

Philosophy School President's Report

Semester 1, 2017-2018

24/1/2018

Introduction

This brief report aims at explaining what the Philosophy Class Representatives and myself have been working on during the first semester of the academic year 2017-2018. It will be included in my handover to the next School President, so that issues addressed this semester can be built upon in the future.

Working as School President in the Philosophy department has been an extremely insightful and positive experience. I am looking forward to the semester ahead and hope that the position of School President will be used even more extensively in the future to make it as beneficial as possible to both staff and students.

Thank you for taking an interest in the work done by myself and the other student representatives of the Philosophy department.

Best,
Antonia Zimmermann

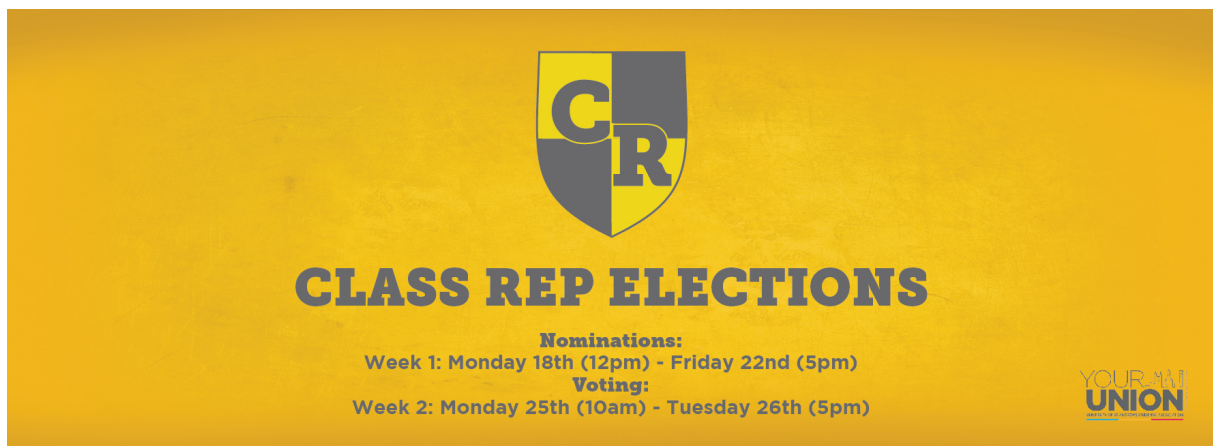
Philosophy School President, 2017-2018

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1. Elections and Class Reps

This election season was very busy, with 23 nominations and only one uncontested position. Prior to the election period, I had decided to reduce the number of sub-honours Class Reps to two per year to facilitate communication and cooperation within the team of Class Reps. This year, I am thus working with an extremely motivated and creative team of 2 First Year Reps, 2 Second Year Reps, 2 Third Year Reps, 2 Fourth Year Reps, 1 MLitt Rep and 1 PGR Rep. Unfortunately, the positions of Mature Student Rep and Evening Degree Rep have not been filled, which has been an issue in previous years. I would recommend the next School President to try and fill these positions, so that the interests and concerns of these groups can be better represented within the department.



I held two Class Rep forums this semester and met regularly with individual Class Reps. Further, I made use of email groups and social media to ensure that communication between Class Reps and myself was always simple and efficient. During our first meeting, we discussed general matters of concern and compiled ideas for events for the semester. The second forum, which preceded the SSCC, was mostly aimed at clarifying any final issues concerning feedback gathered within the different modules.

2. Student-Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC)

The SSCC, which takes place once a semester, is the main place for your Class Reps and myself to report feedback gathered in the different modules to members of staff. We aim to report what is going well at every level of study and in the modules, as well as to address what should be improved. These meetings are extremely important to inform members of staff about any concerns their students might have and to give them a platform to respond and articulate possible solutions.

This year, our first meeting took place on October 11th. The meeting's minutes, alongside a list of actions taken following the SSCC, can be found [here](#). During this meeting, where your representatives reported from their respective years, a number of issues was addressed, ranging from the hut space for postgraduates to the new 3rd-year modules. The Director of Teaching presented a Prezi outlining how the department uses student feedback, which is now accessible online (find it [here](#)). The Class Reps had also gathered feedback on Panopto, the lecture capture programme used in some modules last year, which seems to be very popular amongst students.

3. Employability and Careers Event

On October 18th, I organized an internship panel in conjunction with the School Presidents of Art History, Classics and English. This event featured 12 student speakers who reported on their summer internships and took questions from the audience.

The attendees could choose to attend up to 3 presentations. I am happy to report that we had a fantastic turnout for this event and that, as illustrated by a survey circulated after the events, students seem to have found the event valuable and well-organized.



Student presentations covered Oxford University Press, the Guggenheim Museum as well as PA and Consultancy opportunities in the UK. The event was followed by a coffee and cake reception, where students could mingle with the speakers as well as staff from the Careers centre.

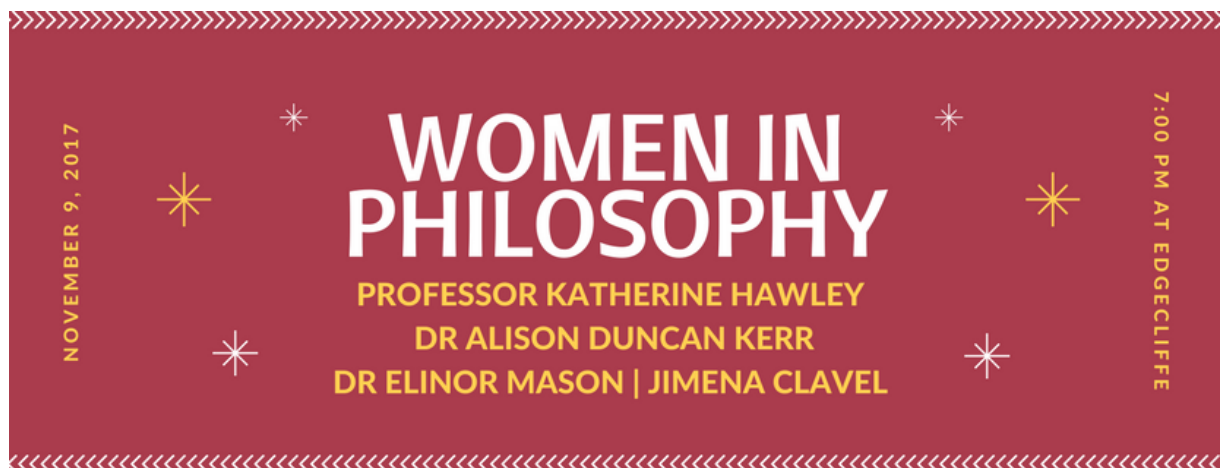


This semester, my work on careers was made more difficult by the lack of a Careers link for Philosophy. I am hoping that this issue will be resolved in the near future to ensure that the important matter of careers is addressed even more in the Philosophy department, especially in respect to non-academic careers.

4. Equality and Diversity

This semester, I decided to focus on issues related to equality and diversity within the Philosophy department. On November 11th, alongside the “Society for Women and Minorities in Philosophy”, I organized a “Women in Philosophy” Panel during which we discussed the various issues facing women in Philosophy at different points of their careers and attempted to find strategies to deal with them.

We invited Dr Elinor Mason from the University of Edinburgh for a keynote speech on Unconscious Bias, as well as Professor Katherine Hawley, Dr Alison Duncan Kerr and Jimena Clavel from our Philosophy department for a panel discussion. The event was preceded by an open-invitation dinner with the speakers and included a catered break to encourage discussion amongst the attendees. This event was incredibly well-attended, which testifies to the need in our department to address issues related to equality and diversity. I would encourage the next School President to run similar events and spark further discussion.



In the aftermath of this event, I met with members of staff to discuss these issues and develop concrete solutions to some of the problems raised by students (such as the discussion culture in tutorials for example). I am looking forward to continuing that work in the upcoming semester.

The School President of Philosophy has also newly been added to the Equality and Diversity Committee of the School of Anthropological, Philosophical and Film Studies, which met twice this semester. The committee predominantly focused on the School's Athena Swan application. The Athena Swan award recognizes work undertaken within the School to address gender equality. For this purpose, a survey on equality and diversity within the School was spread amongst students and staff.

5. Revision sessions

Due to a need for more support in their module, the Second Year Reps organized revision sessions throughout the semester for the Intermediate Logic module.

Before exams, the Class Reps and myself set up student-led revision sessions for all undergraduate modules to create a space for students to exchange their ideas, go over past exams papers and clarify any remaining issues. These were generally well received, although timings might not have been ideal for some of them. I would recommend running these in the future, but scheduling them for a few days before the exam (no earlier than 3-4 days prior). This semester, some of the sessions took place a week before the exam, which meant that most students had actually not yet started revising.

6. Internal Communication and Social Media

I am happy to report that communication amongst undergraduate students over Facebook especially seems to have improved compared to the past year. The group "St Andrews Philosophy Students" is now being used by more students (to advertise events, draw attention to publication possibilities or pose questions). However, this can still be

improved significantly. A group seems to work better than a page, which has been used in the past.



Some Class Reps created separate groups for their respective years, which also facilitates discussion within the modules.

7. 5-Year Review

This semester, the Philosophy department underwent the University-led Review of Learning and Teaching, which takes place every five years and is one of the main ways in which the University checks the quality of teaching and learning within the different schools.

To prepare for this review and submit a report from the students' perspective, I organized focus groups at both undergraduate and graduate level. The issues raised at these groups (alongside a survey at PGR-level) were then included in the report. For the review day, I gathered attendees together with the Director of Teaching.

8. Education Committee

The Education Committee is comprised of the Director of Representation, the Faculty Presidents, the School Presidents and the Postgraduate Convenor. This is where we discuss issues that arise on a university-wide level and that concern all schools. Once we have found a

consensus on these issues, we take them to the Proctor, the Rector and the Deans at the School Presidents Forum. During these meetings, we also exchange ideas and receive an update on other School President's work.

Issues addressed this semester included lecture capture, academic mentoring schemes, a feedback course developed by CAPOD as well as work with careers links within the different schools.

9. School Presidents Forum (SPF)

The School Presidents Forum is where the 21 School Presidents and the Education Executive Committee meet with the Proctor, the Deans and the Rector. It takes place twice a semester.

This semester, the main issues addressed included postgraduate experience, most importantly the induction and integration of postgraduates, lecture capture and school careers liaisons within schools.

Another important issue is the learning and teaching space review that the University is currently undergoing. School Presidents play an important role in reporting feedback on teaching and study spaces to the Faculty Presidents/the Postgraduate Convenor.

10. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLA)

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLA) in Philosophy met twice this semester.

The main issues addressed were preparing for the 5-Year Teaching and Learning Review, the National Student Survey (NSS) 2017 Results and the approval of new or amended modules.

11. Looking Forward: Semester 2

I am looking forward to the upcoming semester and am currently working on a couple of issues and events.

For one, I am planning a joint careers event with the School Presidents of Classics, Art History and English. We are planning to invite St. Andrews alumni who can report on their job. Your Careers Rep is also planning to organize a careers event on transferrable skills. In addition, I am hoping to hold another event related to equality and diversity with the Society for Women and Minority in Philosophy. Finally, your Class Reps and myself are hoping to organize more social events, which are open to all students and members of staff.

More generally, I am working on Student Staff lunches and on finding practical solutions to the problems addressed at the “Women in Philosophy” panel.

This past semester, I have tried my best to represent all students. Please get in touch if you have any ideas, suggestions or concerns. Best of luck for the second semester!