

# *CAFAS Update No. 76*

*7 June 2013*

*Council for Academic Freedom & Academic Standards*

*[<http://www.cafas.org.uk>] Temporary site: [www.cafas.net](http://www.cafas.net)*

*Meeting:*

*Saturday 22 June 2013*

*2.00 pm*

*Room 253*

*Birkbeck College*

*Malet Street*

*London WC1*

*Underground: Goodge Street, Euston Square, Euston, Russell Square, Holborn*

## **Stop the Witch Hunt**

Defend Max, Jawad and Steve

**Hope and fairness at  
London Met! Drop the  
charges against Steve &  
Max! Wear Green to  
show your support!**

Posted on May 22, 2013

You probably know that Professor Steve Jefferys and Research Administrator Max Watson are both appealing against final written warnings following their involvement in the recruitment, some five years ago, of Jawad Botmeh onto a temporary contract. Jawad is an employee who the University recently confirmed they had full confidence in.

Steve was found to have acted within his delegated authority in making the appointment but was

disciplined for not referring the matter upwards (when Jawad subsequently applied for a permanent role his appointment was 'referred upwards' and was approved). If you can work out what Steve did wrong (particularly as he was found to have made the original appointment 'within his delegated authority') then you deserve a prize.

Max's disciplinary relates to the fact that he could not remember (some five years after) that he had actually taken a phone enquiry relating to the job from Jawad prior to Jawad submitting his formal application. No one has suggested that any written rule of the University's recruitment procedure has been broken.

This simply cannot be right. The University has contrived allegations of misconduct by inventing 'non-rules' that neither Steve or Max have broken. If these disciplinary findings are not quashed on appeal then no one, student or staff, can ever be sure that even when complying with the rules in doing their jobs that charges cannot be brought against them – even up to five years later.

As students and staff of LondonMet we demand hope and fairness. We wish to persuade the Board of Governors to ensure respect for all Londonmet staff by insisting on proper procedures and real charges based only on actual misconduct in all disciplinaries in future. To do this we need to get a moral avalanche

moving and we need your help to do it.

We need your support to do two things. To distribute this leaflet to your colleagues whether they be students or staff, and to wear a green badge for hope and fairness.

We want to leaflet everyone at the University alerting them to this injustice over the two weeks beginning Tuesday 28 May, and we want to encourage people to wear a small plain green badge as a sign of hope and fairness in the week of the Appeals on Wednesday 29th May (Max) and Wednesday June 12th (Steve).

The six months final written warnings follow five weeks of being suspended on 'gross misconduct charges' which were dropped following a huge campaign. Max, Steve and Jawad have been reinstated – they should now be allowed to get on with their jobs and lives. Max and Steve are appealing against 'serious misconduct' charges:

Steve was disciplined, despite:

The VC's clean bill of health for Jawad, confirming Steve's judgement that there was no risk to anyone in Steve's appointing Jawad; and Jawad's background as a victim of a miscarriage of justice; and

Evidence from top immigration lawyers that Jawad always had the right to remain and work in the UK, there being no risk at all of a breach of immigration law; and

HR never raising a single query about the forms Steve filled in, the accusations against Steve are that he exposed the university to risk and didn't fill in forms properly. Max was disciplined, despite:

Jawad being the only candidate who got his application for the part-time casual PSG3 post in by the deadline;

and Max, a PSG4 admin worker, encouraging others to apply;

and Max having met Jawad once prior to his appointment and having answered two telephone and two email queries from him;

and Max being one of three people who interviewed Jawad;

and Steve having responsibility for Casual appointments and being responsible for submitting the Casual Employment Forms,

the accusations against Max are that he unfairly favoured Jawad.

Continuing with these 'charges' is an attack on logic. It is an attack on trade unionism. It is an attack on academic freedom.

**For hope and fairness at London Met! Drop the charges against Steve & Max! Wear Green to show your support!**

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*Full details are on:*

**<http://stopthewitchhunt.wordpress.com>**

**Please circulate widely.**

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## **WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE FUTURE OF CAFAS**

At its last meeting on April 27 CAFAS set up a small working group to examine its future working and to make recommendations to be considered at the next meeting on June 22. The group consists of Aubrey Blumsohn (a former co-chair of CAFAS), John Pickering (former Deputy Vice Chancellor of Portsmouth University and CAFAS member), and Janet Collett, a current member of the Committee.

The working group is, of course, free to make its own recommendations, but it was suggested that it consider how CAFAS might recruit more members who will play an active part in its work, and also how CAFAS might work with other organizations concerned to defend the values of academic freedom and the independence of universities.

Among those organizations are the Council for the Defence of British Universities (CDBU) and the Campaign for the Public University. The CDBU is a particularly important initiative. It was launched last year by Sir Keith Thomas, former President of the British Academy and Sir Martin Rees, former President of the Royal Society. Among its aims are:

'To safeguard the freedom of academics to teach and pursue research and inquiry in the directions appropriate to the needs of their subject' and 'To maintain the principle of institutional autonomy, to encourage academic self-government and to ensure that the function of managerial and administrative staff is to facilitate teaching and research.' These seem to me to reflect the values which CAFAS has represented, and which it is concerned to defend.

Please get in touch with me and other members of the Committee to let us know your views on the future working of CAFAS and how it can defend the freedom of British academics more effectively.

**Eric Barendt, Co-Chair**

# OBITUARY

**John A. Hewitt, MA, PhD**

**1947-2013**

John died suddenly of a heart attack on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013 – shortly after his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Being now officially a pensioner he felt, at least last, completely liberated from his financial problems and free to concentrate exclusively on finishing his new book (see [www.evolution-origin.co.uk](http://www.evolution-origin.co.uk)) and other studies. John passed away just a few days before CAFAS meeting he was going to attend tempted by a possibility that CAFAS might wake up from its lethargic state and become active again in protecting academic freedom and academic standards. He wanted to be part of it by being actively involved again.

John joined CAFAS well before me – in 1999 or even earlier. He frequently contributed to CAFAS Update and created his own websites “A habit of lies” ([www.habitoflies.co.uk](http://www.habitoflies.co.uk)) and “Sex and Philosophy” ([www.SexandPhilosophy.co.uk](http://www.SexandPhilosophy.co.uk)) - still available on the Internet.

John became a CAFAS secretary and designed CAFAS website in 2003 continuing in the former role until April 2008 and in the latter - until AGM in 2011. Most importantly, he tried to help others labelled, like him, “difficult” due to their independent mind and courage to protect the truth and express their views.

John bowed out like several other senior academics before him from his active involvement in CAFAS quietly disappointed by the declining standards of CAFAS itself. This did not prevent him from helping others whenever he was asked for it. Unfortunately, his brilliant mind, which allowed him to make sharp observations and logical connections of facts, was inconvenient not only to his university (Cambridge), but also to some CAFAS Committee members. John himself tells the rest in his short autobiography copied below from one of his websites:

“John Hewitt is a Yorkshireman, born in 1947 in Bradford, where he grew up. He attended a local grammar school and became an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, studying natural sciences. After his first degree he obtained a Ph.D. in molecular biology, also in Cambridge, working with the Nobel prizewinner, Max Perutz.

After doing research in Cornell and Stanford Universities, in the USA, and at the National Institute for Medical Research in London, he returned to Cambridge, as part of the academic staff, teaching biochemistry. He is the author of numerous scientific papers in virology as well as molecular and theoretical biology. *The Architecture of Thought* is his first published book.

Dr. Hewitt has become a fierce critic of the academic

community, in particular of the scientific establishment, which (Perutz **not** included) he often found to be corrupt, unwilling to engage in rational debate, censorious of criticism and dissent and, at times, deliberately deceitful. A description of one instance can be found in his work at “*A Habit of Lies*”.

The conflict between scientific deceit, which is actually quite common, and science's claims of rationality, led to Dr. Hewitt's interest in scientific method and philosophy. This interest, in its turn, led to his studying the application of evolutionary theory to epistemology, the theory of knowledge, and hence to his development of the generalized form of evolutionary theory, bioepistemic evolution, described in "*The Architecture of Thought*." The radical departure underpinning the theory of bioepistemic evolution is that it is based on data, rather than genes, which are treated as a format for the data contained on DNA. The aim of his present work is to describe and develop this form of evolutionary theory particularly its application to our understanding of human nature and origins.

Dr. Hewitt lives in Bedfordshire. He is divorced and raised his son, who is now a young adult.”

John does not live in Bedfordshire any more, but he is and will be remembered by those who appreciated his brilliant mind and persistent search for truth. One can only imagine the extent of his contribution to the field of virology and molecular biology if he were allowed to continue his research in Cambridge University.

**Eva Link**

***CAFAS Update* seeks to provide an open forum for opinion and discussion. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council.**

## CAFAS Website

An investigation is currently taking place concerning the apparent hijacking of our domain name [www.cafas.org.uk](http://www.cafas.org.uk). In the meantime, our website can be accessed via [www.cafas.net](http://www.cafas.net).

**Meetings 2013:  
Birkbeck College**

**22 June 2013      Room 253  
October 2013      tba**

# Defending-Academic-Freedom JISCMail List

Defending-Academic-Freedom JISCMail List is a lightly moderated discussion list for all Cafas members and non-members interested in academic freedom and related concerns.

## **I. Go to Cafas website <http://www.cafas.org>**

1. Open the link to Defending-Academic-Freedom (Email list) on the Home Page. 2. Click on 'Join or Leave the List...' 3. Write your email address and your first and last names in the boxes (complete both) and click on the box that says 'Join...'

## **II. Email JISCMail directly.**

1. Send to: LISTSERVE@JISCMail.ac.uk

2. Leave Subject blank.

3. Send the text: **Subscribe Defending-Academic-Freedom YourFirstName**

**YourLastName**

**YourLastName**

NB: one space between each word. Defending-Academic-Freedom is one hyphenated word. Do not add punctuation or other text.

## **To post a contribution**

**Either:** Send to: Defending-academic-freedom@jiscmail.ac.uk

**Or:** Go to the Cafas website, click on the link and then click on 'Post to the List'.

*Sue Blackwell, [sue.blackwell@gmail.com](mailto:sue.blackwell@gmail.com), and Geraldine Thorpe, [g.thorpe48@gmail.com](mailto:g.thorpe48@gmail.com), are lead List Owners.*

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## NOTICES

**Meeting 2.00pm**

**22 June 2013**

**Room 253**

**Birkbeck College**

### **Agenda**

1. Minutes
2. Matters arising
3. Report of Working Group on CAFAS
4. Relations and co-operation with other academic freedom bodies
5. Website
6. Academic Freedom
7. Campaigns
8. Casework
8. AOB

**Pre-meeting from 1.30pm. All welcome.**

## Committee

### **Co-Chairs:**

#### **John Fernandes**

76 Bois Hall Rd, Addlestone Surrey KT15 2JN

[johnfernandes500@googlemail.com](mailto:johnfernandes500@googlemail.com)

m: 07778828430

#### **Professor Eric Barendt**

74, Upper Park Road,

London NW3 2UX

020 7586 9930; [e.barendt@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:e.barendt@ucl.ac.uk)

### **Secretary:**

#### **Ben Cosin**

3 Halliday Drive DEAL Kent CT14 7AX

01304 361074 [Brcosin1926@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Brcosin1926@yahoo.co.uk)

### **Membership Secretary & Treasurer:**

#### **Dr Eva Link**

17 Highcliffe, Clivedon Court, London W13 8DP

02089982569; [rekgeml1982@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rekgeml1982@yahoo.co.uk)

### **Casework Coordinator:**

#### **Colwyn Williamson**

83 Fairwater Grove West, Llandaff, Cardiff CF5 2JN

m: 07970 838 276

[cafascordinator@gmail.com](mailto:cafascordinator@gmail.com)

### **Cafas Update Compilers:**

#### **Pat Brady**

3 Ingleby Way, Chislehurst BR7 6DD

0208 467 2549; [patrick.brady28@googlemail.com](mailto:patrick.brady28@googlemail.com)

#### **Geraldine Thorpe**

7 Benn Street, London E9 5SU

0208 986 3004; [thorpegm@googlemail.com](mailto:thorpegm@googlemail.com)

### **David Regan Appeal Coordinator:**

#### **Dr Janet Collett**

School of Life Sciences, University of Sussex, Brighton

BN1 9QN

01273 473 717

[j.i.collett@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:j.i.collett@sussex.ac.uk), [janet.collett@gmail.com](mailto:janet.collett@gmail.com)

### **Students' Complaints:**

#### **John Fernandes**

76 Bois Hall Rd, Addlestone Surrey KT15 2JN

[johnfernandes500@googlemail.com](mailto:johnfernandes500@googlemail.com)

07778828430

### **Website**

#### **Ian Hewitt, Rashid Mehmood**

### **Cafas Legal Advisors**

#### **Professor Eric Barendt**

74, Upper Park Road,

London NW3 2UX

020 7586 9930; [e.barendt@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:e.barendt@ucl.ac.uk)

#### **Dr Amir Majid**

32 Forest Drive West, London E11 1LA

0208 556 1990, [drmajid47@googlemail.com](mailto:drmajid47@googlemail.com)

### **Health & Safety**

#### **Ian Hewitt**

[Ian.Hewitt@phoncoop.coop](mailto:Ian.Hewitt@phoncoop.coop)

### **Founding Members**

#### **Michael Cohen**

#### **Colwyn Williamson**

# CONSTITUTION

CAFAS' aims are outlined on the membership form. The full constitution can be obtained from the Secretary or [www.cafas.org.uk](http://www.cafas.org.uk).

CAFAS was founded in February 1994. It depends on subscriptions and an active membership. It meets in March/April, July and September/October.

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## DO YOU BELIEVE

- That academic standards have been dumbed down throughout the higher and further education sector?
- That this decline has been accompanied by the escalating rhetoric of 'excellence' and 'world-class'?
- That the number of contact hours between teachers and students, which the Dearing Report described as a proper measure of the quality of education, has been reduced across the board?
- That there are all sorts of pressures on examiners to pass candidates who would previously have failed?
- That it is far easier to obtain Firsts and Upper Seconds than it used to be?
- That practices which used to be treated as academically unacceptable, or even as cheating, are now widely regarded as normal and inevitable.
- That the effect of the RAE and other pressures on academics is to increase the quantity of research, not the quality, and to restrict innovative and critical thought?
- That there are pressures, often of a commercial nature, to avoid certain areas of research, or to falsify results or to distort their conclusions and significance?
- That, despite lip-service to the importance of teaching, universities and colleges take little account of this in career advancement?
- That academic values have been largely displaced by market values?
- That the stated 'mission' of universities to serve the community has been abandoned in favour of commercial priorities?
- That education in the UK no longer has the status of a right bringing social benefits, but is instead treated as a commodity to be bought and sold?
- That discrimination against women and ethnic minorities is still rife in the

employment and promotion practices of tertiary education, despite the multicultural community it is supposed to serve?

- That the work of the union in fighting discrimination and victimisation can usefully be supplemented by specialised advice and support from an organisation which focuses on issues of academic freedom and standards?

**If you believe that many or most of these propositions are true, you ought to be a CAFAS member and your UCU branch ought to affiliate.**

**Membership Secretary & Treasurer:  
Dr Eva Link, 17 Highcliffe, Clivesdon  
Court, London W13 8DP  
02089982569;  
[rekgemL1982@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rekgemL1982@yahoo.co.uk)**

**If you would like a speaker from CAFAS to address a branch meeting, contact:  
Colwyn Williamson, 07970 838 276  
[cafascoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:cafascoordinator@gmail.com)**

**Next deadline:  
6 September 2013**

Please send letters, news items and articles to:  
Pat Brady [patrick.brady28@googlemail.com](mailto:patrick.brady28@googlemail.com)  
& Geraldine Thorpe  
[thorpegm@googlemail.com](mailto:thorpegm@googlemail.com)

### SUBSCRIPTION

**Dear Members**  
**Some of you have forgotten to pay your membership fee.**  
**Could you please be kind enough to check the date of your last payment on the address label? If you should find there "\*\*\*\*" or "\*\*\*\*!!!" could you please send a cheque without further delay as your contribution is absolutely crucial to the well being of CAFAS.**  
**Many thanks for your contribution.**  
**Your Treasurer and Membership Secretary,  
Eva Link**

