Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Summary of the Periodic Review of Film, Theatre and Television

Programmes covered by the Periodic Review

1  The programmes covered by the Periodic Review were:
   • BA Film & Theatre
   • BA English Literature and Film & Theatre
   • BA Art and Film & Theatre
   • BA Film & Theatre and German
   • BA Film & Theatre and Italian
   • BA Film & Theatre & History of Art
   • BA Television and Film & Theatre
   • BA Television and English Literature
   • BA Television and English Language
   • MA (Research) Film Studies
   • MA (Research) Television Studies
   • MA (Research) Theatre

Date of the Periodic Review

2  The Periodic Review took place on 14 and 15 December 2010.

Objectives of the Periodic Review

3  The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:
   • Review the effectiveness of the means by which Schools manage and assure the academic standards of the degree programmes under Review and the quality of the learning opportunities provided;
   • Enable the Department of Film, Theatre and Television to consider how they might enhance their portfolio of taught programmes and the learning experience of their students, and to consider the effectiveness of their approach;
   • Consider the future plans of the Department of Film, Theatre and Television for their taught programmes
   • Enable an independent Panel to review this self-evaluation through consideration of documentation and discussions with staff and students;
   • Provide a means by which the Department of Film, Theatre and Television were able to reflect on the success, enhancement and future development of the taught programmes that they offered;
• Identify examples of good and effective practice;
• Consider whether the programmes under Review should continue to run for a further or initial period of up to six years, as appropriate;

Conduct of the Periodic Review

4 The Periodic Review was conducted by a Panel chaired by the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning for the Faculty of Social Sciences, with two internal members of academic staff (from the School of Arts & Communication Design and the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development), and two external members of academic staff (from Queen Mary University of London and the University of Warwick). The Joint-Faculty Senior Administrative Officer acted as Secretary to the Review Panel.

The Panel received a range of documentation in advance of the Review, made available on a BlackBoard Organisation site, including a Self-Evaluation Document prepared by the Department, a copy of the Pathfinder report, relevant programme specifications, programme handbooks, and External Examiners’ reports. During the Review visit, the Panel considered extensive further documentation, and met with the majority of staff and current students from the Department, along with recent graduates.

Evidence base

5 The Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including programme specifications, module descriptions, programme handbooks, External Examiners’ reports and the School’s responses, minutes of relevant committee meetings (including the Staff – Student Committees and Boards of Studies meetings), Annual Programme Reports and statistical data, and examples of student work. The Panel received feedback from staff, students and recent graduates from the School.

External peer contributors to process

6 External members of the Review Panel were appointed by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Board for Teaching and Learning, after considering nominations from the School of Arts & Communication Design. The role of these External members was to provide subject expertise and to provide an expert judgement of the validity and appropriateness of the programmes under Review.

Overview of the main characteristics of the programmes covered by the Review

7 The programmes under review were noted for their integrity; offering students a solid base to develop into independent learners. The programmes unique combination of all aspects of the Department’s areas of interest, Film, Theatre and Television, provide students with a diverse and exciting learning experience. The Department fosters a strong sense of belonging in its staff, current and past students.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

8 The Panel identified a number of areas of innovation and good practice, including:
   (a) the integrity of the Department’s undergraduate and postgraduate programmes;
(b) the Department’s Blue Sky meetings which enable a strategic overview of all areas of the Department, including teaching and learning;
(c) the range of diverse assessment methods offered in the programmes;
(d) the co-ordination of submission dates across the Department in order to avoid additional pressure on students;
(e) the new coursework feedback form; introduced following reflection and a desire to improve the provision of feedback for students;
(f) the Student Arts Fund; the opportunity this offers to students and the vetting process by the Student-Staff Committee;
(g) the Teaching handbook;
(h) the variety and innovative use of blogs, Facebook, twitter and general management of Web 2.0.
(i) the Department’s interview days which enable applicants to engage with the Department from an early stage in the process;
(j) the sense of community fostered between staff and all students, including joint honours students and the pastoral support offered by all staff;
(k) the scope of the Department’s DVD/Video resources, the development of which the Panel strongly supports;
(l) the Real Jobs initiative as an example of innovative ways to enhance students’ employability;
(m) the engagement of alumni in the Department, including alumni talks to current students.

Conclusions on quality and standards
9 The Panel is assured of the quality and standards of the programmes that have been reviewed, that the intended learning outcomes of the programmes are being obtained by students and that the programmes specifications are appropriate.

Conclusions on currency and validity of the programmes under Review
10 The Panel agreed that the degree programmes offered by the School, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, met the stated aims and objectives, and were of appropriate standard and quality. The learning outcomes of the degrees were being met by students, and the degrees prepared graduates well for employment. The School takes active steps to review and enhance its programme provision.

Recommendations
11 The Panel recommends to the Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning that, subject to the School addressing the issues listed below, the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years:
BA Film & Theatre
BA English Literature and Film & Theatre
BA Art and Film & Theatre
BA Film & Theatre and German (withdrawn - all students to have completed by June 2012)
BA Film & Theatre and Italian (withdrawn - all students to have completed by June 2012)
BA Film & Theatre & History of Art (withdrawn - all students to have completed by June 2012)
BA Television and Film & Theatre (withdrawn - all students to have completed by June 2014)
BA Television and English Literature (withdrawn – all students to have completed by June 2013)
BA Television and English Language (withdrawn – all students to have completed by June 2013)
MA (Research) Film Studies
MA (Research) Television Studies
MA (Research) Theatre

Recommendations:

Advisable

(a) The stand-out concern of the Panel was the Department’s inability to effectively present the reality of its exciting and distinctive programmes. The Department must take ownership of what it is already doing, self-identify and reflect it as exciting and unique both internally and externally. The Department should address this both within the Department but also through working with the University marketing team, to clearly present its unique selling points and how these can be conveyed across the university and beyond;

(b) The Department should review their teaching and learning documentation; to proof read, ensuring consistency and the use University standard terminology;

(c) In light of advisable recommendation (a), the Department needs to review how it can amplify attractive and unique aspects of the curricula, beyond close reading and critical practice, by expanding on the abstract and advertising the range of less conventional forms of performance, for example, embedded in the programmes;

(d) The Department is strongly encouraged to revise the BA programme to enable provision for joint honours students or students transferring into Part 2 to be able to undertake any practical options in the latter years of the programme;

(e) The Department must make arrangements for the enforcement of the University’s policy of anonymous marking of coursework;

(f) The Department needs to review its peer review procedures, particularly how these can be more effectively achieved without the considerable resource load on all staff;

(g) The Department is advised to further consider arrangements for increased technical support both during and after the move to the new building.

Desirable

(h) The Department should think about how it articulates what is feedback and when it should be obtained and how it can manage expectations, particularly through the provision of realistic deadlines for when coursework and feedback will be returned;

(i) The Department should review how it evidently links assessment criteria to module and programme outcomes both verbally and in the documentation provided to students;
(j) In recognition of the good practice of Interview Days for applicants, the Department should reflect on provision for parents, such as a parallel programme;

(k) The Department has a loyal set of graduates which it increasingly links with. Many graduate profiles of work in related industry should be utilized in the admissions process and throughout the programme to a much greater extent.

(l) In recognition of the good practice of the Department’s DVD/Video library, to review how best to manage these materials with the most appropriate use of resources in the new building and change of campus;

(m) The Department should review ways of constructing a four-year programme to allow for and encourage students to undertake a year in industry;

The Panel requests that the University consider the following recommendation:

(a) In recognition of the growing importance of national student surveys, such as the NSS, to formalise University level explicit engagement of its results and how they can be improved. For example, a specific section in the Annual Programme Reports. To also, consider ways improvement actions undertaken as a result of the feedback on such surveys, can be explicitly conveyed to students.