

The Northern Institute of Philosophy, University of Aberdeen

PROSPECTUS

Start-up

September 1, 2009

Areas of remit (and of likely focus in the mid-term)

Epistemology (*formal epistemology, entitlement, epistemic externalism, perception*)

Formal Logic, including the history of logic

Philosophy of Logic (*logical consequence, the paradoxes, inferentialism and model-theory, the epistemology of logic and the a priori*)

Philosophy of Language (*rule-following, propositions, vagueness, semantics and pragmatics, contextualism and relativism, content externalism*)

Philosophy of Mathematics (*foundations, neo-logicism and structuralism*)

Metaphysics (*value, taste, meaning, intentionality, time and truth*),

Philosophy of Mind (*the metaphysics and epistemology of the self, rationality and rational explanation*)

History of Analytical Philosophy, and its methods, scope and limits

General mission

- To produce and disseminate to the international philosophical community original research of excellence within the areas of remit.
- To support graduate student and early career philosophers of excellence to develop their interests and skills and absorb examples of best research practice in collaboration with experts. A special effort will be made to recruit from relatively disadvantaged academic backgrounds, including new accession countries in Central and Eastern Europe.
- To stimulate and coordinate work on the issues worldwide through the parts played by visitors, exchanges, international networks, conferences, workshops, multi-centre research collaborations and website dissemination.
- To extend results to neighbouring disciplines seeking contributions from philosophers, to communicate a sense of the goals, results and interest of contemporary analytical philosophical research to non-professional audiences, and to establish effective models of wider public communication for possible more general uptake by institutions within academic philosophy.
- To develop standing research liaisons with selected institutions of philosophical excellence worldwide.
- To uphold wherever possible the aspirations of analytical philosophy as an essentially critical, normative, potentially revisionary discipline; and to defend and maintain its engagement with the great perennial problems of philosophy

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Research Activity

The work of the Institute will in many respects follow and build upon the intense, highly synergetic and hugely successful prototype pioneered by Crispin Wright at the Arché Centre at St. Andrews during its period as an AHRC Research centre (2003-8).

Research projects: A number of multi-year managed collaborative research projects will be undertaken (including for the years 2009-12 the AHRC-funded *Basic Knowledge* and *Contextualism and Relativism* projects, for which negotiations for transfer of resourcing from St Andrews are at an advanced stage). New projects are planned for submission within the next 1-2 years within Formal Epistemology and on the Metaphysics and Epistemology of the Self. Each NIP project will be pursued by a resident team of senior, postdoctoral and graduate student researchers.

Seminars: *Core seminars* for each of these projects, involving all resident and interested visiting researchers, will average one meeting per week during term and somewhat less frequent meetings during the summer (totalling about 35 annually.) Cross-fertilisation and collaboration between projects will be strongly and officially encouraged. Participation in the various project seminars and other meetings will therefore normally involve most, or all of the resident Institute researchers, together with Research Leaders and other interested visitors. Postdoctoral fellows and graduate students are expected to regularly lead discussion at the core seminars.

Pilot seminars for prospective research projects will meet on an occasional basis to explore basic issues and readings around themes of interest to the group that are thought of promise for future research grant applications. Pilot seminars were a key factor in the Arché centre's securing over £5 million in external research funding during the years 2002-8.

A *Thesis seminar* for PhD students will meet weekly during full session.

Milestone seminars will be staged annually for each project (see below)

Research Leaders: In addition to the resident senior researchers, a cadre of external philosophers of international standing will be closely associated with individual projects throughout their duration, visiting to lead core and/or additional seminars for periods ranging from one to seven weeks a year.

Research Minuting: All research meetings will be carefully minuted, the postdoctoral fellows taking primary responsibility for convening additional short follow-up seminars at which graduate students (and others) will have an opportunity to rehearse issues arising in the main seminar and a minute will be composed collectively and put directly on-line. This process will serve both to provide an effective record for the further development of ideas in play and the evolution of new research questions, and to help colleagues to clarify and absorb the ideas, and issues, emerging in the course of the research. (The project minutes will be submitted weekly to the Auditors — see below)

Academic Audit: An Audit of all projects, and of the Institute's activities as a whole, will take place annually. The process will involve the Auditors' receiving work in progress and self-assessments from all the Institute researchers and then visiting for a period of up to four days to attend research presentations and meet with project members and the Institute Directorate. This will provide the basis for an annual report assessing all aspects of progress in the research projects and collateral research activity in the Centre. The current auditors are Richard Heck (Brown) *Contextualism and Relativism*, and Stewart Cohen (Arizona) *Basic Knowledge*.

Milestones: An end-of-year one-day 'Milestone seminar' for each project will be held annually to facilitate a conspectus of the previous year's work and review the relations of the findings of the previous year with those of earlier years. Each Milestone seminar will generate a collaborative 'state-of-the-art' article surveying the main findings, problems and prospects identified during the year, co-authored by members of the project team and posted on the project website. These seminars will play a key role in helping to shape new research agendas and future directions of research going beyond the 'state of the art'.

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Conferences, Special Seminars and Workshops: Two weekend workshops per project will be held annually in Aberdeen or at partner institutions, at which additional standing Networks of interested philosophers from elsewhere in the UK and abroad will convene. At least one major international conference on themes associated with one or more of the projects will be held annually.

Graduate training: Full-fledged participation in the project research will be a major additional component within a regular UK-style PHD education, involving standard principal and second supervisory arrangements. In addition, a one-year Research-preparation Masters (MRes) will serve both as a platform for basic training of prospective PhD students, and as a screening for those with the aptitude to excel at PhD research. The PhD programme, incorporating the MRes, will be four-year funded, with fifth-year awards available for exceptional students. Visits, for periods ranging from a few weeks to a full academic year by graduate students at partner institutions, will be strongly encouraged; graduate student visitors will enjoy exactly the same rights, privileges and academic experience, including full supervision and participation in the project research routines, and funding for research-related travel, as locals.

Graduate conferences: In addition to supporting participation by Institute graduate students at graduate conferences hosted by partner institutions and others elsewhere, the Institute will stage an annual graduate conference in Aberdeen, provisionally scheduled for early September. Our aim is to attract student papers of the very highest standard. Towards this aim the Institute graduate conference offers two opportunities that are particularly attractive to early career academics. The Institute's will be one of the few graduate conferences at which student papers are given responses by faculty. Also, each year one of the papers presented at the graduate conference will be published in the Institute journal as The Institute Graduate Paper.

Journal: Plans are well advanced for the inauguration of a new quarterly journal, provisionally titled *Aurora*, to be housed by the Institute, specialising in the publication of short sharply focused papers within the areas of remit. A proposal is under consideration with Oxford University Press. Subject editors include JC Beall (Logic), Richard Heck (Philosophy of Maths), Ross Cameron (Metaphysics), Tim Crane (Mind), Jonathan Schaffer (Language), and Brian Weatherson (Epistemology). The executive editors will be John Divers and Crispin Wright.

Website: As well as serving the standard needs of marketing and informing, the Institute website will be used as a tool for research dissemination. Each project will have an associated project page where one can access general information regarding the scope and aims of the project. As the project progresses interested parties will then have access to the various milestone papers produced at intervals throughout each project. E-records from conferences and workshops will enable parties across the world to visit and revisit papers given by many of the world's leading philosophers. The extensive bibliographies attached to each Institute project will also be available on the Institute website.

Calendar: The Institute's terms will diverge from the Aberdeen University calendar in respects designed to facilitate visits from overseas scholars while maintaining sufficient time for project researches and for reflection and writing. Thus the Institute's Winter term will run during the months of September to December, when the focus will be primarily on project research. January to mid-March will be a Spring Recess, with a concentration on writing, when graduate students will be assisted to visit partner institutions if they wish. Seminars will resume during the Institute's Summer term running from April to late July, when the main concentration of research visits will occur.

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External Collaborations and Institute Fellowships

Institutional Partnerships

A wide network of Institutional research partnerships and graduate student and postdoctoral exchanges will be established. Informal discussions, involving workshops and graduate and postdoctoral visits, have already been opened with recently emerging centres of analytical philosophy in Continental Europe, including CSMN Oslo, *Institut Jean Nicod* in Paris, *Eidos* in Geneva, and the *Logos* group in Barcelona. There will be collaborations with the *Centre for Time*, Sydney, in projects on “The pragmatic foundations of language” and (prospectively: ARC application under assessment) “Learning from disagreement”, led by Prof. Huw Price; and with the London Institute of Philosophy, including graduate student and postdoctoral fellow exchanges, associate visiting fellowships, and co-organisation of the biannual Logic and Language conferences with the *Centre for Logic and Language*. We anticipate continuing close working relationships, including informal graduate student exchanges, around the “Epistemic Warrant” project with philosophers in the Research School of Social Sciences at the ANU and with the Philosophy Department at the University of Connecticut. Plans for the Institute’s major partnership with New York University are outlined below.

NIP Professorial Fellowships

These appointments will play a key role in the Institute’s research processes and internationality. They are open-ended one-quarter time posts, held by scholars of the highest international distinction, in areas within the remit of the Institute. The duties, of research leadership and graduate and postdoctoral support and advising, are conceived very much on the model of those of Global Distinguished professors at NYU. The University is providing funding for six such appointments.

NIP Associate Fellowship

The Institute’s Associate Fellowship will closely follow the Arché model. Associate Fellowship will normally be offered to former graduate, postdoctoral or senior members of the Institute, or former project auditors, who are in employment as professional philosophers and are willing to undertake an ongoing commitment to the work of the Institute and to participate regularly in its activities. They will be assisted with travel costs to enable them to visit, and encouraged to take initiatives in developing research activity, including organisation of ad hoc workshops, and to develop and maintain academic relationships with the younger members of the Institute. The Arché Centre has at present some 28 fellows in this category, representing Australia, Belgium, Denmark, England, Germany, Italy, Norway, Scotland, Spain, New Zealand and the United States. It is expected that the Associate Fellowship of the Northern Institute will be no less cosmopolitan and impressive.

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RESOURCING

The College of Arts and Social Sciences is committed to a programme of investment and re-development in Philosophy, in line with the strategic plan for the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy. The ambition is to develop Philosophy so that it matches the significant research strengths of the other disciplines within the School, and makes a major contribution to the research and pedagogical success of the College and the University. Over the next five years the University plans to invest the following resources in the Institute, as part of the overall plan for the regeneration of Philosophy.

Permanent Institute staffing:

Directorate:

Director, Executive Director, Communications Director (to be confirmed), Office Manager

Research:

2-3 Institute Professors (full time),

6 Professorial Fellows (one quarter time),

Postdoctoral Fellowships : the equivalent of four three-year posts, in addition to those externally funded

Other resourcing:

Graduate programme:

PhD studentships: 2/3 fully funded studentships per year

MRes: top-up awards will be available for promising candidates with partial funding

Networks and Workshops: £60k per annum

Accommodation: Luthuli House -

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/central/vcampus/kings/students_association.shtml

will be refurbished as accommodation for Philosophy (including the Institute) at an estimated cost of £ 0.75 million.

Professor Christopher Gane
Vice-Principal and Head of the College of
Arts and Social Sciences

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PROPOSALS FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY

(The following proposals have secured initial support and are now subject to final approval and ratification by the relevant offices of Aberdeen and New York universities.)

The Northern Institute will be owned by Aberdeen University but will be an institutional participant in New York University's Global Network University program through its partnership with the New York Institute of Philosophy, (the first such participant at graduate/research level).

Joint Mission: to be defined, but to include research collaborations, joint workshops and training schools, recruitment of young philosophers of excellence, and the representation of the highest intellectual aspirations of academic philosophy.

The joint program:

- (i) Support for research visits by NYU Faculty and graduate students
 - (a) Summer visits of up to several weeks for finishing NYU PhD students, for presentation of seminars on their thesis materials
 - (c) Funded Research Leadership visits by NYU Faculty
 - (d) Summer visits by NYU's Bersoff postdoctoral fellows from mid-May till late July
- (ii) Supported visits by Northern Institute graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to NYU
- (iii) Support activities on both sites for NYIP and NIP research projects; occasional joint workshops, drawing in European scholars with expertise in the topics of NYIP projects.
- (iv) Revival of the European Summer School for graduate students. (The London Institute of Philosophy is here a potential further partner) with a possible rotation between Aberdeen, London, and La Pietra, Florence.
- (v) A joint research partnership, involving workshops, conferences, graduate student and postdoctoral fellow exchanges, and visiting fellowships, with the London Institute of Philosophy