

**Macquarie University
Division of SCMP**

**Department of Philosophy
Report on Student Forum, 7 December 2006**

The Department's 2006 student forum was held at 2pm on Thursday 7 December, in W6A 107. We are very grateful to Clara Wong for organization, publicity, and for the excellent catering. About 20 students attended the forum, along with 5 staff members. This report offers a brief summary of the issues raised and discussed.

Teaching modes and tools

A number of students spoke in favour of having iLecture recordings available for all units. This helps students with busy lives or who suffer ill health, and is widely used for revision purposes, or to catch up on the bits of lectures you've missed while thinking about something else. These students acknowledged that they were an unusually enthusiastic group, who would still attend lectures even with iLecture availability. They suggested a number of ways of encouraging attendance for all students, including compulsory attendance in upper-level units, and continuous assessment through semester.

There was a wide-ranging discussion of lectures, tutes, and seminars as teaching modes, with our attention focussed on ways to encourage interactivity and to motivate students to keep up with the work all through semester. Some assessment methods in our units were highly praised, including student journals and regular shorties: more continuous assessment seems hard in the abstract, but works extremely well in practice. Some units were praised for allowing not every piece of submitted work to count (eg the best 2 of 3 shorties should count), thus reducing pressure on students.

Syllabus and coverage

Students praised a number of areas of the philosophy syllabus, such as the newly redesigned stream in history of philosophy. They made a number of suggestions for areas which could be better represented, including non-Western philosophy; philosophy of language; ancient philosophy; and the historiography of philosophy. We were encouraged to highlight links with units and topics in other disciplines, especially at 1st-

year when students need help in seeing the relevance of philosophical issues to other areas.

There was some helpful discussion of timetabling. We should have our provisional long-term syllabus on the department website as far in advance as possible to help students plan their programme of study. The Handbook should advise students to check the department website for this information. Students reported that 9am lectures (as for example scheduled for PHIL 359 History of Philosophy #2 in 2007) are extremely undesirable as many have family and other commitments which make it impossible to attend classes at this time: we were encouraged to request timetable changes in such cases.

Pre-Honours and Honours programme

Jean-Philippe Deranty, the Honours convenor, reported on the new arrangements for Honours. From 2007, PHIL 354 will be a taught Advanced Philosophy Seminar highlighting current research issues across the department's three teaching and research streams. The content of this unit will change every year. It will be a prerequisite for Honours entry, and also a compulsory seminar unit within the Honours programme. There was positive student feedback on this change, and a wide-ranging discussion of the Honours system followed.