

**BRITISH PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION**  
**Executive Committee meeting**

Monday 10 December 2012, 2.00-5.00pm  
Room 246, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Senate House, London

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Present:** David Bain, Michael Brady, John Callanan, Havi Carel, Tim Crane, Michael Lacewing, Roxanna Lynch, Herjeet Marway, Alessandra Tanesini.

**1. Apologies**

Mark Addis, Maria Alvarez, Anita Avramides, Kimberly Brownlee, Brendan Larvor, Bob Stern.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

Approved.

**3. Matters arising (MB)**

**Item 3/3/4, National Philosophy Open Day:** Helen Beebee has been in touch about organizing this in Manchester in 2013.

**Item 5, REF consultation:** the meeting with Alexander Bird took place in September 2012.

**Item 9, REF matters:** MB to liaise with Alexander Bird to suggest further end-users for Panel.

ACTION: MB

**Item 10, Philosophy Foundation:** MB to contact.

ACTION: MB

**4. Committee members and officers 12-13 (MB)**

The Committee welcomed five new members: Bob Stern, who is the new President; Kimberly Brownlee, Michael Lacewing and Brendan Larvor, who will be members of the Exec until 2015; Roxanna Lynch, who is a co-opted member representing the BPPA; and Herjeet Marway, who is a co-opted member and the BPA's Executive Secretary. We are also pleased that Alessandra Tanesini agreed to serve a further term as a co-opted member until 2015.

Mark A, MA and JC are at the end of their three-year terms in July 2013. MB will liaise with each to ask whether they wish to continue for a further term.

ACTION: MB

## 5. Director's report (MB)

**(a) Northampton:** Our attempts to resist the closure of Philosophy at Northampton were unsuccessful, with the University no longer offering the subject from September 2012.

**(b) Joint Session:** The newsletter was distributed at the Joint Session in Stirling in July 2012. Thanks to the organizers for their help with this. There was an AGM scheduled at the meeting, but no-one attended. In light of this, and the poor attendance at the AGM in previous years, and the costs of sending the Director to the Joint Session each year, the Exec decided that the AGM would now be scheduled to take place in London before the May meeting of the Committee, and that this arrangement would be advertised to members in advance.

**(c) HoD meeting, September 2012:** The meeting was successful, with 26 HoDs attending. There was a Q&A session about the REF with Alexander Bird; discussion of grant capture and peer reviewing; discussion of the BPA leaflet on building profile and resisting closure; and discussion of GTA terms of employment.

**(d) AHCR Strategy document:** The AHRC requested feedback on their Draft Strategy 2013-2018 document, but we didn't think that there was anything particularly novel or worrying in the document – beyond issues to which we already take exception – and so we didn't provide feedback on this.

**(e)** The BPA nominated one person to be a user-assessor, but have since discovered that this person cannot join the Panel. MB to liaise with Alexander Bird over other potential names.

## 6. Finance report (Mark A/HM)

HM reported that the BPA currently has funds of just over £11,000, which is reasonably well above the level of desired reserves. The IT expenses for this year were particularly high, due to the redesign and replatforming of the website. It was suggested that in future the Executive Committee expenses be broken down into travel, accommodation, etc. We will continue our efforts to improve membership, with MB liaising with HM on a recruitment drive. It was also suggested that the BPA utilize social networking sites, for instance by putting a page on Facebook, having a Twitter feed, a presence on academia.edu, and so forth. MB to liaise with HM on this. The Exec also agreed to ask departments and learned societies to put a link to the BPA website on homepages, and for the BPA and BPPA to have closer online connections.

ACTION: MB/HM

## 7. AQA Report (ML)

ML presented a report on the AQA A Level in Philosophy, which reported a number of issues from a meeting with the AQA on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2012, and provided information about a number of changes to the A level structure and syllabi. A number of issues arising from the report were raised and discussed.

- (i) ML indicated to the AQA that the BPA would be interested in forming a group of academics to develop a new specification for A Levels, to be in place by 2015. MB and ML to liaise on this.
- (ii) The examining process. The BPA needs to nominate people to sit on a review panel which will help to instigate a new and more rigorous process for setting exam papers (and marking schemes). MB and ML to liaise on this.
- (iii) Examiner training. There are concerns about whether examiners for philosophy are sufficiently knowledgeable. The AQA provides training in marking procedures and the like, but not in the philosophical content of the examinations, and there are worries that examiners of philosophy don't have requisite content qualifications. In order to address this, at least partly, we agreed that the BPA should put forward a list of teachers that we would be happy to act as examiners. MB to liaise with ML on this.
- (iv) There was a discussion about what the BPA can do in order to train teachers, with a view to improving teaching and examining at A level. One possibility is an online module, along the lines of those currently provided by St Andrews. But perhaps it would be better for the BPA to (help to) organize a series of events for teachers, along the lines of those currently organized by ML, throughout the UK. MB to liaise with Lisa Jones at St Andrews, and ML, on this.
- (v) There was discussion about how we might get more philosophy PhD students into teaching, and thereby improve content qualifications. One difficulty here is that there is not a huge demand for new philosophy teachers since there is no PGCE in philosophy; there is a PGCE in religious studies, with the result that this is the main subject-route to teaching religious studies and philosophy at A level. TC suggested that we invite someone who is a teacher to be a co-opted member of the Exec. MB to liaise with HM about current Exec membership numbers and consider this suggestion further.
- (vi) There was discussion about the 'Answers' section of the BPA website, with some worries being raised about the quality of some of the answers being given. In light of this and worries about uptake, some questioned whether we should remove this from the website. However, it was thought that the Answers section fills a need, since there is not much information available for students doing A-level philosophy at present – as opposed to a great amount of general information for philosophy students at undergraduate level. In order to address worries about the quality of answers, we might think of utilizing the list of teachers mentioned in (iii) above. Mark A, MB and ML to give further thought to what we want the Answers site to do, and liaise further on these issues.

ACTIONS: Mark A, MB, ML

## **8. GTA Employment (MB)**

MB reported that he had been in touch with HoDs and had received feedback from 14 departments (now 17, as of January 2013), who sent detailed and helpful information about (i) rates of pay, hours of work, preparation and marking, and (ii) training and support. The former showed some variation, but no obvious signs of people being paid below minimum wage if working along expected lines. But of course it might not always be the case that GTAs are told what is expected of them, how many hours they are supposed to commit to preparation, teaching, marking et al. From the feedback received, even well-run departments with conscientious HoDs have received complaints on GTA issues and have had to improve

communication with GTAs. So a survey of HoDs supports the BPPA's own survey and conclusion that there are genuine reasons for concern here.

The Exec thought that the best response would be to draft a leaflet outlining information about rates of pay and terms of conditions we have received – with anonymity preserved – and provide a narrative about how best departments can go about informing GTAs of the pay, conditions, and expectations with respect to preparation, marking and feedback. After feedback, the finalized leaflet would be circulated to HoDs and GTAs, perhaps via the BPPA, so that the former have guidance on the kind of information it would be good to provide, and the latter have an idea of what they might expect in the way of guidance. JC suggested that we provide fictional models for GTA pay – one with a single 'bundle' payment to cover all activities, one with a specific breakdown of hourly rates for each activity – so that GTAs can see how their own institution fits in with this. The fictional models might be regarded as 'best practice', although we are aware that HoDs don't have much in the way of control over GTA budgets and are under significant financial pressures on a number of fronts. Nevertheless, it was thought that HoDs might consider, with colleagues, how things are done in other universities and how they might implement best practice. MB and RL to liaise about this and produce a draft for circulation.

ACTION: MB, RL

#### **9. Recruitment drive (MB)**

We should have one. MB to liaise with HM and set this up.

ACTION: MB, HM

#### **10. AOB**

No other business.