

PHILOSOPHY DISCIPLINE PROFILE

Updated 9 March 2007

OVERVIEW

Philosophy is a relatively small department (ten continuing members of staff). Its teaching and research are divided into three broad areas:

1. Mind, Meaning and Metaphysics
2. Ethics and Social Philosophy
3. European Philosophy and Aesthetics

These areas are non-exclusive and partly overlapping, so philosophers may have their teaching and research specialties in more than one area. Staff members are expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in their chosen areas, and this will involve them in discussion and debate with colleagues at Australian and overseas universities. However, the Philosophy Department aims to develop a strong and interactive research culture at Macquarie (the Strategic Plan speaks of 'creative interaction' between the various areas). Philosophy thrives on collegial discussion and criticism, and members of staff are expected to contribute to this.

Philosophy is an essentially non-hierarchical enterprise in which respect is earned on the basis of quality of argument, scholarship and intellectual creativity, not according to status or seniority. This carries over into administration: as far as possible, decisions are made and responsibilities allocated on the basis of debate and discussion. Though the more experienced staff should take a greater responsibility for administration, coordination and planning, all staff should be involved at some level.

QUALIFICATIONS

These days an Honours Degree in Philosophy (occasionally a cognate discipline), followed by a Ph.D. in Philosophy, are the normal professional qualifications for an academic career in Philosophy.

- ASSOCIATE LECTURER: It may be that an applicant of great promise will be appointed at this level before he/she has obtained the PhD, but this would be expected to be successfully completed within a year of appointment.
- LECTURER AND ABOVE: A Ph.D would be the normal condition for appointment.

TEACHING

Undergraduate

The Department aims to provide its students with a good coverage of the main areas of Philosophy, exposing them to a variety of different approaches. Consequently, members of staff are expected to teach in a number of different units. The standard undergraduate teaching pattern in a unit is two lectures, plus one tutorial per week, but there are variations on this (e.g. seminars in later year units, workshops in aesthetics and logic units, etc.)

All members of staff will normally be involved in both lectures and tutorials (though in recent years, most 100 level tutoring has been done by casual staff). We try to organize teaching so that each member of staff will be involved at all levels. This will mean some lectures in one of the 100 level units, and responsibility for at least one 200 level unit and at least one 300 level unit. Most 100 level units and many 200 and 300 level units offered by the Department are team-taught. The Department values team teaching as a way of introducing a plurality of different philosophical approaches to students. Staff members also learn a great deal about teaching from working with each other.

The teaching load should be between 7 and 9 hours face-to-face teaching per week. While we attempt to equalize undergraduate loads, there is a limit to the extent that we can do this. Some areas attract more students, and these can vary over a period. Teaching load can also reflect quality of teaching. All continuing and fixed-term staff work according to the Teaching and Research pattern of the Enterprise Agreement.

All members of staff are expected to make use of teaching and unit evaluations. Senior members of staff should be available to give advice and guidance to junior members of staff. Peer review is common, as many units are team-taught.

Coordination of major 100 level units (100-350 students) is a major administrative responsibility. This would normally be undertaken by senior staff.

Honours and Postgraduate Teaching

Each year, on average, we attract 5 to 10 honours students and offer at least three honours seminars in addition to a pre-Honours unit Phil 354 Advanced Philosophical Topics. There are currently around 20-25 MPhil and PhD students to supervise (some part time). The Department does not currently offer any postgraduate degrees requiring course work. We are striving to increase the numbers of honours and postgraduate students, but in view of the limited number of career opportunities in Philosophy, we do not anticipate enormous numbers.

All members of staff are expected to convene or contribute to an honours seminar at least once every two or three years. Members of staff typically teach honours courses in a field close to their research.

Supervision of honours and postgraduate students is a demanding and responsible activity, requiring extensive knowledge of a research area, the capacity for sustained critical assessment and guidance, and a mature sense of judgement. Supervision is distributed according to staff availability and expertise, and student demand. Honours as well as postgraduate theses are

externally examined. Success in this area is indicated by the number and quality of successful theses. With the increasing emphasis placed on postgraduate thesis completion by the University and external bodies, we place great importance on a supervisor's ability to guide their students to a successful completion within the allotted time.

Though we try to spread the supervision though the department, there are limits to the extent that this is possible. Given relatively small postgraduate numbers and the spread of research specializations, it may be that some philosophers will have limited opportunities for supervision despite the high quality of their own research.

Curriculum and course/unit innovation

Innovation is important in a department that draws much of its recurrent income from the students it attracts to its units. Traditional fields must be maintained in balance with the introduction of innovative areas of inquiry that address contemporary issues. It is very important to keep the teaching at Macquarie in contact with the most important developments in the discipline. Inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches, together with initiatives in team-teaching, on-line course development, and flexible modes of delivery, are all encouraged. Innovation might take place in a single unit, e.g. with new methods of teaching, revised course content, or development of on-line course material; or in a particular stream, e.g. with a re-organization of several units in the stream. In the past, major contributions have been made by relatively junior staff, and we hope this will continue.

- In principle, ASSOCIATE LECTURERS should mostly be involved in undergraduate teaching, but will be encouraged to offer honours seminars in areas close to their research interests. They will normally undertake lecturing responsibilities and may from time to time act as convenors of 200 and 300 level units, under the supervision of a senior member of staff.
- LECTURERS will have responsibility for convening undergraduate 200 and 300 units and honours seminars and, where possible, undertake honours and postgraduate supervision.
- SENIOR LECTURERS may take responsibility for major 100 level units and play a leading role in undergraduate and postgraduate planning. They may chair Learning and Teaching, Honours, or Higher Degree Research Sub-Committees, and should be available to act as guides to junior staff.
- ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS and PROFESSORS should play a major role in teaching at all levels. They are expected to play an active role in developing teaching initiatives and in promoting teaching excellence in the Department.

Staff at all levels should have their teaching regularly evaluated by students and colleagues, and have demonstrated their commitment to teaching as effectively as possible. While it is too much to expect that every member of staff will be a brilliant teacher, all should give teaching a high priority and demonstrate a commitment to remedying any weaknesses in their teaching. Excellence in teaching will be indicated by contribution to course design and innovation, a track record of maintaining solid student numbers in units, participation in teaching development initiatives, reputation amongst colleagues, as well as face-to-face effectiveness as measured by

student evaluations.

SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

Philosophical research generally involves the critical analysis and/or interpretation of philosophical texts, intellectual traditions, arguments and theories or views. Much philosophical research involves analysis and development of arguments. Many branches of philosophy overlap with other areas of intellectual inquiry. Research in some branches of philosophy, e.g. applied ethics and cognitive science, may even require empirical investigation. However, most philosophical research proceeds by way of investigation of and response to the scholarly literature. Members of staff engage in research in a range of different fields within the subject and pursue a range of different research styles. The Philosophy Department is committed to encouraging this diversity as long as the research undertaken fits within the norms of good research practice.

The principal forms in which scholarship and research are disseminated are:

- a. Refereed Journal Articles (in Philosophy or cognate disciplines)
- b. Chapters in Edited Collections (including Encyclopedia Entries)
- c. Books
- d. Edited Collections of Original Articles
- e. Translations and Editions of Philosophical Texts
- f. Papers in Conference Proceedings
- g. Conference Presentations
- h. Book Reviews

Refereed Journal Articles remain the major vehicle for publication, though Chapters (including major Encyclopedia Entries) are becoming widely cited and increasingly important. Most Books have their beginning as Articles or Chapters. A good Edited Collection is an intellectually demanding exercise, and often makes an important contribution to the discipline. Substantial Translations and Editions of Philosophical Texts can also make a significant contribution to scholarship. Conference Presentations are important forms of dissemination of research and scholarship in Philosophy and often form the basis for Journal Articles, Chapters, and Papers in Conference Proceedings. Book Reviews are more important in Philosophy than in other disciplines, and are sometimes a significant avenue of scholarly exchange.

In assessing contributions, most weight should be given to (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f) and (g). In the cases of (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) quality of journal and/or publisher, and appropriate refereeing procedures are very important. With regard to (d), quality of contributors is important. In the case of all publications, reviews and responses by other scholars are good indicators of quality.

The number, frequency, and length of publications vary widely from individual to individual, but an average rate of one substantial publication (in one of the categories (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), or (f)) every year constitutes an acceptable minimum standard. However, there can be delays of several years between submission and publication of work, and so it is difficult to ensure a completely regular publication output. Although in some more technical areas, more frequent publication of short pieces is common, significant publications are commonly the fruit of several years' research. Monographs are becoming more common, but some very distinguished philosophers choose to make their contribution through articles and chapters, rather than book length work. Most publications are single-authored, though jointly authored publications are not unusual. However, it is unusual for staff to co-author papers with postgraduate students.

In the past, philosophers were able to make significant reputations on the basis of a small number of high quality articles, contributions to discussion, influence on colleagues and postgraduate students, and the like. These days, frequent publication of work by journals or publishers of national or international standing is the normal route to establishing reputation. However, the University's procedures should recognize contributions of a less easily quantified kind. Here quality of external references will be crucial.

Creative works outside what is usually considered Philosophy may be considered where they have significant philosophical content.

Indicators of success in the profession are:

1. Publications in high quality refereed journals and books (as above).
2. Impact of published work, as measured by frequency of citation in journal articles and books (though citation indices are not as well developed in Philosophy as in the natural sciences); by reviews of books and responses to articles by other scholars; and by reprintings and translations.
3. Invitations to give keynote addresses or read papers at conferences and workshops.
4. Invitations to contribute articles to edited collections and special issues of journals.
5. Invitations by publishers to edit reference collections or journals
6. Recognition: e.g acting as referee for journals and research grant funding, membership of editorial boards of journals, examiner of higher degree theses, etc.
7. Successful applications for external grants.
8. Ability to attract good postgraduate students.

- ASSOCIATE LECTURERS will normally be beginning their publication career (it is relatively unusual to publish before completing the PhD). They should be giving papers at conferences and departmental seminars, and submitting work to journals (though there is often a long wait for acceptance and then a longer wait before publication).
- LECTURERS should have published several refereed articles or chapters, have a developed research program, and be beginning to establish a reputation in his/her main areas of research.
- SENIOR LECTURERS should have a growing number of substantial publications in

refereed journals or collections, papers delivered at national or international conferences, and perhaps success at attracting external grants. They should be making a significant contribution to the major areas of their research, and have received recognition for this.

- ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS should have a distinguished record of high quality research and have made a demonstrable impact on his/her area of expertise. He/she will have a substantial publication record (e.g. a high quality book, an array of refereed articles or chapters with a reasonable number in high-quality journals or collections), will have regularly presented papers at national and international conferences, will have received significant recognition in the profession, and will typically have attracted external grants.
- PROFESSORS should have an outstanding record of high quality publications (e.g. several books, a substantial array of refereed articles or chapters with many in high quality journals or collections), a record in attracting external grants, and an international reputation in his/her area.

SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY

The Philosophy Department has an elected Head who takes significant responsibility for the academic and administrative functions of the Department and represents its interests in the Division and the University. Other responsibilities are assigned to Learning and Teaching, Honours, Higher Degree Research, and Research Sub-Committees, each of which has a Chair who has major responsibilities to initiate and coordinate programs in the relevant area. Policy decisions are taken by a Philosophy Committee, comprising all continuing and fixed-term members of staff.

All members of staff are expected to undertake a range of administrative responsibilities and also to contribute to the governance of the Department. In a small department, there is no place for academics who leave administrative responsibilities to colleagues. The responsibilities of Head of Department, and of the Chairs of the various sub-committees are especially demanding, not merely of time and commitment, but also of political skill and judgement, fairness and sensitivity, and collegiality.

Members of staff may also contribute to the wider University by chairing or serving on committees, contributing to interdisciplinary programs, advising on issues of philosophical relevance (e.g. ethical questions), playing a role in the union, etc. At present the Department makes a significant contribution, given its size, to the wider administration of the Division and the University; and it is crucial for the health and vitality of the Department that these contributions are recognized by the University.

Members of staff may serve their Profession by organizing conferences and workshops, editing journals, acting on the editorial boards of journals, examining theses, writing newspaper/magazine articles on philosophical subjects. Philosophers may also seek out opportunities to contribute to the wider Community (e.g. book reviewing, radio broadcasting,

community education, research consultancies), and the University should recognize these contributions.

- ASSOCIATE LECTURERS should play a role in Department and Divisional affairs, be available to carry out certain administrative responsibilities, and serve on one or more of the Philosophy Sub-Committees.
- LECTURERS should serve on one or more of the Sub-Committees, play an active role in planning and discussing the future of the Department, and serve on Divisional Committees.
- SENIOR LECTURERS should be available to chair Sub-Committees, and coordinate and plan the relevant area. They should be prepared to play a leading role in Divisional affairs, especially those affecting the Department. In the current situation, they may be asked to act as Head of Department. This is a major responsibility, and should be appropriately recognized by the University.
- ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS and PROFESSORS should take on a leadership role in administration at all levels. They should have demonstrated a high level of administrative competence in a number of different roles. They should be prepared to act as Head of Department where necessary.

Updated by Peter Menzies March 2007