



**Middlesex
University**

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMMES

Philosophy programmes

Middlesex University has taken the decision to phase out the teaching of undergraduate Philosophy programmes over the next two years and not to recruit to its postgraduate research or part-time programmes. This prompted an occupation of the Mansion building at Trent Park on Tuesday 4th May by students and staff, which ended on Saturday after the University was granted an injunction.

Since the start of the occupation at the Trent Park campus, the University had held three separate meetings with Philosophy staff and two with students to explore a way forward. As a result of these meetings areas were identified for further discussion.

The Philosophy provision at Middlesex, as it is currently structured, is only able to operate with subsidies from other areas of the University. The University has no choice but to address this issue. The decision was made following detailed consultation with the staff involved over a number of months. Current undergraduates and postgraduate research students will continue their studies at Middlesex University. Middlesex University's aim is to safeguard the student experience whilst working with the staff to develop an alternative model of provision.

Decision making

The original decision to stop recruitment of undergraduates, part-time masters students and research students to Philosophy from next academic year was made following six months of detailed consultation with Philosophy staff. In this time, staff were encouraged to address concerns about low student recruitment and limited research

funding and to propose workable solutions. The contribution of Philosophy staff to research and their dedication to their students is unquestionable but they have not adequately addressed the University's concerns.

Low student recruitment and limited research funding

Over the past three years there has been insufficient demand from prospective undergraduate students to study Philosophy at Middlesex. For the forthcoming academic year, the University had received only 6 firm acceptances of a place on its BA Philosophy course by the end of April. In previous years undergraduate numbers have remained unsustainably low – at only 12 new BA students on average per year. In 2009/10 there were 18 full time and 26 part time MA students registered on Philosophy programmes. The area has 6 FTE staff, three of whom are professors.

Although the Philosophy area has been widely recognised for its research, the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy is not in receipt of any current funding from external research bodies. With the exception of one sizable AHRC grant (circa £250K) in recent years, the Centre has only succeeded in attracting small amounts of external competitive funding.

The University has continually invested in strengthening research in this area and was delighted therefore that Philosophy performed well in RAE 2008. However, despite the improved RAE ratings, the RAE income for Philosophy went down compared to what was received previously (from circa £250K to £173K per annum). Meanwhile several other subject areas have shown substantial

improvement in the quality of their research, and as a result enjoy substantial amounts of RAE income (business and management, computing science, subjects allied to medicine) and also attract substantial amounts of external research income. Further, while other subject areas have worked hard to enable the University to attract circa £9.5M in continuing professional development, consultancy and other areas of knowledge transfer, Philosophy has not developed any strengths in this area.

Research remains an important area of focus for Middlesex University. The University continues to invest more than ever before in strengthening research and investing heavily in facilities across a number of key areas of research and teaching including humanities and STEM subjects. Research and business income is improving year on year. Doctoral student numbers have increased by over 100 in the current year. Early indications are that Middlesex will substantially improve its research position in the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework.

Occupation of Mansion House at Trent Park

A group of our Philosophy staff, Philosophy students and various campaigners from outside of the institution launched a forced occupation of the Mansion building at Trent Park on 4th May.

The University does not underestimate the strength of feeling amongst Philosophy staff and students and their supporters and whilst it recognises their right to free speech, it did not condone this illegal occupation. The University had concerns for the welfare of those inside the Mansion Building – fire exits were barricaded and people put themselves at risk by walking onto the roof and leaning out of windows.

Assaults were committed on security staff by individuals from the protest on entering the Mansion building resulting in serious injuries including broken bones and severe bruising. These staff were legitimately protecting restricted areas of University property including office spaces.

It was regrettable that the occupation prevented many University staff from going into work for several days. The University worked steadfastly to resolve the situation and did its best to reach an amicable conclusion to the situation and was in communication with relevant staff and students.

It has been claimed that the reason that the occupation took place was that the University cancelled a meeting scheduled with the Philosophy students. In fact the postponement was due to a clash with coursework deadlines and all students were informed twice of the postponement well before the scheduled meeting. Postings on social network sites showed that the students were aware of the change in plans.

Middlesex University Students' Union did not support the occupation of the Mansion and advised the students to end the occupation. Middlesex University's lawyers issued a formal letter on Friday 14th May requesting that the Mansion House be vacated immediately. When it was not, the University was granted an injunction to end the occupation. Those occupying the Mansion left of their own accord on Saturday 15th May.

May 17th, 2010