

**Date** Wednesday 10 February 2021

**Time** 2.00-4.00pm

**To** Dr Sandra Fulton (Chair, Director of Education for NST and PBS), Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant (Faculty Board of Biology rep, Deputy Head of Department for Teaching), Prof Marta Mirazon Lahr and Dr Guy Jacobs (Faculty Board of HSPS reps), Dr Nik Cuncliffe (NST Management Committee rep), Dr Lee de-Wit (PBS Director), Prof Claire Hughes (PBS Subject Convenor), Dr Simone Schnall (PBS Chair of Exams), Dr Emma Weisblatt (Chair of PBS DOS Committee).

**Co-opted members:** Prof Richard Holton (Philosophy rep), Dr Marta Halina (HPS rep).

**Student representatives:** Ms Kitty Beck (IA), Ms Molly Ghinn (IB), Ms Jennifer Grint (II), Ms Katy Radcliffe (IA+IB, Faculty Board of Biology)

**By invitation:** Ms Fiona Craig (Departmental Administrator), Ms Josephine Simmonds (Secretary, Deputy Departmental Administrator), Mr Richard Sellens (Teaching Administrator)

**At** Zoom

## **Department of Psychology PBS Management Committee Meeting – Lent Term 2021**

### **UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

**1. Apologies**

Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant, Dr Simone Schnall, Dr Nik Cuncliffe, Prof Richard Holton, Ms Fiona Craig, Ms Kitty Beck, Ms Katy Radcliffe.

**2. Welcome to new members**

- a) Dr Marta Halina joins us as HPS rep, replacing Dr Anna Alexandrova.
- b) PBS student Katy Radcliffe joins us as Faculty Board representative for PBS students.

**3. Approval of minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 4 November 2020 and Thursday 12 November 2020 (1a-b)**

The minutes were approved.

**4. Matters arising from the previous minutes**

**a) New PBS Tripos structure**

The proposal approved by this Committee was also approved by the Biological Sciences Committee in December 2020 and by the Faculty Board of Biology in February 2021, subject to certain conditions which will be made clear when the minutes are released. One of them was that it be asked if it is possible for PBS Part II to be offered in the NST Part II allocation round in place of NST Part II Psychology. The full proposal will now go to the NST Management Committee.

It was confirmed that the increased number of core papers at PBS Part IA (from 2 to 3) will mean potentially lower numbers of students on individual borrowed papers.

**ACTION: For clarification purposes, the final paper on the PBS structure will be re-circulated once final approval has been granted (JS).**

**5. Update to Committee Terms of Reference (2)**

The Committee is asked to approve the ToR to include a fourth student representative. This accommodates the new policy that the Faculty Board of Biology will have one student rep per Tripos (PBS, NST, MVST) and that the PBS student representative shall also serve on this Committee. The new Terms of Reference were approved.

**ACTION: JS to send the new TOR to the Faculty Board of Biology.**

**6. Optional Papers (3)**

Members received a breakdown of PBS student choices in 2020-21. SF noted that the paper contained data on the number of students borrowing PBS papers; there was an increase in numbers of HSPS students on PBS1 but otherwise no dramatic differences. There was also data on PBS students' optional paper choices. No students had selected PHIL11 Political Philosophy this year but that reflected standard yearly variation in choices.

It was noted that the absence of Education papers this year was due to a change in circumstances between the Education and PBS Triposes. LDW confirmed that there were discussions underway about the possibility of reintroducing borrowing from Education at some point in the future.

MH noted that the Part II paper HPS4 Philosophy and Scientific Practice would contain lectures on Philosophy of Cognitive Science and Psychiatry next year. It was agreed that PBS students were likely to find this interesting.

It was clarified that while the papers BANX and BANY do not exist in BioAnth itself, it was a way of PBS grouping Part II BioAnth papers, which are worth 50% of PBS papers. For BANX, PBS students can take any two of the BioAnth papers on offer; for BANY, they can take any other two of these papers. SF noted the broad range of BioAnth options on offer to PBS students, and GJ confirmed that there are no plans to make significant changes to this for next year.

**ACTION: RS and LDW to liaise with relevant departments over next year's optional papers, bringing the list to the next meeting for approval.**

**7. Student Feedback Michaelmas Term 2020 (4)**

UTO responses to student feedback from Michaelmas Term 2020 were circulated. LDW noted that feedback had been good overall with no significant concerns. PBS IA workload was generally manageable, and improvements were made to things like PBS2 Electrophysiology lectures. At PBS IB, there had been largely positive feedback for PBS3, but some students had found PBS4 Neuroscience lectures difficult. The Department is in the process of recruiting a new Teaching Associate,

and this person will provide some supplementary classes where necessary. The start date of the new Teaching Associate depends on the circumstances of the preferred candidate, but it is hoped that they will be in place to offer revision sessions in Easter Term. At PBS Part II there was positive feedback and students were happy with their projects.

## **8. Response to January lockdown**

This item had been introduced so that staff or students could highlight any particular challenges faced as a result of the new lockdown.

### **a) Online Learning (nothing was raised)**

### **b) Exams**

LDW noted that there had been several departmental Examiners meetings, initiated as soon as the lockdown was announced, to discuss possible mitigation. Since that time, the University had launched its own consultation on exams, for which the Department has been liaising with student reps. There had been broadly good alignment between the departments' suggestions and the university-level suggestions. We hope to have confirmation soon and are holding off on releasing sample papers until that point so as to prevent confusion. SF noted that the PBS Staff-Student Committee scheduled for 24 February might be a good opportunity to discuss this further – information should have been released by this point. LDW noted that the student reps have been very engaged in the process and therefore the Department might seek to meet them earlier than this if possible. SF noted that while information about the mitigation plans would be released soon, the University was also waiting on further government advice, expected on 22 February. SF acknowledged that students may be finding it stressful to wait for this information, but that waiting until critical information is available will lead to fewer subsequent changes.

## **9. Comments from student members**

### **a) Part IA – KB was unable to make the meeting but had sent comments, read by RS. PBS IA students were grateful for clear communications from the Department, lecture Q&As, and for efforts to keep spirits up such as with the Would I Lie To You events and socials. Mock exams had been a source of stress for some students, mostly on PBS2. Those who had done mocks found them to be beneficial. Online learning could be quite tough, with students spending a long time on individual lectures. Students found the workload to be more intense in Lent than in Michaelmas. Those who had studied Maths at A-level had some concerns about the structure of the Maths unit. There was significant interest in the following papers at PBS Part IB: CR1 Foundations in Criminology and Criminal Justice; PHIL4 Knowledge, Language and the World, and NS3 Neurobiology.**

### **b) Part IB – MG noted that content notes had been requested on certain PBS3 and PBS4 lectures. She had written a document on this, which had been sent to CH, LDW and KPG. CH had brought this up yesterday at the PBS DOS Committee. It was agreed that the best place for the content notes would be at the start of each lecture, perhaps on the first slide, rather than directly on Moodle or once at the start of the Term. Students had also requested captions on lectures. CH stated that**

captions will be added but not checked, and that students would be able to turn them on or off. SF noted that captions can now be set on Zoom if the host has a paid-for account.

- c) Part II – JG stated that PBS Part II students were mainly waiting for exams information. Otherwise feedback was positive and students were enjoying lectures. Students appreciated having slides on Moodle slightly earlier and having captions.

SF noted that it was good for staff in the Department, who have put in lots of effort, to hear positive feedback.

## **RESERVED BUSINESS**

### **12. Dates of meetings for 2020-21**

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|--------|-----------------------|--------|------|
| Easter | Wednesday 12 May 2021 | 2.00pm | Zoom |
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