Fisher-Levine (1st yr), Danielle Kelly (2nd yr), Doug Somerville (1st yr), Katie Baker (2nd yr), Andrew Haughton (phil soc), Lisa Nash (2nd yr), Eric Olson (DoLT), Bob Stern (HoD).

1. Apologies were received from Rosanna Keefe, Amy Wilkerson, James Fox, and Heidi Riley.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting were unavailable. [Apparently they were incorporated into the Teaching Committee minutes.]
3. First-year concerns:

MFL reported that many students were unhappy that presentations were compulsory in some first-year modules. They were not told of this when registering for the course, and then had to choose a topic at the start of the semester before they knew anything about those topics. BS said that presentations were compulsory because otherwise students don't do them, and it's good for students to make presentations.

The coarse-grained marking scheme for presentations (according to which students get 2 points for giving any presentation at all, and 5 points for an especially good one) was also unpopular among the students. RS noted that the tutors disliked it as well, and for the same reason: it means that a very poor presentation earns the same mark as a quite good one. Both students and tutors generally favour use of all five points on the scale. BS said that the current scheme was designed to make the grading of presentations straightforward, but saw the point of the objection, and promised to bring this proposal to a departmental meeting.

MFL also reported complaints that many tutors don't know the subject matter adequately and thus are sometimes unable to answer questions. And tutors who are not native English speakers are hard to understand. BS said that tutors are not supposed to be junior lecturers, and could not be expected to be able to answer all questions.

4. Second-year concerns

LN reported that some seminars were too big for the room--up to 18--so that not all students had chairs. EO promised to look into this.

5. Third-year concerns

AH reported that some students had felt discouraged by their lecturers from doing long essays. BS and EO said that all students had a right to do a long essay, but that lecturers were obliged to warn of the dangers of this option (the entire module mark riding on a single piece of work). Any student who felt that lecturers went beyond warning of the dangers should report this to BS or EO.

It was also noted that dual students had no access to Philosophy Online. [This is now being fixed.] Also, students found it very helpful to have their course handouts and other materials online--preferably on MOLE, so that they're all in the same place. BS said that he encouraged lecturers to do precisely this.

A proposal that logic be made compulsory for all students was strongly opposed by most of the students present.