

BRITISH PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION
Executive Committee meeting

Wednesday 20th November 2013, 1.00 pm
Room G37, Senate House, Malet Street, University of London

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Mark Addis, Anita Avramides, David Bain, Michael Brady, John Callanan, Angie Hobbs, Michael Lacewing, Tom Sorell, Bob Stern, Tom Stoneham, Alessandra Tanesini.

1. Apologies

Kimberly Brownlee, Havi Carel, Tim Crane, Brendan Larvor, Roxanna Lynch, Herjeet Marway.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Approved.

3. Matters arising (MB)

Item 3/7, AQA/Philosophy in Schools: items dealing with the new specification for A levels and for expert panels for setting exam papers will be discussed under item 7 below.

(iv) MB to discuss further with ML and HoDs the teacher training model.

(vi) MB, ML, and TSo discussed the Answers website and Howard Simmons's role for the BPA this prior to the meeting. The Answers website will be redeveloped, in response to concerns about the quality of the answers, and the oversight procedure. We will set up a new version on the BPA website; incoming questions arrive to Howard, who allocates them to contributors. ML and TSo will look at a sample of answers on a regular basis to moderate. We agreed to raise the issue of schools liaison work at a future meeting of the Exec.

Item 5 (c), AHUG: There is a meeting of the AHUG group on Monday 25th of November. Unfortunately no-one was available to represent the BPA at this meeting, but I'll circulate the minutes and any information I get from Peter Mandler when I receive these.

Item 5 (d), REF: Ian Rumfitt was added to the main panel in June 2013. Additional assessors that we had are Jon Nuttall from St John's School, Jonathan Derbyshire, Peter Milne, David Owens, and John Skorupski.

Item 5 (e), online presence: see Director's report later.

Item 8, recruitment drive: HM has now circulated instructions and information for this, and encouraged all to try to send letters soon.

Item 9, Philosophy Foundation/SAPERRE: (i) The BPA has endorsed specific Philosophy Foundation events, such as World Philosophy Day at the Houses of Parliament, and have said

that we recognize the Foundation for their work in training teachers and bringing philosophy into schools; the latter was to support a Foundation application for an education investor award. MB will keep in touch with Emma and Peter Worley at the Foundation to discuss further collaboration.

(ii) MB, ML, and TSo to meet with SAPERE in early 2014, to think of ways of taking this further.

ACTION: MB, ML, TSo, all

4. Committee members and officers 13-14 (MB)

The Committee welcomed Angie Hobbs as a co-opted member. Roxanna Lynch and Herjeet Marway are both leaving the Exec; we would like to thank both for all of their hard work on behalf of the BPA over the last few years. MB will contact the BPPA regarding RL's replacement; Sarah Johnson has agreed to take over as Executive Secretary, and MA and MB will be in touch with Sarah during the handover and in the new year.

AA, MB, HC, and TC are at the end of their three-year terms in May 2014. (This is when we will have the AGM, before the May meeting, rather than in July at the Joint Session.) MB is not continuing as Director, so will liaise with BS and the Exec about a replacement. MB will liaise with AA, HC, and TC to ask whether they wish to continue for a further term.

ACTION: MA, MB, BS

5. Director's report (MB)

(a) 'Informed Choices' guide: BS brought to the Exec's attention this document, which omitted Philosophy from the facilitating subjects, and in this and other ways promised to have a potentially negative impact on students taking philosophy. MB and BS sent a letter to Elizabeth Woodfield on 1st July, who was in charge of rewriting, raising our concerns, and also copied this to Heads of Russell Group departments, to inform them of the issue, and suggest they raise this with their admissions people. Woodfield replied, noting our concerns about facilitating subjects, and said that she would certainly bear in mind our point about the overly restrictive nature of the list of 'useful' A-levels for Philosophy. She also said that the document would be revised, but there's no updated version the Russell Group website as of Monday.

There was some discussion of what more the BPA might do to respond to the perception, generated by documents such as this, that philosophy isn't as important at A level or Higher level as other subjects. MB will write to HoDs to encourage them to contact admissions and to stress that philosophers would be happy to give advice to careers people about the value of philosophy and the philosophy degree.

(b) Website: This is up and running, thanks to much hard work by HM, and there are no glitches as yet. MB raised the possibility of a redesign at some stage in the near future, as our site is looking a little tired compared by (e.g.) the BPPA's site. MB will liaise with AH and SJ about this, as well as how to make more of our Facebook page, setting up a Twitter account, and other online ventures.

(c) HEA funding: Hugh Pyper at the Higher Education Authority, has written to us saying that the HEA has money for 'Discipline Initiatives', and asking whether the BPA can act on behalf of philosophy as a whole in providing suggestions for appropriate projects. There is up to £3000

available for each initiative. The BPA has written to Hugh requesting funds for the BPA/SWIP Women in Philosophy conference in January, but MB asked others to think of other possibilities for spending.

(d) Recruitment: TSo raised the issue of student recruitment in light of fee increases, and suggested that we survey departments to see how they were faring. MB wrote and received 13 responses. Of those that had access to the information, one reported a fall in numbers, two reported little change or that they were meeting targets, and eight reported an increase in number and/or that they were exceeding targets. It is possible that those with good news were more inclined to reply, but members of the Exec also reported that admissions were stable or increasing, so perhaps this is a reason for some optimism about philosophy as a degree subject at this time.

ACTION: MB, AH, SJ, all

6. Finance report (Mark A)

Mark A reported that the current financial situation was stable. There was some discussion of how to increase membership numbers, in addition to the recruitment drive. One suggestion was to develop further our online presence and increase our use of social media which we will try to do (see item 5(b) above); we might also move to online-only membership applications, and encourage again members to set up standing orders.

7. Schools report (ML/TSt):

ML reported that he had not heard back from the AQA about a number of issues that he and TSo had been raising with them regarding the new A level syllabus, and standards of assessment and examining. TSt reported that one reason for this is that AQA wish to revise the philosophy A level, partly in response to on-going concerns about the content of the syllabus, the open-ended and unclear nature of the questions, and the quality of marking and assessment. There have been many complaints from schools over the years about these issues, and from the BPA: ML and TSo have raised worries with the AQA on these issues.

The AQA has now given Alison Wood the task of producing a new curriculum, in a short space of time, to address these worries about content and assessment, so that philosophy A level teaching will continue from September 2014. Alison wants support from the HE in the design and development of the new syllabus, and so will liaise with the BPA Exec about these prior to submitting a draft syllabus and method of assessment to the AQA on January 9th. The BPA will also give formal support to Alison after discussion, and once we are convinced that the content and method of assessment are appropriate as a preparation for studying philosophy at university. We agreed that a sub-panel of the Exec – MB, TSo, TSt, and AT – would be involved in providing feedback on behalf of the BPA, and would meet with Alison in late December 2014 to scrutinize and endorse the final submission.

8. BPA/SWIP good practice documents (MB)

The meeting formally endorsed the various good practice documents produced by the BPA and SWIP. Helen Beebee, Chair of the BPA Women in Philosophy Committee, has organized a

meeting on January 8th 2014. The meeting will feature a number of talks on issues concerning gender and equality in the profession, and will discuss amongst other topics the good practice documents and introduce the good practice scheme. We will invite heads of department (or their representatives), journal editors, and heads of learned societies to attend.

9. Open Access and repositories (TSt)

TSt circulated guidelines from the European Research Council concerning their support for and rules about open access for published research. The Appendix to ERC document lists recommended repositories but notes that there is no specific repository for social sciences and humanities. This suggest the need for a repository for philosophical research, and TSt asked whether we could work, in conjunction with equivalent bodies across Europe, in creating one. There was strong support for this idea, and the suggestion that we approach PhilPapers and raise the possibility that this could be the repository. Barry Smith said that the Institute of Philosophy would be happy to support this, as PhilPapers is currently housed on the University of London server. If PhilPapers are willing, MB will then contact counterparts in Europe to make the case for PhilPapers to be the discipline-specific repository, and for this to be recognized as such by the ERC and AHRC.

ACTION: MB

10. Black & Minority Ethnic representation (MB)

Nathaniel Coleman, a research associate at UCL who works on the philosophy of race, contacted the BPA to raise the issue of racialised injustice in the profession, and to ask about BPA plans to address this. It was agreed that seem to be low numbers of BME applicants to philosophy degrees and few BME philosophers in the profession. And it was agreed that it would be good to have more BME members of the BPA and in particular representation on the BPA Executive Committee. But perhaps the first thing to do would be to identify BME philosophers in the UK and ask for their opinions, on the issues they face in academia, and on what methods might be helpful to address the problem. MB will organize this in the new year.

ACTION: MB

11. AOB

No other business.