

Periodic Review of the Department of Film, Theatre & Television

Introduction

- 1 An internal review of programmes in the Department of Film, Theatre and Television was held on 3 and 4 November 2015. The members of the Panel were:
 - Professor Richard Mitchell, School of Systems Engineering (*Chair*)
 - Dr Aylish Wood, University of Kent (*external member, subject specialist*)
 - Dr Aoife Monks, Queen Mary University of London (*external member, subject specialist*)
 - Ms Ameenah Allen, Freelance Film Producer and Production Manager (*external professional member*)
 - Dr Amanda Callaghan, School of Biological Sciences (*internal member*)
 - Dr Laura Bennett, School of Law (*internal member*)
 - Ms Bukii Smart, Part 3 BSc Accounting and Finance, University of Reading (*student panel member*)
 - Ms Jennie Chetcuti, Centre for Quality Support and Development (*Secretary*).
- 2 The Panel met the following members of staff:
 - Professor Jonathan Bignell, Head of School
 - Dr John Gibbs, Head of Department
 - Dr Lisa Purse, Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning
 - Ms Alison Butler, Associate Professor
 - Dr Simone Knox, Senior Tutor, Widening Participation Officer and Disability Officer
 - Dr Louise LePage, Admissions Tutor
 - Professor Anna McMullan, Departmental Director of Research
 - Dr Teresa Murjas, Director of Postgraduate Research
 - Professor Lucia Nagib, Co-ordinator of MA programmes
 - Dr Graham Saunders, co-Programme Director of the MA Samuel Beckett, Part 1 Convenor
 - Professor Lib Taylor, School Director of Research.
- 3 The Panel met current students who represented the following degree programmes:
 - BA Film;
 - BA English Literature and Film & Theatre;
 - BA Film & Theatre
 - MA Creative Enterprise.

- 4 The Panel met recent graduates who had graduated from the following degree programmes between 2012 and 2015:
- BA Film & Theatre
 - BA Television and Film & Theatre
 - MA (Research) Film Studies.

General observations

- 5 The Review Panel met with a range of teaching and learning staff and wishes to express its gratitude to all those who participated in the Review process. The staff made the Panel welcome, provided a useful tour of the Department's impressive facilities and engaged fully with the process. The Panel commends the Department for its provision of a well-organised and comprehensive Blackboard organisation, which facilitated members' access to documentation before and during the Review visit.
- 6 The Panel welcomed the involvement of current and former students, who gave a very positive endorsement of the programmes under review and were a credit to the Department and, indeed, to the University. The Panel wishes to thank them for their valuable input.
- 7 The Panel was particularly impressed by the Department's provision of pastoral care and by the strong sense of community which extended to staff and students and across all levels of study [**Good practice (a)**]. Students praised staff for being approachable and friendly and felt that they were part of a "close family". They were made to feel valued whilst at the University and remained loyal to the Department following graduation.
- 8 The Panel noted the particular context within which the Review took place; the Film, Theatre & Television (FTT) Project had been established by the University in September 2014 to review the Department's current and potential range of teaching and learning activities, partly to enhance student recruitment. This followed on from, and was complementary to, the Department's recent internal review of its undergraduate provision which had led to the launch of new undergraduate degree programmes from 2014-15. The Panel welcomed the revised undergraduate provision, and the associated success in recruitment to those degrees. It was also pleased to note the introduction of taught MA provision from 2015-2016, replacing the MAs by Research.

Academic standards of the programmes

Educational aims of the provision and the learning outcomes

- 9 The Panel was provided with evidence in the form of programme specifications, programme handbooks, module descriptions, External Examiners' reports, annual programme reports and samples of students' work. These, along with discussions with staff and students and the Panel's own deliberations, enabled the Panel to confirm that the academic standards of programmes were being met.
- 10 The Panel confirmed that the educational aims and intended learning outcomes of programmes and their constituent modules were set at the appropriate level within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and informed by QAA subject benchmarking statements. External Examiners' reports verified that the aims and learning outcomes were attained by students.

- 11 The Panel considered that the Department's educational aims were ambitious, well-grounded in pedagogical principles, and offered its students an excellent programme of study [**Good practice (b)**]. This was clearly evident from an inspection of student work, and from the discussions with current students, staff and alumni, all of whom communicated the value of the aims and intended learning outcomes of the programmes as well as the innovative and highly engaging module content.
- 12 However, the Panel considered that the educational aims and learning outcomes of the programmes and the content of modules were less well communicated by the programme documentation. Despite the recommendation of the previous Periodic Review that the Department "consider the communication of module content to be as specific as possible", the Panel considered that the module descriptions provided a largely abstract and generic summary of the content and area to be covered. It also considered that the recent revisions to module titles had resulted in titles that tended to obscure the very good work being done on those modules. For example, the Part 1 *Practical 1: Making Meaning* module focussed on representations of conflict in performance but this remained unclear from the module title and description. The Panel noted that the use of A and B in module titles was at times misleading, and that the description of the relevant modules in some cases did not clearly differentiate the content until several paragraphs in. It would be difficult for a potential applicant or a current student considering their choice of optional modules to discern the excellent material contained in the modules either from the module titles or from the module descriptions available on the website. In relation to the Department's taught postgraduate provision, the Panel considered that some further indication of the advanced nature of the study being undertaken was needed in the module descriptions to differentiate the material from related undergraduate modules.
- 13 The Panel **recommends** that the Department communicate more clearly the diverse and ambitious range of content covered in its modules, by using more concrete and specific module titles and descriptions which better articulate the differences between modules and emphasise questions of critical debate and interrogation [**Advisable recommendation (a)**]. Staff may wish to consider communicating the more specific learning outcomes of the module first, before listing the more generic ones. The Panel noted that a University-wide curriculum framework review process was underway and suggests that the proposed review of module titles and descriptions be undertaken as a part of this wider process.

Curricula and assessment

Curricula

- 14 The Panel considered that the curriculum was designed to be engaging and the undergraduate students who met with the Panel were very enthusiastic about their experience of the programmes. In respect of the film studies aspects of the curriculum, the Panel was pleased to note that the recently introduced options in film and television broadened the choice for students, while keeping in place a rigorous programme of study. The critical and theoretical elements of the programmes introduced students to a historically grounded study of film in the contexts of American, European and World Cinemas, while at the same time challenging the construction of those terms. The critical and theoretical elements of the programmes also offered students the opportunity to approach television as a distinct screen practice with an individual history of practice and study.
- 15 The Panel wishes to congratulate the teaching and technical staff on the rich range of materials covered in the theatre studies aspects of the curriculum. The students were

exposed to an exciting range of theatre forms and practices through critical engagement and practice. It was clear to the Panel that they were offered a carefully structured programme of study that developed their critical skills incrementally over three years.

- 16 The Panel **commends** as a particular feature of good practice the excellent coverage of global theatre forms and the critical questions raised by their socio-historical contexts [**Good practice (c)**]. The area of global and diverse forms of performance and identity was embedded in first year work in modules such as *Making Meaning*, continued through Part 2 in modules such as *Alternative Forms in Theatre*, and emerged very powerfully at Part 3 in modules such as *World Theatres* and *Representing Conflict on Stage and Screen*. Staff gave a very good account of how they managed the discomforts and complexities raised by this material in the classroom, recognising how the dynamics of students' own identities needed to be managed and supported. However, whilst it was clear to the Panel that this excellent global reach and diverse curriculum offered a rich and ambitious course of study for students, this material was less clearly evident in the programme documentation and marketing materials (please see Advisable recommendation (a)).
- 17 The Panel welcomed the development of the BA Film and BA Theatre alongside the BA Film & Theatre as an exciting expansion of the Department's provision which gave students the opportunity to develop further depth and breadth in their knowledge of a single art form. The Panel noted that the focus of the BA Theatre restricted its historical coverage to the 20th and 21st centuries, which retained the structure of mapping theatre history onto the early history of cinema. It **recommends** that the Department take the advent of the BA Theatre as an opportunity to scrutinise the pedagogical logic, and articulate the fundamental values and principles that undergird the study of theatre as a discrete subject in the Department [**Advisable recommendation (b)**]. Staff should be encouraged to consider whether modules should be renewed or entirely replaced in order to introduce the longer histories of theatre as a means to contextualise and enrich the students' understanding of modern and contemporary practices.
- 18 The Panel **commends** the Department on the recent enhancement of its provision of practice modules. The Department had responded to student feedback in the design of the new and revised undergraduate programmes, which offered more flexibility and choice to students and extended the opportunity for joint honours students to access practical modules that had previously only been available to single honours students, whilst maintaining a pathway for students who did not want to follow the practice route [**Good practice (d)**]. The Panel considered that the practice modules were well designed to support independent and self-directed learning in film, theatre and television as well as mixed productions. It considered that the current format of individually-led final year projects provided an excellent experience for students. However, the Panel raised a concern about the future sustainability of this approach in the context of increasing student numbers in the Department. The Panel noted that the new appointments in Screen and Performance Practices and Industries (please see also paragraph 55 below) would be essential in maintaining support for the practice modules.
- 19 The Panel considered that the new MA in Creative Enterprise, taught in conjunction with the School of Law and the Henley Business School (HBS) and running for the first time in 2015-16, offered a distinct programme of study. The taught postgraduate students whom the Panel met were positive about the opportunities offered by its interdisciplinarity. Given the distinctiveness of the programme, the Panel suggests

that the Department consider indicating in the relevant module descriptions how the film modules link to the modules owned by Law and HBS.

Assessment and feedback

- 20 The Panel found evidence of a range of good practices in the assessment culture of the Department, including the tables of coursework deadlines produced on an annual basis within and across year groups and programme cohorts, which were useful for staff planning and for assisting students to manage their workload. The Panel **commends** the range of diverse assessment methods which are employed in the programmes to good effect and have been praised by External Examiners [**Good practice (e)**]. These include essays, oral presentations, practice-based presentations, portfolios, timed essays, blogs and video essays. The Panel considered that the assessment schemes offered a rigorous and structured approach to critical practice.
- 21 The Panel noted that for the dissertation modules at BA and MA level, the entire mark currently rested on one final piece of writing. It **recommends** that the Department review the assessment design of dissertation modules at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level and consider incorporating an introductory assessment to spread the burden of marks and embed formal feedback earlier in the process, in order to prepare students for the final piece of work [**Advisable recommendation (c)**].
- 22 The Panel noted that the Department did not currently send all of its examination papers to the External Examiners in advance. It **recommends** that the Department ensure that all papers for written examinations are sent to the External Examiners in advance for scrutiny and approval, in accordance with the University's *Code of Practice on the External Examining of Taught Programmes* [**Advisable recommendation (d)**].
- 23 The Panel also noted that the re-assessment arrangements currently implemented within the Department for modules which comprised both practical and written elements were not entirely consistent with the guidance stated in the *Examinations and Assessment Handbook* that, "Where a student is re-assessed in a module, the re-assessment should be capable of yielding a mark of 100% prior to any capping". However, it acknowledged that the Department might not wish to increase the number of practical re-assessments, for both logistical and educational reasons. The Panel **recommends** that the Department reflect on its re-assessment regime in light of the guidance contained in the *Examinations and Assessment Handbook*. Should the Department decide to maintain its current arrangements, it should provide a rationale for this decision [**Advisable recommendation (e)**].
- 24 Discussions with current students confirmed that assessment criteria were communicated to students in a timely manner. The Panel noted that different criteria were used for different forms of assessment. It welcomed the recent inclusion of assessment criteria on all assessment briefs and was also pleased to note that staff discussed the criteria with students in class.
- 25 The Panel noted that recent National Student Survey scores and qualitative comments indicated that there was still work to be done in respect of the promptness and quality of feedback and the communication of assessment criteria. The Panel noted that the Department was working to clarify students' understanding of the 15-working day turnaround time and supports the Department's plans to consult with students on the issue of marking criteria awareness via the Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLIC). The planned introduction of electronic marking and feedback was largely welcomed by staff and students and it was hoped that this might further improve the efficiency of feedback.

- 26 The Panel noted that, since the previous Periodic Review in 2010, the Department had made a number of revisions to the standard Coursework Report Form. The previous Periodic Review Report had suggested that the guidance notes issued to students with the Coursework Report Form include a procedure for receiving further comment on the information on the form and what strategies needed to be employed to improve the student's ongoing work. The Panel saw some examples of feedback which identified areas for further improvement, and the students who met with the Panel confirmed that they were generally satisfied with the feedback they had received and that they felt comfortable approaching staff for further clarification. However, the Panel noted a lack of consistency between markers in the quality and level of feedback provided to students. It considered that in some instances, the amount of feedback provided was inadequate and the tone was overly critical. The table of scaled, paired items within the Coursework Feedback Form, which was intended to help students rapidly and clearly identify areas of strength and areas for improvement, was often used as a substitute for more detailed written comments, and on other occasions it was not employed at all. In light of the above issues, the Panel **recommends** that the Department revisit the Coursework Report Form and guidance issued to staff to ensure that all staff are providing high quality feedback to students [**Advisable recommendation (f)**].

Use of student management information

- 27 The Panel was pleased to note that the Department made appropriate use of data from a range of sources, including External Examiners' Reports, student module evaluations, admissions data, classifications data and the NSS. It was clear that the Teaching & Learning Committee, Board of Studies and SSLC gave consideration to relevant datasets and that key issues were addressed in Annual Programme Reports.
- 28 The Panel identified as a particular feature of good practice the effective working relationship between the Department and its External Examiners [**Good practice (f)**]. It was clear to the Panel that comments made by the External Examiners had been carefully considered and had informed a number of recent changes, which had then been reported back to the relevant External Examiner. For example, in response to an observation made by one of the External Examiners in his Report for 2013-14, the Department had reflected on the length and complexity of essay questions for different modules and individual staff members had agreed to adjust their approach where appropriate.
- 29 The Panel confirmed that the Department had appropriate mechanisms in place for student representation, including the SSLC which met three times a year and provision for student representatives on the Board of Studies, in accordance with University policy. Student representatives made use of private groups on Facebook to canvas opinion and to feedback outcomes from discussions at the SSLC. The undergraduate students who met with the Panel were familiar with how the SSLC operated and student representatives appeared to be effective in representing the views of the wider student body. The Panel saw evidence that issues raised at SSLC meetings were acted upon and the outcomes reported back at subsequent meetings. It noted that the number of staff attending SSLC meetings had been reduced in order to increase openness and student participation in the discussions.
- 30 The Panel considered that the Department had a robust system in place for reflecting on student module evaluation and making appropriate changes; module evaluations were summarised in module convenors' reports which were then discussed at Programme Review and Planning meetings. In addition to the formal methods in

place for eliciting student views, students were encouraged to provide feedback in other less formal contexts, including at the regular cohort-specific Senior Tutor Talks and the newly introduced termly meetings for joint honours students. In these ways, students were able to influence their learning/programme(s).

- 31 The Panel noted the relatively high number of meetings which took place within the Department and the length of the annual planning meetings, to which all staff were required to contribute. It considered that there appeared to be some overlap between the business discussed by the various boards and committees, and that the continuity of business between meetings was not always clearly documented. The Panel also noted that while brief references were made in the minutes of Teaching & Learning Committee and Board of Studies meetings to the termly “blue sky” meetings, discussions which took place at these meetings did not appear to be formally documented or reported back. The Panel **recommends** that the Department take steps to ensure the continuity of business between meetings of the Teaching & Learning Committee, Board of Studies, SSLC and blue sky meetings via the allocation of action points and regular formal reporting between the various committees [**Desirable recommendation (a)**]. It also **recommends** that the Department review its planning process [**Desirable recommendation (b)**].

Quality of learning opportunities offered by the programmes

Teaching and learning

- 32 The Panel was impressed with the quality of teaching and learning in the Department. It noted that current students, graduates and External Examiners were very satisfied with the provision. The Panel saw evidence of appropriate engagement with, and active participation by, students in their learning.
- 33 The Panel would like to **commend** the Department for its provision during Enhancement Week [**Good practice (g)**]. It appeared to be offering exciting and engaging activities for students that aligned with the ethos of the week, including a storyboarding masterclass and a playwriting session. Discussions with students confirmed that they had found these activities both interesting and useful. The Panel was pleased to note that students had contributed to the design of Enhancement Week activities for 2015-16 via discussions at the SSLC.
- 34 The Panel also wishes to **commend** as an example of good practice the Department’s Teaching Handbook, which provided excellent guidance for staff, including a section which set out the responsibilities of module convenors [**Good practice (h)**]. At least two of the internal panellists will be considering whether some variation of the Handbook might be usefully adopted in their home Schools.
- 35 The Panel wished to congratulate staff for embedding theatre-going as a key aspect of the curriculum that exposed students to a rich range of theatre forms and contexts. The Panel noted that the experiences from these mandatory trips were invaluable and essential to students’ learning. However, undergraduate students had expressed concerns regarding the additional costs incurred through these trips. Although the Programme Handbook advised students to budget for theatre trips, feedback indicated that not all students had been explicitly made aware of the financial costs in advance of attending the programme. The Panel **recommends** that the Department consider:
- (a) ways to communicate more clearly to prospective students the additional costs associated with theatre trips (both in terms of tickets and transport costs); for

example, by including additional information on the Departmental website and in publicity materials at Open Days;

- (b) alternative transport options for theatre trips, including minibus hire which might be paid for by the Department;
 - (c) further emphasising to current and prospective students that all theatre trips would form the subject of detailed class discussion, and that the majority would be connected to assessment for the relevant modules. This would help students to recognise the value of this essential aspect of their studies [**Advisable recommendation (g)**].
- 36 The Panel considered that the Department had a very impressive track record of attracting research funding for ambitious research projects; achievements that reflected the rich cultures of research in the Department. However, apart from a brief reference in the Self-Evaluation Document, neither the documentation provided to the Panel nor the website offered much insight into the ways in which research was embedded centrally in the Department's pedagogic practices and cultures. Discussions with undergraduate students revealed that they viewed themselves as rigorous scholars and practitioners, that they were clearly aware of the research interests of staff, and that they valued the ways in which innovative staff research informed teaching. It was difficult for the Panel to discern the extent to which taught postgraduate students were engaging with research given the very recent introduction of the MA Creative Enterprise and the size of the current cohort. From the Panel's discussions with current postgraduate students, it was clear that some were engaging with research seminars and talking to potential supervisors, while others saw little value in doing so.
- 37 Overall, the Panel considered that more could be done to communicate the central role that research played as a foundation for the Department's teaching and creative practice to the outside world. The Panel **recommends** that the Department review its website and other marketing materials to make clearer the role of research in relation to teaching and creative practice [**Advisable recommendation (h)**]. It also suggests that the taught postgraduate student community might need further embedding within the research culture of the Department.

Student admission and progression

- 38 The Panel was pleased to note that the Department had been highly successful in attracting a good number of excellent recruits onto its undergraduate programmes for 2015-16. Nevertheless, the Panel **recommends** that the Department continue to review its website and marketing material to make the content more attractive and to make clearer to prospective students the academic nature of the degrees [**Advisable recommendation (i)**].
- 39 The Panel reaffirms the commendation made in the previous Periodic Review Report in relation to the Interview Day which all applicants are required to attend in advance of receiving an offer [**Good practice (i)**]. The Panel supported the conclusions of the recent FTT Project, which had recognised the value of the Interview Day as a "valuable conversion tool", providing an opportunity for a useful two-way dialogue from an early stage in the process. The Panel was pleased to note that the Department had introduced a parallel programme of events for parents in line with one of the recommendations of the previous Periodic Review.
- 40 In light of the small number of students currently enrolled on the MA Creative Enterprise film pathway and the failure to recruit sufficient numbers to enable the MA

Samuel Beckett: Archive, Text, Performance to run in 2015-16, the Panel **recommends** that the Department consider how to better promote its MA provision by reviewing its publicity materials, including the website, and considering other recruitment tools, such as a Massive Open Online Course [**Advisable recommendation (j)**].

- 41 The Panel confirmed that student progression was appropriate to the stated aims of the programmes and consistent with the attainment of intended learning outcomes. No progression problems were evident, and the proportion of students attaining in each of the degree classifications was in line with national trends.
- 42 The Panel considered that academic support for students was consistent with the overall aims of the degree programme, although the Panel questioned the ethics of targeting students on borderlines for special encouragement. Further discussion with staff clarified that Personal Tutors were tasked with reviewing the feedback received for assessments and discussing areas for improvement with all students, including those on borderlines.
- 43 In relation to the written guidance provided to students, the Panel **recommends** that the Department include in the Programme Handbook more specific information on pathways through the degrees in order to better inform module selection; for example, information on how the modules in various subject areas and Parts link together and which are the most appropriate for particular career paths [**Desirable recommendation (c)**].
- 44 The Panel wishes to **commend** the quality of pastoral care provided to students, including Personal Tutor meetings and the role of the Senior Tutor. It considered that the use of cohort-specific Senior Tutor talks, which were embedded across the programmes and intended to communicate key degree milestones and related advice, offered excellent and sustained support to students at all levels and enhanced the personal tutorial system with a broader collective reflective pastoral care experience for each year group [**Good practice (j)**]. The Panel also noted that careers advice was effectively integrated into the programmes.

Learning resources

- 45 The Panel confirmed that the collective expertise of academic staff was suitable for the effective delivery of the curriculum and for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. It welcomed the dynamic use of learning resources and considered that staff were well-equipped in their areas to support the diverse needs of the student cohort. The Panel noted the strong technical and administrative support within the Department, which played an important role in relation to pastoral care and the student experience, and the highly effective communication between academic, administrative and technical staff and students. Current students and recent graduates confirmed that they (had) felt well-supported in this respect. The Panel acknowledged the Department's concerns about the changes that were likely to arise as a result of the Professional and Administrative Services Review, in particular the potential loss of specialist technical support and administrative staff *in situ* who had developed a deep subject-specific knowledge base. Such concerns were heightened in the context of growing student numbers.
- 46 The Department had moved to the purpose-built Minghella Building on the Whiteknights campus in 2011, following the previous Periodic Review. The Panel considered that the new building and its facilities, along with associated specialist technical staff, provided excellent support for students' learning and for the development of practical film, theatre and television skills needed in industry. The

Panel supports the plans to rename the building as the Minghella Studios and to 'dress' it in order to better reflect the activity within the building and to raise the profile of Film, Theatre and Television on campus. The Panel was impressed with the array of learning resources available to students, including several flexible theatres, a film cinema, an impressive working television studio with Green Screen, and editing suites, and with the opportunities provided for students to make use of these [Good practice (k)]. It expressed some concern about the increased pressure on these resources that might arise from increasing numbers of students.

- 47 The Panel wished to highlight the importance of allocating sufficient funds to ensure regular maintenance and upgrading of the Department's equipment. Replacement equipment, including cameras and editing software, would need to keep close enough pace with industry standards to ensure that the programmes remained competitive. The Panel noted the value of the Department's current strategy of using different kinds of cameras (including iPads and DSLRs). However, the Panel considered that the Department would benefit from one, or possibly two, higher-end cameras i.e. an ARRI ALEXA (cinema standard), as are currently available to students at a number of competitor institutions, for use in Part 3 productions. This would facilitate the production of higher quality final films, thereby assisting the Department in pursuing festival routes for the exhibition of student productions. The Panel noted that students would have to be carefully trained in the use of such equipment.
- 48 In relation to post-production resources, undergraduate students had access to Final Cut Pro X and Masters students to the higher-spec Avid. The Panel noted that issues with sound quality were relatively common in short films, particularly with location sound re-recording. It suggests that the Department consider ways to address this potential issue, such as a masterclass from a sound recordist and designer. The Panel noted that technology in this field was progressing rapidly such that it was possible to achieve a professional grade working from your own home. It also noted that the British Film Institute offered grants to small production companies on Digital Cinema Package (DCP) making and suggests that the Department consider how it might access these types of fast-moving, growing technology.
- 49 The Panel was satisfied with the availability of library resources. It considered that the Library was well-stocked, although the Part 1 students might need further encouragement to exploit the available resources at an earlier stage during their studies.

Employer engagement

- 50 The Panel welcomed the work undertaken by the Department since the last Periodic Review and the initiatives currently underway in relation to preparing students for the transition to work. This included the creation of the *Creative Industries and Professional Development* module at Part 2, the alumni mentoring scheme and the Senior Tutor Talks. The Panel was pleased to note that visiting creative industries professionals were embedded in a range of modules across the programmes, which it considered to be excellent practice. It encourages the Department to aim high in terms of potential employers involved in the programmes.
- 51 The Panel considered that the programmes enabled students to build highly desirable skills for employment. Students gained experience as project managers, directing and producing their practical work, and a strong understanding of practical team work through working collaboratively on other students' projects. The Panel was pleased to note that the graduates whom it met felt that the content and skills learnt during their degree, alongside extra-curricular opportunities within the Department, had

helped them to gain employment and develop personal confidence to face the working world. The Panel wishes to **commend** the Department's engagement with its alumni [**Good practice (l)**]. It was impressed by the loyalty and enthusiasm of the alumni and suggests that they should be more evident in the Department's marketing material.

- 52 The Panel noted that the mentoring scheme, which paired Part 2 students with alumni working in a range of industries, had worked very well in some cases; however, some students/graduates who met with the Panel expressed dissatisfaction with their pairing. The Panel suggests that the Department endeavour to ensure a closer matching of students to mentors and that it consider widening the scheme; for example, some mentors might be able to offer opportunities to more than one student. The Panel noted that alumni were well-placed in terms of understanding the degree-specific skills attained by the students. It also noted that other opportunities for employers and industry professionals to meet students, such as industry masterclasses within the Department, could offer a more natural way of fostering a mentor/mentee relationship.
- 53 The Panel noted that the Department encouraged students to obtain work placements which could then form the basis of an optional work-based learning module in Part 2 or Part 3. The module provided students with opportunities for critical reflection on the work of an arts or media organisation and on their own career development. However, discussions with current students indicated a gap in provision in terms of facilitating access to work placements for those students who wished to secure them; a number of students expressed a desire for increased support in this respect. The Panel noted that short placements better reflected the fast-moving, project-based nature of the creative industries sector into which many graduates would enter than longer placements.
- 54 Whilst the Panel noted that the Department's Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) Survey scores had improved in recent years, it considered that further improvements were required in this area. It noted that there were varied and potentially well-paid careers in Film and Media which students were not always aware of. It therefore **recommends** that the Department continue its efforts to further develop the students' understanding of possible career paths and the skillsets they would require, both technical and personal, and that it enhance links with employers and industry professionals [**Advisable recommendation (k)**].
- 55 In this context, the Panel welcomed the recent appointment of two new members of staff in Screen and Performance Practices and Industries as a result of the FTT Project. These colleagues had been explicitly tasked with increasing applied practical skills training provision, and with increasing industry engagement and placement provision in screen industries and performance industries respectively. The Lecturer in Performance Practices and Industries would be involved in building links with local creative organisations and developing opportunities to work with theatre companies in residence. It was hoped that the new appointments would generate additional placement opportunities and impact positively on employability.

Enhancement of quality and academic provision

- 56 The Panel was pleased to note that the Department continued to demonstrate a high concern for the enhancement of the quality of its offering, as evidenced for example by the annual process of module/programme review and planning. As noted elsewhere in this Report, the Panel found evidence that the Department acted appropriately in

response to comments from External Examiners, NSS scores and feedback from the SSLC. The Department was engaged in regularly reviewing its programme offering in response to changing demands and feedback from current students, including the recent internal review of undergraduate provision. In this way, students were engaged in curriculum development and enhancements to teaching and learning.

- 57 The Panel noted that the Department had an appropriate forward-looking plan in place for developing its academic provision over the next three academic years, which was consistent with the outcomes of the FTT Project and included the following key areas:
- consolidate the Department's admissions and marketing strategy;
 - enhance placement provision and industry engagement;
 - increase recruitment for taught postgraduate programmes;
 - make changes to the structure of Part 3 to improve flexibility and resourcing and the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration;
 - continue to bed in the new and revised undergraduate degree programmes which began in October 2014.

Main characteristics of the programmes under review

- 58 The Panel considers that the programmes under review are ambitious in their educational aims, well-grounded in pedagogical principles and offer the students an innovative, diverse and highly engaging programme of study. The programmes provide carefully structured opportunities for students to develop into independent learners, to demonstrate achievement of knowledge and understanding and to build highly desirable skills for employment. The Department's teaching and creative practice are intellectually rigorous and informed by up-to-date research.
- 59 The programmes are underpinned by a strong sense of community, high-quality pastoral care and strong technical and administrative support. The Department's impressive facilities and array of learning resources provide excellent support for students' learning. The Department makes appropriate use of student management information and has robust quality assurance and enhancement procedures in place. The Panel supports the recent changes to the undergraduate curriculum and congratulates the Department on its full and positive engagement with the FTT Project.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

- 60 The Panel commends the following as areas where the Department has particular strengths:
- (a) the provision of pastoral care and the strong sense of community which extends to staff and students and across all levels of study;
 - (b) the Department's ambitious educational aims, well-grounded in pedagogical principles, which offer the students an excellent programme of study;
 - (c) the excellent coverage of global theatre forms and the critical questions raised by their socio-historical contexts;
 - (d) the recent enhancement of the provision of practice modules, which now offers more flexibility and choice to students and extends the opportunity for joint

- honours students to access practical modules, whilst maintaining a pathway for students who do not want to follow the practice route;
- (e) the range of diverse assessment methods which are employed in the programmes to good effect and have been praised by External Examiners;
 - (f) the effective working relationship between the Department and its External Examiners;
 - (g) the exciting and engaging activities offered during Enhancement Week;
 - (h) the Department's Teaching Handbook, which provides excellent guidance for staff, including a section which sets out the responsibilities of module convenors;
 - (i) the Interview Day which all applicants are required to attend in advance of receiving an offer, which provides an opportunity for a useful two-way dialogue from an early stage in the process;
 - (j) the quality of pastoral care provided to students and in particular the cohort-specific Senior Tutor talks, which offer excellent and sustained support to students at all levels and enhance the personal tutorial system with a broader collective reflective pastoral care experience for each year group;
 - (k) the impressive array of learning resources and the opportunities provided for students to make use of these;
 - (l) the Department's engagement with its loyal and enthusiastic alumni.

Conclusions on quality and standards

- 61 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 achieved by students and that the programmes specifications are appropriate.

Recommendations

- 62 The Panel **recommends** to the Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science that the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years or, in the case of joint programmes, until the Periodic Review of the other discipline:
- BA Art and Film
 - BA Art and Film & Theatre
 - BA Art and Theatre
 - BA English Literature and Film
 - BA English Literature and Film & Theatre
 - BA English Literature and Theatre
 - BA Film
 - BA Film & Theatre
 - BA Theatre
 - MA Creative Enterprise.

The Panel notes that the MA Samuel Beckett: Archive, Text, Performance will run from 2016-17 and that it has been formally approved by a separate process.

- 63 The Panel does not consider that any recommendations must be addressed as a condition of re-approval.

The Panel has identified the following actions which it **recommends** the Department addresses:

Advisable actions:

- (a) to communicate more clearly the diverse and ambitious range of content covered in the modules, by using more concrete and specific module titles and descriptions which better articulate the differences between modules and emphasise questions of critical debate and interrogation;
- (b) to take the advent of the BA Theatre as an opportunity to scrutinise the pedagogical logic, and articulate the fundamental values and principles that undergird the study of theatre as a discrete subject in the Department;
- (c) to review the assessment design of dissertation modules at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level and consider incorporating an introductory assessment to spread the burden of marks and embed formal feedback earlier in the process, in order to prepare students for the final piece of work;
- (d) to ensure that all papers for written examinations are sent to the External Examiners in advance for scrutiny and approval, in accordance with the University's *Code of Practice on the External Examining of Taught Programmes*;
- (e) to reflect on its current re-assessment regime in light of the guidance contained in the *Examinations and Assessment Handbook*;
- (f) to revisit the Coursework Report Form and guidance issued to staff to ensure that all staff are providing high quality feedback to students;
- (g) in relation to theatre trips, to consider:
 - i. ways to communicate more clearly to prospective students the additional costs associated with theatre-trips (both in terms of tickets and transport costs);
 - ii. alternative transport options for theatre trips, including minibus hire which might be paid for by the Department;
 - iii. further emphasising to current and prospective students that all theatre trips would form the subject of detailed class discussion, and that the majority would be connected to assessment for the relevant modules;
- (h) to review the Departmental website and other marketing materials to make clearer the role of research in relation to teaching and creative practice;
- (i) to continue to review the Departmental website and marketing materials to make the content more attractive and to make clearer to prospective students the academic nature of the degrees;
- (j) to consider how to better promote the MA provision by reviewing publicity materials, including the website, and considering other recruitment tools, such as a Massive Open Online Course;
- (k) to continue efforts to further develop the students' understanding of possible career paths and the skillsets they would require, both technical and personal, and to enhance links with employers and industry professionals.

Desirable actions:

- (a) to take steps to ensure the continuity of business between meetings of the Teaching & Learning Committee, Board of Studies, SSLC and blue sky meetings via the allocation of action points and regular formal reporting between the various committees;
 - (b) to review the departmental planning process;
 - (c) to include in the Programme Handbook more specific information on pathways through the degrees in order to better inform module selection.
- 64 The Panel does not have a recommendation to the Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning as to whether any proposal(s) for new degree programmes should be approved as this is not applicable.