Changes in the regulations governing the Bachelor of Philosophy in Philosophy and the Master of Studies in Philosophy: communication from the BOARD OF THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY.

Ref: HDB/1078/G

Approved on behalf of the Divisional Board on 9 March 2012.

Brief note about nature of the changes: The changes will increase the breadth of study, introduce new teaching arrangements (with additional emphasis on the role of classes), and result in continuous assessment of students across the two years of the course.

(1) Bachelor of Philosophy in Philosophy

With effect from 1 October 2012 (for first examination in Hilary Term 2013)

In Examination Regulations, 2011, delete from p.490, l.4 to p.492, l.11, and substitute:

'The regulations made by the Board of the Faculty of Philosophy are as follows:

1. Candidates will be required to attend the B.Phil. Pro-seminar in Michaelmas and Hilary terms of the first year of their studies (i.e., the year in which their names are first entered on the Register of B.Phil. students). In addition, candidates will be required to attend two graduate classes in each of the first four terms of their studies.

2. Candidates will be examined by submitting:

(A) Seven essays of no more than 5,000 words each, in conformity with the following distribution requirement. Each essay will be assigned to a subject; the seven essays must cover at least five subjects, with no more than two essays on any one subject. One essay must be on a subject from Group 1 (Theoretical Philosophy), one on a subject from Group 2 (Practical Philosophy) and two on a subject or subjects from Group 3 (History of Philosophy), of which at least one must be concerned with philosophy written before 1800. The remaining three essays may be assigned to subjects in any of the three Groups, provided that the distribution requirement above is met. The list of approved subjects in each Group will be published at the beginning of each academic year in the course Handbook. In exceptional circumstances, students may request to have one or more elements of the distribution requirement waived. Candidates wishing to do this must seek approval from the Graduate Studies Committee in Philosophy as soon as they decide they would like to do so, and in any case no later than the Friday of the 0th week of the Michaelmas Full Term of their second year of study. Any such application must be supported by the relevant B.Phil. Course Coordinator.

(B) A thesis of not more than 30,000 words, exclusive of bibliographical references, on a subject proposed by the candidate in consultation with his or her supervisor, and approved by the Graduate Studies Committee in Philosophy.

3. Topics for the essays will be chosen by the candidates. Candidates may offer up to two essays on at most one subject not included in the list of approved subjects in the Handbook. Candidates wishing to offer an essay or essays on a subject not on the prescribed list must seek approval for the proposed subject from the Graduate Studies Committee in Philosophy as soon as they decide they would like to offer it, and in any case no later than the Friday of
the fifth week of the Trinity Full Term of the first year of their studies. Any such application must be supported by the relevant B.Phil. Course Coordinator. Where a subject is approved by the Graduate Studies Committee in Philosophy, the Committee will assign it to one of Groups 1-3.

4. Candidates must inform the Graduate Studies Committee in Philosophy of their thesis title and abstract as soon as they have made their decisions and in any case not later than Friday of the eighth week of Trinity Full Term of the first year of their studies. Requests for permission to change the thesis title must be submitted for approval, with the support of the candidate’s supervisor, to the Director of Graduate Studies in Philosophy as soon as the candidate has decided to seek such permission.

5. Two printed copies of each essay must be delivered to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford OX1 4BG, by 10 a.m. on the Wednesdays of the following weeks. In the first year of study, one essay is due in noughtth week of Hilary Term and two essays are due in noughtth week of Trinity Term. In the second year of study, two essays are due in each of the noughtth weeks of Michaelmas and Hilary Terms. Candidates must give notice of the subject of each essay and the Group to which it will be assigned in accordance with the procedures and deadlines specified in the course Handbook.

6. The thesis must be delivered to the Examination Schools, of the above address, by 10 a.m. on Wednesday of the eighth week of Trinity Full Term in the second year of study. The thesis must be accompanied by a brief abstract and a statement of the number of words it contains (exclusive of bibliographical references). A penalty may be imposed on any thesis that exceeds the word limit. Successful candidates will be required to deposit one copy of the thesis in the Bodleian Library.

7. The examiners may award a distinction for excellence in the whole examination.

8. Candidates who fail up to two essays will be permitted to resubmit those essays at any of the subsequent essay submission dates during the first or second year of their studies, or at the thesis submission date in their second year. A resubmitted essay may be on a new topic, and may be on a new subject, provided that the distribution requirement is met. Candidates who fail the thesis but who receive passing marks on all their essays will be permitted to resubmit an amended or different thesis by 10 a.m. on Wednesday of noughtth week of the Hilary Term of the year following the whole examination. Candidates who fail three or more essays or two or more essays and the thesis will be permitted to resubmit work for the failed elements of the examination in the following academic year (or over four terms for candidates who fail more than five essays or more than four essays and the thesis). Candidates need only resubmit work for those elements of the Examination that they failed, but no resubmitted essay or thesis can receive a mark of more than 60. Candidates who fail to satisfy the examiners a second time in any part of the examination may not resubmit work for any part of the examination on any subsequent occasion.

(2) Master of Studies in Philosophy

With effect from 1 October 2012 (for first examination in Hilary Term 2013)

In Examination Regulations, 2011, delete from p.645, l.39 to p.646, l.14, and substitute:

‘2. Candidates will be required to attend the B.Phil. Pro-seminar in Michaelmas and Hilary terms. In addition, candidates will be required to attend two graduate classes in each of the three terms of their studies.

3. Candidates will be examined by submitting five essays of no more than 5,000 words each, in conformity with the following distribution requirement. Each essay will be assigned to a subject, with no more than two essays assigned to any one subject. One essay must be on a subject from Group 1 (Theoretical Philosophy), one on a subject from Group 2 (Practical Philosophy) and one on a subject from Group 3 (History of Philosophy). The remaining two essays may be assigned to subjects in any of the three Groups. The list of approved
subjects in each Group will be the same as the list published in the course Handbook for the B.Phil. in Philosophy.

4. Topics for the essays will be chosen by the candidates. Candidates may offer up to two essays on at most one subject not included in the list of approved subjects in the Handbook. Candidates wishing to offer an essay or essays on a subject not on the prescribed list must seek approval for the proposed subject from the Graduate Studies Committee in Philosophy as soon as they decide they would like to offer it, and in any case no later than the Friday of the fifth week of Trinity Full Term. Any such application must be supported by the relevant Course Coordinator. Where a subject is approved by the Graduate Studies Committee in Philosophy, the Committee will assign it to one of Groups 1-3.

5. Two printed copies of each essay must be delivered to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford OX1 4BG, by 10 a.m. on the Wednesdays of the following weeks: one essay is due in noughth week of Hilary Term and two essays are due in noughth week of Trinity Term. The final two essays must be submitted in noughth week of the Michaelmas Term following the year in which candidates are first entered on the Register of M.St. students. Candidates must give notice of the subject of each essay and the Group to which it will be assigned in accordance with the procedures and deadlines specified in the course Handbook.

6. The examiners may award a distinction for excellence in the whole examination.

7. Candidates who fail up to two essays will be permitted to resubmit those essays; a resubmitted essay may be on a new topic, and may be on a new subject, provided that the distribution requirement is met. Candidates who choose to resubmit one or two failed essays must do so by 10 a.m. on Wednesday of noughth week of the following Michaelmas Term where the failed essay or essays had been submitted during the first year of the degree, or by Wednesday of noughth week of the following Hilary Term where the essay or essays had been submitted in noughth week of Michaelmas Term. Candidates who fail three or more essays will be permitted to resubmit work for the failed elements of the examination during the following academic year. Candidates need only resubmit work for those elements of the examination that they failed. No resubmitted essay can receive a mark of more than 60. Candidates who fail to satisfy the examiners a second time in any part of the examination may not re-submit work for any part of the examination on any subsequent occasion.”.

Explanatory note
These changes will reform the Philosophy Faculty’s flagship postgraduate taught course, the BPhil. The reforms arise from the recommendations of a Working Party set up by the Faculty’s Graduate Studies Committee in Hilary Term 2009, and are intended to improve the BPhil by addressing three key weaknesses of the course as it is currently configured.

The effect of these changes will be to reform the BPhil degree in line with the proposals which were approved by the Humanities Division, Education Committee, and the Conference of Colleges during the calendar year 2011, and to amend the regulations governing the MSt in Philosophy accordingly. A copy of the proposal document (excluding the various annexes) is appended, together with an outline timetable of assessment. The changes will take effect from 1 October 2012, i.e., for candidates who are admitted to the BPhil (or MSt) degree from 1 October 2012. Candidates who will enter the second year of the BPhil in October 2012 will continue their studies, and will be examined, under the existing regulations.

Under present arrangements, the subjects available to candidates on the one year Master of Studies in Philosophy are shared with the BPhil, and the same board of examiners acts for the both courses. It is therefore necessary to put through changes to the Master of Studies in Philosophy alongside the changes to the BPhil. In effect, the MSt will become a 12-month course, mirroring the first 12 months of the BPhil. It will be possible, though not encouraged, for students admitted for the BPhil to leave after just one year with an MSt, provided of course that they meet the criteria necessary to pass that course.
The proposed changes to the BPhil and MSt in Philosophy were approved by the Humanities Division, Education Committee, and the Conference of Colleges over the course of the calendar year 2011. Further details about the new version of the course can be found on the Philosophy Faculty website at http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate.