The Philosophical Society: Oxford
Constitution
14 July 2026

1. Objectives of the Society

1.1 The purpose of the Society is:

(a) to promote philosophical discussion and contact between people, of any background, who have an interest in philosophy;
(b) to support the organisation of lectures and courses in philosophy, including, but not limited to, collaboration with OUDCE and similar institutions, thereby enabling members to hear distinguished speakers and to participate in philosophical discussion;
(c) to pursue engagement with OUDCE and similar institutions in the interests of furthering the objects of the Society; and
(d) to encourage the formation of local discussion groups.

2. Income and Property of the Society

2.1 The income and property of the Society shall be applied solely towards the promotion of its objectives. No portion shall be paid or transferred, directly or indirectly, to members of the Society, except as permitted by this Constitution.

3. Governance of the Society

3.1 The Committee shall be the principal forum for collective governance, deliberation, and decision making within the Society, exercising delegated authority from their election by the members at the AGM.

3.2 The Committee may determine the Society's policies, programmes, and activities, and oversee their implementation.

3.3 The following matters shall require a vote of the Committee and shall not be determined by any officer or subset of the Committee acting alone:

(a) approval of the Society's annual budget and any material variation to it;
(b) nonroutine correspondence or applications to regulatory or public authorities;
(c) amendment of the Society's standing policies or internal regulations;
(d) appointment or removal of any co-opted Committee member;
(e) commencement or settlement of litigation or formal dispute; and
(f) any other matter designated as a reserved matter by vote of the Committee.

3.4 The Society is a collegially governed society. This Constitution shall be interpreted to promote collective deliberation, shared responsibility, and consensus-based governance through the Committee.

4. Membership of the Society

4.1 Membership of the Society shall be open to any person who has an interest in philosophy.

4.2 A person becomes a member of the Society upon payment of the annual subscription then in force, or upon being admitted as an honorary member.

4.3 Members are defined as those who have paid their subscription for the current year, or who are honorary members.

4.4 The subscription year commences on the first day of the month in which the member's first payment was made and falls due for renewal annually thereafter. If a subscription is not received within two months of the renewal date, membership may be deemed to have lapsed.

4.5 Honorary membership may be awarded by the Society. Honorary members are not required to pay a subscription.

4.6 The AGM may approve the appointment of a President Emerita/Emeritus as an honorary member, as recommended by the Committee.

4.7 The AGM may approve the appointment of Lifetime Members as honorary members, as recommended by the Committee.

4.8 The Committee may invite the Director of Studies in Philosophy for OUDCE to serve as President of the Society in a voluntary and personal capacity, offering the President an honorary membership in the Society.

4.9 Honorary membership is offered to all philosophy tutors at the University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education for one year. The philosophy tutors must be actively teaching at OUDCE. At the end of one year, if still teaching at OUDCE, the tutor may be awarded another year of honorary membership in the Society. If the tutor is not teaching at OUDCE, they will be given the opportunity to pay the subscription fee and become a paid member of the Society. The tutor honorary membership includes a pdf-only copy of the Society's Annual Review.

4.10 Honorary membership is awarded to student prize winners of the Marianne Talbot Student Essay Competition for one year. At the end of one year, the winner will be given the opportunity to pay the subscription fee and become a paid member of the Society.

4.11 Each member is entitled to:

(a) receive notice of future philosophy day and weekend courses and lectures at OUDCE;
(b) receive a copy of the Society's Annual Review, either by pdf or hard copy, to which members are invited to contribute;
(c) access the Rewley House Library and receive a library card, subject to the terms applicable with OUDCE;
(d) participate in the AGM; and
(e) exercise one vote at the AGM.

4.12 A person ceases to be a member as soon as—

(a) they give written notice of resignation to the Membership Secretary;
(b) fail to renew their subscription; or
(c) if they are removed from membership by resolution of the Committee on grounds of disruptive conduct.

(d) These conditions guide internal governance but do not restrict the statutory rights of members.

5. Officers of the Society

5.1 The officers of the Society are the President, the Chair, the Secretary, the Membership Secretary, the Treasurer, and the Governance Officer.

5.2 The Committee shall invite the Director of Studies in Philosophy for OUDCE to serve as President of the Society in a voluntary and personal capacity.

5.3 The Chair shall hold office for three years and shall not be eligible for re-election in the immediately following year. The Chair shall preside at the AGM and at meetings of the Committee. The Chair's function is to stimulate interest in the Society's programme and to represent, as far as possible, the viewpoints of Members in planning general policy.

5.4 The Secretary shall prepare agendas for meetings, write minutes of the meetings, and keep records of the Society's activities.

5.5 The Membership Secretary shall maintain a list of Members and be responsible for issuing membership application forms and ensuring that new Members receive appropriate documentation.

5.6 The Treasurer shall keep adequate accounts, advise the Committee on financial matters, and submit to HMRC such returns as are required by law.

5.7 The Governance Officer shall support conformance with applicable policies and procedures and with the requirements of this Constitution.

5.8 Officers shall be elected at the AGM. A vacancy in any office may be filled by the Committee until the next AGM.

5.9 A person ceases to be an officer as soon as—

(a) notification in writing is received by the Chair from the officer that the officer is resigning from office, and such resignation has taken effect in accordance with its terms; or
(b) they cease to be a member of the Society.

6. Committee

6.1 The Committee shall consist of the officers of the Society, other role-holders who wish to serve, and no more than four members without a designated role, elected or co-opted in accordance with this Constitution.

6.2 Members wishing to serve on the Committee should contact the Chair or any Committee member. If a vacancy exists, the Committee may approve the member's nomination for election at the next AGM.

6.3 The Committee shall meet at least once per year and at other times as it considers necessary. Its function is to plan the general policy of the Society and to elicit and represent the wishes of members.

6.4 The Committee shall have the power to co-opt further members for special purposes. Co-opted members shall have no vote in their role on the Committee.

6.5 Members of the Committee may claim legitimate expenses as authorised by the Chair and Treasurer acting together.

6.6 The quorum for a Committee meeting shall be three members of the Committee, at least two of whom must be officers or such lower number as equals the total number of serving members where vacancies exist.

6.7 Questions arising at any Committee meeting shall be decided by a majority of votes. In case of an equality of votes, the Chair shall have a second or casting vote.

6.8 A person ceases to be a member of the Committee as soon as—

(a) notification in writing is received by the Chair from the Committee member that the Committee member is resigning from the Committee or from their office, and such resignation has taken effect in accordance with its terms; or
(b) they cease to be a member of the Society.
(c) These conditions guide internal governance but do not restrict the statutory rights of members.

6.9 The Society shall indemnify Committee members against any liability incurred in the reasonable performance of their duties on behalf of the Society and may apply Society funds towards any related legal costs or settlements, provided the liability does not arise from fraud, wilful misconduct, or gross negligence on the part of the member concerned.

7. Meetings of the Society

7.1 The Society shall hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year for the election of officers and members of the Committee, and to provide a forum for the expression of members' opinions. The Chair shall preside.

7.2 Notice of the AGM, together with the agenda, shall be given to all members at least twenty-one (21) days before the date of the meeting.

7.3 The AGM shall:

(a) receive the Treasurer's statement of accounts;
(b) elect officers and ordinary members of the Committee;
(c) make recommendations about the general use of the Society's funds; and
(d) consider any other business of which due notice has been given.

7.4 The Committee may convene a general meeting at any time with notice of a general meeting, together with the agenda, given to all members at least twenty-one (21) days before the date of the general meeting.

7.5 Resolutions at general meetings shall be decided by a show of hands.

7.6 Each member shall have one vote.

7.7 In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair shall have a casting vote.

7.8 No objection may be raised to the qualification of any member voting at a general meeting except at the meeting or immediately after the adjourned meeting at which the vote objected to is tendered, and every vote not disallowed at the meeting is valid.

(a) Any such objection must be referred to the Chair of the meeting, whose decision is final.
(b) A technical defect in the appointment of a person acting as a director or member, or in the convening of a general meeting, does not invalidate decisions made.

8. Amendments to this Constitution

8.1 This Constitution may only be amended by the membership at an AGM or a general meeting called by the Committee.

8.2 Prior written notice of any proposed amendment must be given to the Secretary at least sixty (60) days before the meeting at which the amendment is to be considered.

8.3 All members must be informed of the proposed amendment when the agenda for that meeting is circulated.

9. Society Funds

9.1 The Society's funds shall be held with a bank or other organisation approved by the Committee.

9.2 All payments shall be authorised by one of two persons nominated by the Committee for that purpose.

10. Dissolution of the Society

10.1 The Society may be dissolved by special resolution of the members at an AGM or general meeting called by the Committee.

10.2 On dissolution of the Society, any balance remaining after the Society's debts have been met will be donated to the Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford for its Department for Continuing Education (the "Department") with a preference that the Department applies it towards education in the field of philosophy.