

## Moving forward with Philosophical and Religious Studies

December 2nd 2011

# A Summary of The Higher Education Academy's Provision for Philosophical and Religious Studies

## Introduction

The Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies (PRS) closes its doors on Tuesday 20th December 2011. Support for philosophy, religious studies, theology and HPSTM will be taken over by the central Higher Education Academy, based in York, but with staff based in institutions across the country.

As part of the plan for smoothing the transition process, PRS held a networking event for those who had been particularly active with the subject centre, contributing to events, publications, projects etc., to forge links between them and the new HEA structures being put in place. The meeting took place on November 30th 2011. Representatives of the six major subject associations were present, as were many others. Around half of those invited could attend, so it was decided that a document would be created to summarise what had been discussed, as a record for those present, and as information for those who could not. This document can also be used by those fielding questions from others about PRS provision in the HEA, or who want to publicise the opportunities available to a wider audience.

## Presentation 1: New Structures of the Academy

Dr John Craig, Head of Social Sciences and Acting Head of Arts and Humanities, gave a presentation on the way the new look Academy will be structured in the support it provides.

## HEA Categories of work

- **Academic practice development:** This is the area of work that PRS subject communities will be most interested in, as it is the focus of most discipline level support.
- **Teacher excellence:** This covers schemes such as the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme: more details can be found at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ntfs>
- **Institutional strategy and change:** This covers work at a strategic level, work with the funding councils and Vice-chancellors etc.

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## Academic Practice

Academic Practice development comprises 28 core discipline areas, one of which is 'philosophical and religious studies', plus 10 other discipline areas. Each of these discipline areas has its own budget.

It will integrate with thematic work relating to:

- Internationalisation
- Assessment and feedback
- Employability
- Flexible learning
- Retention and success
- Reward and recognition

Each of these thematic areas also has its own staff and budget.

The academic practice team is split into four cluster teams:

- STEM
- Health
- Social Sciences
- Arts and Humanities

At present, the head of Arts and Humanities has not been appointed, so John Craig, head of social sciences, is also heading Arts and Humanities. It is hoped that an appointment will be made in the near future.

Each cluster team contains a set of Discipline Leads, (DLs) responsible for the discrete subject areas referred to earlier. In Arts and Humanities, there will be seven discipline leads:

- English - Nicole King
- History - Peter D'Sena
- Media Communications - John Mundy
- Dance, Music and Drama - Paul Kleiman
- Art and Design - Carolyn Bew
- Languages - TBA
- Philosophical and Religious Studies - TBA

The discipline lead for PRS is yet to be confirmed. It is hoped that a confirmation of appointment will be made soon. The post is a 0.5 position, reflecting the relatively small size of the subject communities.

Working with cluster teams will be Academic Leads, leading on services such as journals.

Each cluster team has a set of Academic Development Officers, (ADOs) who will support development in disciplines and services. For Arts and Humanities there are four:

- Resources and Seminars - Jennie Osborn
- Journals and Teaching Development Grants - Sam Ellis
- Consultancy and Change - Catriona Cunningham (0.5 position)
- Management and Resources - Sandy Coe

In addition to these members of staff, the HEA plans to call on Academic Associates to deliver much of its front-line activities. This flexible model provides an opportunity for DL/ADOs to bring in additional expertise from the sector. Each DL can make decisions based on the needs of his disciplines and sub-disciplines, working with his or her own budget of £35k. This represents an opportunity for those working in PRS disciplines to get involved in the HEA's activities. There is currently an open call for Associates on the HEA website: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/academic-associates>.

Some examples of associate work:

- Research projects
- Delivery of workshop
- Development of teaching materials
- Editorial work
- Engagement with a subject community (e.g. in the PRS discipline area, it is possible that a discipline lead with expertise in religious studies may choose to appoint an academic associate with expertise in philosophy to ensure good relationships and contacts with the philosophical community)

All those interested in learning and teaching in our disciplines are encouraged to apply, to form a pool of those interested in working with the Academy in the future.

## **Presentation 2: Services for the Disciplines**

As is evident, the team for Arts and Humanities, and PRS specifically, is still incomplete, and those team members who are now in post are facing the challenge of planning for the academic year 2011-12 as it is already in train. Suggestions are more than welcomed for the kinds of services that are currently valued by the PRS community and that you would like to see continue, as well as suggestions for new areas of work that would have value for your discipline community. Services that are already being planned for this year include:

- Annual Conference - this is going to be a joint Arts and Humanities event this year, probably taking place in Scotland in mid-May. There may be disciplinary strands if this is what attendees would like. There may also be focuses on themes e.g. employability and Key Information Sets. Again, Jennie would like suggestions and comments to feed into the planning (contact details at the end of the document).
- Learning and Teaching summit for Arts and Humanities
- 3 New To Teaching 2 day residential events for Arts and Humanities
- 5 PG 1 day events for Arts and Humanities
- Regular newsletters for the disciplines
- Resource Centre and new resources development - at present PRS resources have not found a permanent

home on the new HEA website but user consultation is underway, together with liaison with Subject Centre staff while they are still in post, to make sure that the most valuable resources continue to be available. Again, feedback is sought on this as to what colleagues in our disciplines find useful.

- Journals - including Discourse, which will continue at least in 2011-12 and into the future if funding allows and/or this is what PRS communities want. Contacts will be kept updated about the new ways of submitting work, its new home on the HEA website etc.

All the joint Arts and Humanities events will aim to provide a disciplinary and sub-disciplinary focus where appropriate, through the use of parallel sessions etc.

## **Presentation 3: Funding opportunities**

Across the whole of the Academic Practice work area the following funding has been made available for 2011-12:

- Teaching Development Grants £1.5M
- Hosted Workshops and Seminars £140k
- UK Travel Grants £40k
- International Scholarships £160k
- PhD Programme £150k
- Sponsorship opportunities

### **Teaching Development Grants**

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/teaching-development-grants>

There has already been one individual, and one departmental, round of funding for teaching development grants. There will be two further calls in 2011/12:

- January: individual grants (deadline in mid February ? up to 7k )
- February: collaborative grants (deadline in mid April ? up to £60k)

These will be announced on the website: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/teaching-development-grants>

The main contact for projects is Sam Ellis, and he is happy to discuss potential projects and the bidding process with interested potential applicants. There is at present no ring-fencing between discipline areas, but the HEA team were keen to stress that it is their 'ambition' to achieve a reasonable disciplinary spread and that this round will be closely monitored to ensure that no subject area misses out in the long term because of issues e.g. the relative levels of maturity of the pedagogical research community within disciplinary areas, experience of putting in research funding bids etc. They may also be able to provide a 'matchmaking' service for collaborative bids where several contacts in separate institutions are interested in compatible projects.

### **Hosted Workshops and Seminars**

There is an open call for UK HE institutions to host workshops or seminars, which should be broadly related to the student learning experience in some form and available to those in the institution and those outside. Grants of £500 are available to host, with a potential extra £500 to cover speaker costs for external speakers where appropriate. The f

ull call can be found at: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/seminar-series>

PRS has been allocated funding for around six of these, to take place before July 2012, and contacts are invited to apply promptly to allow there to be time for this to happen.

## **UK travel grants**

The HEA realises that departmental budgets are being squeezed and that funding is not always available to cover the costs of attending events related to learning and teaching. All UK HE contacts in subscribing institutions can apply for funding to attend these kinds of events, (whether external or HEA funded).

## **Contact details**

John Craig, Head of Social Sciences and Acting Head of Arts and Humanities, can be contacted on [john.craig@heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:john.craig@heacademy.ac.uk). Sam Ellis, the main contact for funded projects and journal queries, can be contacted on [Sam.Ellis@heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:Sam.Ellis@heacademy.ac.uk). Jennie Osborn, the main contact for events and resources, can be contacted on [Jennie.Osborn@heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:Jennie.Osborn@heacademy.ac.uk). Sam and Jennie are particularly keen to elicit feedback on current plans and suggestions for the future.

For more information on this story go to:

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