

**British Philosophical Association
Executive Committee Meeting: Friday March 31st, 2006
Seminar Room: 19 Gordon Square, London WC1E 6BT**

Present: Helen Beebee, Gordon Finlayson, Brad Hooker, Dan Hutto, Dudley Knowles, Adrian Moore Onora O'Neill (Chair), Tony McWalter, Tom Sorrell, Jo Wolff. Sacha Stephens

1. Apologies: David Archard, Robin Attfield, Stephen Clark, John Dupré, MM McCabe, Duncan Pritchard

2. The minutes of the Last Meeting 7th November 2005 were approved.

3. Matters Arising:

i) Constitution

At the last meeting it was agreed to recommend to the AGM that philosophy departments in schools and colleges should be permitted to join. A constitutional amendment is necessary to allow this. The current wording reads:

philosophy departments or equivalent units within UK higher education institutions (hereafter referred to as 'departments'), and learned societies having among their principal objects the promoting of study in areas which are wholly or primarily philosophical (such members are referred to hereafter as 'corporate members').

Proposed change to: within higher education institutions, further education colleges and secondary schools

This will be proposed to the AGM in July.

ii) Officers

It was agreed to look at the constitution to see if it is possible for JW to serve a further year as Secretary and DH two years as Treasurer.

The relevant passages are as follows:

(i) The Executive Committee shall elect from among its members the following Officers, who shall serve both as Officers of the Executive Committee and as Officers of the Association: a Chair, a Secretary and a Treasurer. Elections shall take place, as officer posts fall vacant, at the first meeting of the Executive Committee after each annual general meeting (hereafter referred to as its 'constituting meeting'). Officers shall serve for terms of three years, serving until the constituting meeting in the relevant year, and shall be confirmed in office annually during their terms by the Executive Committee at its constituting meeting.

(ii) Any Officer shall be a supernumerary member of the Executive Committee during any part of their term of office in which he or she would otherwise not be a member.

(iii) An individual may not serve continuously in any office for more than two terms. An individual may be elected to a second term in a given post while serving as a co-opted or supernumerary member of the Executive Committee, but may not at the end of that term be elected to another post unless elected or re-elected to the Executive Committee by the members of the Association.

This appears to cover all circumstances, and no amendment is deemed necessary.

iii) Election

Noted that notices regarding the election need to be sent out. Sacha Stephens agreed to look into the necessary procedures and to act as returning officer. It was agreed that the results of the election will be communicated to candidates before they are declared at the AGM.

4. Co-opted Members.

Noted that the normal period of service for a co-opted member is 3 years.

up to four co-opted members appointed by the Committee to its membership, each of whom shall serve on the Committee for a term of up to three years; every such appointment shall be reported to the next meeting of the Association;

Current co-opted members are Robin Attfield, Gordon Finlayson and Tony McWalter. TMcW comes to the end of his three year term this year. He indicated that he would not seek a renewal of his co-option, and the committee thanked him for his work and commitment over the past three years.

It was agreed that, as a general principle, the devices of co-option and supernumerary members would be used as sparingly as possible.

5. Titles of Offices

It was agreed that the term 'Secretary' can be confusing and seems outdated. The term 'Director' was agreed to be preferable, and an amendment to the Constitution will be proposed at the next AGM.

6. Future Secretary/Director

Helen Beebee was nominated as a successor to the current Secretary. This was warmly accepted. Her period of office will begin in September 2007.

7. Secretary's Report

i) AHRC Submission Rate Monitoring

The BPA lobbied the AHRC to complain about the new submission rate requirement for AHRC funded doctoral students. The requirement will rise to 70% this year, which raises a number of problems and inequities.

The AHRC have made some concessions, and replied to our letter in the following terms.

My apologies once again that you have had to wait some time for a response. As I mentioned, the AHRC's Postgraduate Committee met last month, and discussion of the final outcomes of the 2005 survey was one of the items on the agenda.

The Committee spent some time on this item, to allow detailed discussion of the issues and concerns. The outcome of that discussion is that the existing threshold targets for the 2006 survey (70% for departments and 50% for institutions (rising to 60% in 2007)) will remain in place. The Committee did, however, decide to move to a transitional arrangement whereby departments (or institutions) which only narrowly failed to meet the thresholds, would receive a warning rather than application of the penalty. This means that departments who achieve an overall survey result this year of between 60 and 69%, and institutions achieving an overall survey result of between 40 and 49%, will receive a warning rather than an embargo. If, following the warning, those departments or institutions still fail to reach the thresholds in the following year's survey, the embargo will be imposed. Departments and institutions with an overall survey rate of below 60 or 40% will continue to be penalised. Colleagues will be writing shortly to institutions to inform them of these revised transitional arrangements.

As regards the second modification you suggested -- to exclude students with significant medical leave - this is out with our control, as the OST expects all funded students to be included in the survey, regardless of their individual circumstances. When looking at the survey results, however, if the non submission of such students took the department/institution below the thresholds, then we would take this into account when determining whether to impose penalties.

It was also noted that the AHRC will be seeking a new panelist for the competition, to replace Bob Hale. Several names were mentioned as possibilities if we are consulted: Katherine Hawley, Jonathan Lowe, Robin LePoidevin and John Divers.

ii) Bill Rammell

Higher Education minister Bill Rammell was quoted in the press that it was 'no bad thing' that students were dropping Philosophy in favour of vocation subjects. The BPA was asked for its comments, and some of the

papers also reported these. The Secretary also wrote a piece in the Guardian pointing out that there was no evidence that students are dropping philosophy.

TMcW agreed to write to Bill Rammell to discuss this further.

8. Treasurer's Report

Finance and memberships report for 31 March 2006

Bank statement dated 10 March 2006 - Balance of £15,696.12

Outstanding debits	£ 0
Outstanding credits	£ 80
Cash book balance	£15,776.12

Subscriptions update	27 Mar 06	(01 Sep 05)
Full Members paid	247	(306)
Assoc. Members paid	11	(11)
Learned Societies paid	13	(15)
Departments paid	36	(48)

Members yet to renew	
Individual Members	59
Learned Societies	3
Departments	12

New members	
Individual	23
Learned Societies	1
Departments	1
Lifetime individual members	3

Income from all memberships by 27 Mar (6 month period)	£5,723.82
Income in all of previous year 04/05	£6,275.00

Expenses incurred by 27 Mar 2006 (6 month period)	£2043.05
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If **none** of the outstanding memberships are renewed but expenses stay the same for the next 6 months we can expect to see a profit of £1637.72 in 05/06

If **all** of the outstanding memberships are renewed and expenses stay the same for the next 6 months we can expect to see a profit of £3142 in 05/06

Recruitment report and activities

There have been 23 new individual memberships, 3 lifetime memberships, 1 new department and 1 new society. 81% of individuals, 75% of departments and 80% of societies have renewed. 59 individuals, 12 departments, and 3 societies have not yet renewed with six months to go.

I have recently updated the database of non-members. An individual recruitment email has just gone out to all British non-member philosophers (about 700 in all). Considering that this will be the first recruitment initiative these people have seen in a long time I am hopeful that the response will be good, particularly from individuals. In the next fortnight I will be doing the same with departments and learned society non-members.

9. President's Report

OO'N reported on current thinking at the level of government in research assessment, in terms of moving away from the RAE possibly towards a metric based system. The following documents were discussed.

For the Science and Innovation Investment Framework, 2004-14, published in March see
http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/1E1/5E/bud06_science_332.pdf

pp29-35 are of particular interest to us.

For the short debate on RAE in the House of Lords see

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldhansrd/pdvn/lds06/text/60330-23.htm#60330-23_unstar0

to get the government response, Lord Adonis, go down a couple of pages to

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldhansrd/pdvn/lds06/text/60330-27.htm>

These issues made the European Reference Project (see item 11) especially important.

10. Future Strategy for BPA

Questions were raised about the role the BPA should have over the coming years. One proposal was that the BPA should have a bigger stake and presence in the Joint Session, perhaps by agreeing to organise the part of the time currently devoted to Open Sessions. This might involve trying out a greater variety of types of sessions, such as 'author meets critics' panels. JW agreed to put this proposal to the Aristotelian Society.

11. European Reference Project For Humanities

The European Reference Project is an attempt to rank all Philosophy journals A, B, C or unclassified. GF led discussion on the principles of the exercise and also on some of the details. Although there was disquiet about the exercise, and the possible use to which it may be put, it was agreed that it is not something we can ignore. The BPA needs to make a response by 28th April. GF agreed to receive submissions from committee

members, and that together GF, JW and OO'N would produce a response which would be sent by JW on behalf of the Association.

It was agreed that we should press, as a point of principle, that for each recognised major sub-area of Philosophy, it should be possible to publish work in that area in an A-rated journal. Hence the list must be modified to make this possible.

12. School issues

i) School Teachers' Conference

TS reported that the first conference for A level teachers was now in an advanced state of planning, and will take place in Manchester on 20th November. Speakers will be Simon Blackburn, Brad Hooker, and Anthony O'Hear.

JW reported that the Institute of Philosophy had offered to host future events in London.

ii) A and AS Level

TS reported that he had developed friendly relations with the AQA and was now beginning to work with them on curriculum development.

iii) GCSE issues

TMcW reported on a planned development to create a GCSE in Philosophy, and led a general discussion about the ways in which Philosophy could be introduced into the school curriculum, perhaps within the 'citizenship' strand of the national curriculum.

13. Benchmarking

HB reported on the results of the consultation with the profession on the Benchmarking Statement, by means of consideration of possible amendments to the current statement, in light of the consultation and the requirements of the QAA. A number of small, detailed, comments were made and a number of changes recommended. HB will report back to the QAA.

14. PRS

A second BPA member is requested to sit on the PRS. David Archard was suggested as a possibility.

15. Website

It was agreed that it was time to redesign the website, and set it up in such a way that it can be maintained by the administrative assistant. HB agreed to approach a web designer to get an initial quotation for the work.

16. List Rental

Several publishers have asked about renting our list of members. The following policy was agreed: the BPA would assist publishers by sending out details of books free of charge, provided that the publisher offers a discount to our members.

17. To note the situation at University of Queensland

A member of staff at the University of Queensland is facing redundancy, and the BPA had been asked to write a letter of concern. While sympathetic to issues of principle involved, the committee asked JW to find out some further details before writing.

18. AOB

It was noted that this would be Onora's last meeting as President or Committee meeting. The rest of the committee, on behalf of the Association, gave their warm thanks for all her work, support and advice in Presiding over the BPA in its initial three years, which has done a huge amount to position the Association as a serious, professional organisation, representing the interests of Philosophy in Britain.