

DEPARTMENT OF MEDIAQUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLANJULY 2011**1. Undergraduate Studies**

	Recommendation in Peer Review Group Report	Department Action to recommendation	Faculty Action to recommendation	Responsibility	Time-frame / Status (From - to)	Issues for Decision by An Bord (if applicable) / Management Response
1.1.	The lecturing staff/student ratio is a critical challenge at undergraduate level. The PRG noted that there are no academic staff available to students on Friday. There is some concern that the limited interface time of lecturers with students creates a vacuum in which students come to depend on technical staff for support and advice. Any review of staffing resources must take this into account at a Faculty level. A review of timetabling in the Department may help to address an element of this problem.	As Friday is designated as a Studio day for all years, academic staff cover is less of an issue. There is technical support available on Fridays. However we are reviewing the staffing arrangements on an ongoing basis and in the light of developments around 3+2(+3), more shared staff from across the Faculty should become available. A timetabling review will take place across the Faculty in preparation of the new 3+2(+3) programmes. We are also looking at tutorial staff exchanges with DIT to provide variety on a cost neutral basis.	Friday has been a day where many of the academic staff utilize their Research Day. There is less academic programming freeing technical, workshop and studio resources in relation to uninterrupted studio/activity time.	Head of Faculty & Heads of Fine Art Departments	Shared Faculty staff resources from 2011 in place to address SSR in advance of the 2013 start date for 3+2 New programme in place for October 2013	.
1.2.	Careful thought will need to be given to defining the acceptable ratio between on-line learning and face-to-face learning. Above all, the PRG are concerned that on-line learning could become merely an expedient response to a shortage of space and staffing. Students strongly expressed to the PRG their desire to physically attend college, which is fundamental to the socialised collegiate experience that a third level education provides.	We are very conscious of the need for students to physically attend and do not see any online learning as a replacement for actual contact but as an augmentation available to students. A fully realised dynamic online learning environment requires just as much time and staff cover to facilitate.		Media academic staff	Ongoing within the academic year	

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<p>1.3. Arising from their discussions with the students and their visit to the Media Department, the PRG were struck by the very limited studio space available to the students, which includes virtually no wall space to show work in progress or source material. Visual practitioners need to be able to display their work-in-progress in dedicated studio spaces so that they can reflect on their own work and benefit from peer critique. In terms of the College's primary mission, the inability of any student to experiment and communicate visually as part of the group student experience should cause real concern.</p>	<p>We have recently reviewed the layout of the studio spaces in consultation with the students and have facilitated the students in building their spaces to suit their requirements; this has resulted in an increase in attendance. This will be an ongoing task as the cohort changes in style and size each year. The re-negotiating of the available spaces each year is part of the student's studio practice and the teamwork and consensus building is valuable. We have also introduced 'Hot desking' to accommodate students who have home studio space and only require occasional college desk space.</p>		Media Staff and Students	Implemented March 2011 and thereafter on an annual basis	

2. Postgraduate Studies

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<p>2.1. The PRG were particularly struck by the view strongly expressed by students at MA level that the <i>taught</i> masters in particular was failing to meet expectations in relation to the balance struck between self-directed learning and formal taught content. The PRG acknowledges, of course, that this is yet another instance where the lack of staff resource manifests itself. We recommend that either additional staff resource is provided and, if significant progress is not possible on this front, that some effort be made to manage expectations through promotional literature and in the way the programme is described and presented.</p>	<p>This issue is being addressed by liaising with the wider MA programme of scheduled workshops and seminars. The MADW course, while being a taught course is quite explicit in its literature as to the extent of the structured elements and the self-directed elements.</p> <p>There is an annual review of all promotional material to publicize any changes in programmes.</p>		<p>MAADW Course Coordinator</p> <p>Head of Department</p>	<p>Implemented in academic session 2010-2011</p> <p>Annually</p>	

3. Research

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<p>3.1. It was unclear to the PRG how staff research was supported within Media. The Group believes it desirable that the College provide supplementary academic cover for both part-time and full-time staff to allow them to avail of research opportunities. This will not only help to enhance staff research profiles but also provide a means of recognition and motivation.</p>	<p>Supplementary cover to enable Staff research is highly desirable but not economically practical at this time. However Media staff have been successful in receiving staff development funding on several occasions and continue to apply for these funds. Individual staff do continue to pursue their personal research in their own time.</p> <p>A Department initiative to form an onsite research group is underway.</p>		<p>Media Staff</p>	<p>Staff Development Fund bi-annual applications</p> <p>Research Group established by October 2013 to support 3+2(+3).</p>	

4. Facilities and Resources

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<p>4.1. The students interviewed by the PRG wished to convey strongly that an erroneous impression appears to prevail that Media students do not need as much physical space as other art students. The PRG endorses the view that Media students are entitled to an equitable and adequate amount of studio space to make work, which may frequently include 3-D elements.</p>	<p>A trial 'hot desking' within 2nd, 3rd and 4th years proved very successful and has freed up studio space. We also have a new Seminar room and project space.</p> <p>As we move to a 3+2(+3) format, some space may be released to enable more physical making in addition to virtual working with computers. In the interim we have access to shared space with the Sculpture Department on a case by case basis.</p>	<p>The accommodation of Media MFA students in John's Lane has created the project space in the Media Dept.</p> <p>Relationships to spatial resources are critical. There is a limited spatial envelope. There needs to be management of student numbers entering the course. There needs to be consideration of the production of space as an arts practice.</p>	<p>Head of Department</p> <p>Head of Faculty</p> <p>College Management</p>	<p>Implemented in 2010/2011</p> <p>October 2013 and in the context of 3+2(+3).</p>	
<p>4.2. The PRG recognises the merits of holding the end of year exhibition within the campus. However, the fact that student study space must be used for the end of year show can be disruptive. The college therefore needs to consider addressing this problem in terms of off-site solutions. One possible avenue of exploration is the opportunity offered by the NCAD-UCD alliance. This could be facilitated further by adopting the principle that the exhibition could be separate from the examination</p>	<p>There have been several innovative exhibitions by students off-site. The College policy has been to try and contain formal exhibitions within the campus. The notion of separating the exam from the exhibition is being researched in the context of the move to 3+2(+3).</p>		<p>Academic Council</p>	<p>October 2013 and in the context of 3+2(+3).</p>	

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4.3. The PRG recognizes that all students have to purchase some equipment in relation to their courses. However, we were struck by the fact that the students we met were spending up to €2,500 on equipment in addition to their registration fee. The PRG recommends that this situation should be closely monitored to ensure that no student is marginalised through their inability to purchase essential equipment.	This is an issue that we are constantly looking at. Our technical support staff spend a lot of time researching equipment deals for the students, We do make it clear to incoming students what the minimum expectation is regarding equipment. We use our limited annual budget to purchase equipment that can be loaned to students as far as possible. This situation has improved dramatically over the last year with an injection of new equipment.		Media Staff	There is ongoing monitoring of the situation	
4.4. Given the significant level of expenditure likely to be incurred by the student, some prior warning of these costs should be given to prospective students.	As mentioned above this is flagged to incoming students in the course of the Core block release and at any enquiry opportunity. Course documentation will be amended to include average materials expenditure.	All Fine Art Departments have developed some degree of Digital Capacity in order to free media resources. The proliferation of digital resources throughout all fine art forms is a significant contemporary development	Head of Faculty Head of Department Technical Officers	September 2011 for new promotional literature and thereafter on an annual basis	

5. Internal/External Relations

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5.1. In achieving greater clarity around the student offering, and the type of graduate emerging from the Media department, some re-examination of promotional literature and handbooks may be needed.	As a consequence of the move to 3+2(+3), the course document is being rewritten to reflect the changed offer of a 5 year programme to MA with the option of an exit after 3 years with a BA Hons.	Currently each Fine Art department produces a handbook with common and particular information. The faculty will investigate centralising information in one handbook.	Head of Department Head of Faculty	Completed by December 2011 as outlined in the 3+2(+3) implementation plan	
5.2. We have already praised the information contained within the self-assessment report, but note some weakness in relation to external stakeholder analysis. There was very little reference to the present economic climate and the challenges this is now presenting to graduates in terms of employment and career opportunity. There was insufficient consideration of the academic competitors within other HEI's to the programmes offered by Media. Defining the unique academic experience and creative ethos offered by programmes within Media would be strengthened through analyzing and comparing them to equivalent offerings in other institutions.	As part of the new course rewriting, we plan to emphasise the strength of the 5 year programme. Our taught MA, MADW already incorporates a placement element, and there is every possibility that similar experiences could be available at undergraduate level. With the new relationship with UCD, we have the opportunity to expand the depth and breadth of our programmes to an academic and technical level beyond our competitors.	External stakeholder experience and analysis is important and will become a more significant component of our academic future.	Media staff with Fine Art Faculty staff	Analysed and defined within the context of 3+2(+3) and implemented by October 2013	

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5.3. Given the practitioner emphasis of the Media programmes, we were surprised to find that internship/placement opportunities are not supported to a greater extent. The PRG feel that there is much more potential to develop placements and internships as a major feature of the student experience, particularly to enhance professional skills within the postgraduate programmes. This will have the added benefit of strengthening a network of support for the Department in the growing cultural and media sectors.	See 5.2 above and we have developing relationships with several media related companies who are interested in facilitating placements for our students. We just need to make the appropriate matches and schedule the timing and duration of such placements. As we undertake the writing of the new 3 year undergraduate course we will incorporate specific learning outcomes that can be a consequence of a placement experience.	The Head of Faculty can actively support the development of Placement opportunities through an existing suite of stakeholders and through expanded effort in relation to scheduling.	Head of Department Head of Faculty	In place for October 2013	
5.4. The vagueness of the references within the report to relations with “the art world” prompts the PRG to encourage the Media department to work at proactively enhancing and extending its profile with contemporary art institutions, nationally and internationally. This might involve, for example, increased staff and student publications and exhibitions in contemporary art institutions or situations, and possibly greater involvement with the Head of Research.	All of these suggestions are being actively considered and pursued. Media is in discussion with IMOCA, Block T and Moxie Studios with a view to collaborative ventures. Media is also active in developing exhibition opportunities for students. Media is ring fencing some funds to support a ‘10 years of Media’ publication during 2011/2012.		Media Staff with Head of Research and Postgraduate Development	Ongoing	

6. Staffing and Staff Development

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6.1. Anthony Hobbs is the only full-time member of staff in Media and he is working in an Acting Head capacity with responsibility for 85 students in a growing Department. This is both unsatisfactory and unsustainable. The PRG recommends that the acting position be definitively resolved.	This position is now on a three year fixed term contract basis which is acceptable.		Human Resources	Implemented January 2011	
6.2. It was drawn to our attention that the budget for visiting lecturers to the Media department is virtually completely taken up with funding examination staffing costs. Many contributors emphasised to us that in the context of a practitioner programme, the richness and diversity of input from visiting practitioners and lecturers is vital. The desirability of having these practitioners available for tutorials was also stressed. Notwithstanding the resource constraints, we think this is a worthwhile goal and would fulfil the promise offered in the programme documentation.	We are looking at ways to expand the diversity of tutorial input by engaging with the wider Faculty and College cohort of tutors and also developing no cost occasional tutor exchanges with other Colleges. The Media alumni have expressed a strong desire to be involved in a visiting lecture programme		Head of Department	Ongoing and in the context of 3+2(+3)	
6.3. To ensure that EPL/part-time staff are practically facilitated to participate in professional development through attending training and skills courses, every effort should be made to ensure that staff cover/resources are available.	Every effort is made to try and facilitate requests by part-time staff to undertake staff training opportunities as they arise. The College has made staff time buy out possible to facilitate meetings connected with course development.	Media staff regularly apply to Staff development (and are successful in being awarded training and skills components) Faculty Forum meetings are positioned at lunchtimes and are scheduled on different days to gather the opinions and inputs of part-time staff.	Head of Department Head of Faculty College Management	Ongoing and in the context of new course developments.	