NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

Quality Review of the Centre for Media Studies

22 - 23 March 2011

Peer Review Report

Peer Review Group:

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Part I: Introduction

This report is produced after a two day visit to NUI Maynooth, undertaken in Spring 2011, by Dr. Caroline Bassett (University of Sussex) and Dr. Roddy Flynn (Dublin City University) and in response to earlier reports from Media faculty and faculty from the School. The two externals are in agreement over the content of the report, which considers key areas of the Centre's work, comments on success, isolates areas where problems or issues germane to the future development and maintenance of the Centre's work arise, and offers some recommendations. The report itself consists of three sections – (1) general comments, (2) a series of more specific comments outlining issues of concern and commenting on success, and (3) recommendations. The remarks here are offered in a spirit of constructive engagement and are proffered by outsiders who are also colleagues in the sense of being engaged in the general research areas around which the Centre is operating.

General Comments

The over-arching context of this report is success. The Centre is a successful hub within the University where excellent teaching and research is carried out. Students reported that they were happy with their experience in the Centre, felt at home there, and felt able to navigate their way through the various components of what is a relatively complicated degree structure in many cases. The courses appeared to be well-structured and explored the appropriate intellectual terrains and practical skills training for the degrees offered. The average teaching load faced by the teaching staff (6 hours per week) is not unreasonable and is in keeping with Irish university norms. The CVs of the key Centre faculty (x3 full time and x2 fixed term faculty) provided evidence of active and successful research at international levels, and of growing reputations in many cases. It was clear that faculty expertise is being translated into design and teaching of courses. There is a successful partnership with Kairos, an independent production and training facility near the campus, which not only provides teaching but also contributes to the culture of the Centre. Finally, administration staff interviewed demonstrated that they have a stake in the Centre, ensure its smooth running and are accessible to students as well as faculty.

The issues identified in this report need to be viewed within the context of these framing comments and the endorsement they represent.

The chief issues arising here concern: the relationship of the Centre to its School, and in particular pressure on more junior lecturers, who are running the Centre despite their lack of seniority; the potential risks involved in the dependency on the Kairos relationship, and the question of academic oversight into Kairos-led work and; the relationship between the Centre and its various other partners both in relation to potential future developments of the field and in relation to curriculum change.

Part II

1. Student Experience

Comments on the student experience here are based on focus groups interviewed during the visit, supported by information from the Centre's internal report and other material. Interview groups were generally small but included a good cross section of UG and PG students. The internal report noted that there had been some difficulties with curriculum in relation to aspects of multi-disciplinary degrees (particularly around the appropriateness/ relevance of various forms of coding/programming offered by informatics). These issues have been addressed by a series of changes now feeding into the student cohort and it is clear that adjustments will continue (see below). For the most part students we talked to now understand their way around the various degrees, understand what is being expected of them in the various areas of their degree and also demonstrated an understanding of how different areas knitted together.

UG students feel they are able to communicate with and contact faculty and administrative support when they need to and that they are well supported in their work. Thus although there is no formal tutorial system in place, students did not identify this as a problem simply because their lecturers were generally available on a more or less permanent basis. Where close supervision was required, e.g. with regard to final year dissertations, students expressed satisfaction with the supervision they received.

As a consequence students clearly identify the Centre as their home and experience the centre as more of a 'real' entity than the School. (The local geography of the Centre which sees all staff – academic or otherwise – situated on the same corridor within 50 feet of one another also contributes to the sense of identity.) Students appeared happy with methods of teaching, session sizes, and feedback.

UG Students did not spontaneously refer to the networked tools or learning environments (for instance Moodle), although where this was raised, some were enthusiastic about it. That they were so markedly appreciative of accessibility of tutors and admin staff alike (see above) may account for why they felt less need for networked connections.

The doctoral students were enthusiastic about their work and their supervision. Students suggested that the structure of supervision varied according to the needs of the individual student but the reviewers noted with approval that doctoral candidates typically met their supervisors at least once a month. Some were appreciative of the structured

doctoral training programme they undertake - although others noted that choices were very limited, and all agreed that some of what is offered is more appropriate to 'standard' route students than others – for instance those with professional skills returning to University after working in various careers, including those in the media. Nonetheless they were appreciative of the cross-Faculty Research Seminars which they were invited to attend and welcomed the opportunity to discuss methodological issues with students who were not necessarily coming from the same discipline. Doctoral students liked the new building and felt their environment was very positive. This was supported by the fact that postgraduates are represented at Centre Staff Meetings and thus have a direct input into the management of the Centre. They enjoyed sharing space with others in their School and felt this produces a sense of research community. Interestingly, they also noted that the current choice of nomenclature – "Centre" as opposed to "School" – was a factor in attracting them to Maynooth to do their postgrad work, since it implied more of a research orientation.

Students we talked to enjoyed using Kairos and felt facilities there were very good. Equipment is made available for loan for adequate periods (typically 48 hours) and the students have access to Editing equipment in Kairos after office hours (9.30-21.30 weekdays). There was some concern that authoring/coding facilities across both campus (a Mac lab) and Kairos might be put under some pressure near deadline time - but this was expressed more as an anxiety than something experienced as a real problem. Finally, students identified some communication problems at the administrative level between the Centre for Media Studies and Kairos – exemplified, they suggested, by poor co-ordination of assessment deadlines between the two institutions. In a similar vein although the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment was extensively used by staff at the Centre for Media Studies, the students we spoke to asserted that the Kairos staff never used Moodle.

2. Course Structures/Academic Programme

Courses are robust, coherent and able to give students a strong experience with a good grounding in essentials in the areas they have chosen to study. Moreover the Centre has the flexibility to make adjustments where necessary. This bodes well for the ability of the Centre to develop and adapt new programmes for future developments in the field.

Students we talked to identified as media students but it is striking how little of their total degree is delivered within the Centre as media theory - the majority of the theoretical

content of their degree is undertaken in other areas. The 25% practice, 25% media theory, 50% other subject breakdown adopted here produces degrees in which media theory is always going to be the smaller component of the theory elements of the student's degree. It also, of course, produces a situation in which media practice can never account for more than 25% of the student's degree.

These ratios have implications for programme content. Notably fitting in the practical component of the degree, along with the supplementary subject, means media theory courses are by definition tightly constrained. There are no options to be had in fact, although there are spaces within some courses to develop ideas and concepts in less constrained ways and to go beyond 'core' issues such as in the dissertation course. Conversely there is no space for interested students to specialize increasingly heavily in practice as they move into their final years.

It would be useful to consider developing pathways where either media theory or practice respectively might be prioritized - for instance by allowing 'double' practice degrees, or by finding ways to reduce time spent in other areas. Both of these approaches would produce their own issues, but would enable a deeper engagement with media at a practical level and/or a more tightly framed media theory and practice degree.

The current arrangements however, are essentially working. Courses are coherent and cover appropriate subject areas.

There is also evidence of an impressive capacity to adjust here. In recent years courses have been more or less continuously adapted, to fit changing requirements and also in response to student feedback and complaints. In the latter case this has most obviously happened in relation to the BA Multimedia (now the BA in Digital Media) which was under revision by the course leader when it became the subject of student demands for reform. The Centre was able a) to recognise that the degree faced structural difficulties b) identify the particular nature of those difficulties and c) devise and implement solutions to the problem. Notably, removal of the compulsory computer science in year two, and adjustment of the code elements this included (so that the course content is more clearly aligned to the skills demanded for digital media production) is intended to tackle this problem and looks a sensible and workable option.

External Examiners, currently recruited by level and programme are clearly appropriate for the subject area, but have limited capacity/expertise to consider appropriate issues in relation to practical subjects – and are not necessarily asked to examine Kairos outputs. Currently there is little scope for additional recruitment, however a different

distribution of tasks for externals could be achieved organically and could produce a tighter link between assessment levels as centrally set and the oversight of practical work. It would be useful to find ways to involve externals with an interest in thinking about how to develop the relationship between theory and practice in more creative ways. (See Recommendation below).

3. External Partners :

3a) Kairos

The arrangement between Kairos and the Centre places the three degrees offered through the Centre for Media Studies in an enviable position vis-à-vis similar facilities in other Irish third level institutions offering practical instruction in television and radio production. Most institutions claim to offer access to "industry standard" equipment. However since Kairos is a hireable facility, it is literally part of the industry and is appropriately equipped. This brings two key benefits.

First the majority of the staff working in Kairos also work in the industries they are training students into. Thus the problem often faced by academic units seeking to stay up-to-date with industry norms (in terms of practices and equipment) is considerably less of an issue at Kairos as many of the staff spend the bulk of their time engaged in industry (i.e. commercial) activities anyway.

Second, the standard – and appropriateness - of the production and postproduction equipment and facilities is impressive. Even if students are actually taught Final Cut Pro as editing software they have access to even higher end Avid post-production equipment (and the division may in any case be blurring). The television studio is also impressive, offering sufficient height for proper studio lighting rigs and enough space for a number of sets. Furthermore, students generally appear to be able to access equipment outside class hours with relative ease: they can access the various labs from 9am to 9pm and have access to technical support for all but the last three of those hours.

The courses delivered in Kairos make up approximately 25% of UG degrees. These are designed by the staff of that facility and have been since the inception of the Centre for Media Studies in 2005. This raises a potential concern that from the perspective of the Centre, the Kairos courses are something of a "black box", both in relation to content and quality.

Centre staff have never had significant input into course content, do not appear to have actively sought to make such input and, in any case, are largely ill-equipped to offer any given that for the most part their background is in more theory-based subjects. Thus, that what Kairos delivers is appropriate to the needs of the Centre's students - and integrates well with the media theory and computer science material taught on the NUIM campus - must essentially be taken on trust by the Centre (This is reflected in a loosely defined service agreement between the two institutions.)

In practice this does not appear to constitute a problem on a day to day level. Our sense was that this was largely due to the presence of the Kairos co-ordinator who, unusually for a fulltime Facility Manager, holds a PhD from the Department of Sociology at NUI Maynooth. This academic background affords her an insight into academic culture of the Centre and allows her to act as a bridge between the Centre and Kairos. Furthermore, in interview with the reviewers, it was clear that the co-ordinator is thinking about future developments in course content, specifically in the areas of animation, computer gaming and the changing nature of broadcast practice (e.g. 360 degree and long-tail broadcasting.)

Notwithstanding the fact that on a day-to-day basis, there is a good working relationship between the Centre and Kairos (the co-ordinator explicitly noted that the Centre were generally very open to any course structure suggestions from Kairos), there remains a sense in which the co-ordinator/Kairos is isolated from some of the Centre work. As it stands there is no official forum for ongoing exchanges of information regarding what's "inside the box" of academic modules. Nor is there a formal route through which the co-ordinator can make contributions to overall course design. This disconnect between Kairos and the Centre was even evident at the technical level where there was some evidence of a lack of integration of knowledge regarding what technical equipment and software was available in the Mac Labs in Kairos and the main Maynooth campus respectively.

Although our meeting with representatives of the Kairos teaching staff made it clear that they were extremely competent at delivering the practice-based material (and furthermore that they were alert to changes in industry norms which was reflected in willingness to adapt course content on a more or less ongoing basis), there was less sense that they took cognisance of the broader theoretical objectives of the programme.

This is not to suggest that Kairos staff are unreflective about the subjects they teach (such strict demarcations between theory and practice subjects are notoriously artificial) but rather that they may not have an in-depth grasp of the content/objectives of the theoretical modules taught in the Centre. As such, despite suggestions that Kairos staff did see the

theoretical perspectives gleaned by students from the modules they studied in the Centre as informing their practical work, it wasn't fully clear that those staff were intimately familiar with what those theoretical perspectives actually were.

The question of how theory might inform practice is thus not one that is taken up to any great degree either on the Kairos or on the Centre 'side'. Certainly the discussions the reviewers had with undergraduate students suggested that although students were able to recognise connections between their theoretical and practical subjects, this tended to be with the benefit of hindsight (i.e. final year students found it easier to identify such connections than first or second years). The suggestion here is that neither the theoretical or practical lecturers were explicitly drawing attention to such connections as a matter of course.

There are some welcome developments that tackle some of the issues around communication and knowledge gaps raised above. Firstly, the appointment of a lecturer with precisely the cross-over skills needed to integrate practical and theoretical skills and theoretical registers is a welcome development. Our concern is that this is a fixed term appointment. It is the view of both external reporters that this kind of oversight is necessary. Second, along with Kairos and the Centre leaders we regard the appointment of at least one External Examiner with practical skills as a welcome and necessary development.

Risks/Vulnerability:

There is insight both at Kairos and in the Centre about the potential risks of the partnership – and a justified sense that the benefits substantially outweigh them. However it seems important to note that:

1. The relationship between Kairos and the Centre is heavily dependent on cordial personal relationships and understandings between individuals. Currently this relationship is excellent. The potential risk is that a core element of the Centre's delivery is heavily dependent on personal relationships and on one Kairos-based individual's 'insider' sense of how the Centre (and the University runs).

2. The second risk is of a breakdown of the relationship between Kairos and the University itself. Again this seems unlikely to occur, but would clearly constitute a substantial problem for the delivery of courses should it arise. There are issues of control and ownership that might need to be clarified to mitigate the effects of this, or to reduce risks somewhat. For

instance there ought to be clarity over who owns the courses should a change in provider become necessary.

3. Finally, it was not clear what control mechanisms were in place in this agreement. For instance Kairos defines courses, defines appropriate equipment levels and defines industry standard equipment. It is thus defining requirements for the courses it delivers as well as delivering them. This appears to leave the University somewhat vulnerable - for instance on issues of costing and value for money. One issue the reviewers did note, for instance, is that in the Kairos Mac Lab it appears to be normal for students to double up on the Macs (i.e. that there are two students to every computer). Although it is difficult to be definitive about what constitutes norms of equipment access it is worth noting that in the "home" institutions of the reviewers, such levels of access would not be considered acceptable. There is no intention here to impugn anybody at Kairos; the feel of the relationship is very good indeed, equipment levels in general appear to be well pitched, but it is to be hoped that external experts alongside those with a more direct interest in the question are used to assess appropriate equipment needs.

3b) Computer Science

There are clearly some culture clash issues in the relationship between computer science and the Centre. These do not seem to be personal, but concern mutual incomprehension and some structural investment questions around delivery, tailoring, and responding to the specific needs of Centre students. E.g. Notable here were difficulties with the BA in Multimedia where students were delivered computer science modules without really understanding how they connected to their courses - and in ways that perhaps meant that they did not. Students cited the module on Java programming as an example of this: it was not immediately clear to them as to why this was an appropriate module for their degree (although with the benefit of hindsight it was apparent that studying Java constituted one route into learning computer languages). The point was made by students that none of their lecturers had explicitly stated what the purpose of such a module was in the context of the overall course. The intention here is not to criticize this particular module or to suggest that it should be removed. Rather it is to illustrate the implications of running a course using the combined resources of the three institutions referred to above: there is a risk that what might appear on the face of it to be small issues (e.g. demonstrating the rationale for individual modules) may fall between the cracks. The consequence for some students was an at least initial *perception* that some of the

Computer Science courses did not appear to have been designed with Media Students in mind, but were rather "traditional" Computer Science modules which Media students had simply been invited to attend. In this regard it was interesting to note one student comment that in their three years at Maynooth they had never seen staff from the Centre, Computer Science and Kairos simultaneously in the same room.

These issues have been tackled with the new degree and it is to be hoped a more fruitful relationship can now be developed. Clearly the inter-connections between these areas are important given the 'computational turn' in media and film, and the digital humanities more generally. The reviewers' discussions with the representative of the Computer Science department made it clear that he was alert to these trends and indeed that he was thinking about new and exciting course directions which may not otherwise have been considered within the Centre. Thus while not diminishing the 'cultural' difficulties raised by including Computer Science as an element of the undergrad degrees, it is important to stress the value of retaining this perspective. Again, the appointment of a new staff member whose competences bridge the theory/practice divide (however artificial) suggests to the reviewers that the connections between the Media Studies and Computer Science elements of the course are likely to be made more explicit henceforth and this is to be welcomed.

3c) Kairos/Computer Science/Centre for Media Studies

The cross-over between Computer Science, the Centre for Media Studies, and the production-based expertise of Kairos, is complex and inevitably produces problems to be worked through. These problems are not necessarily limited to the aforementioned cultural difficulties: at a more prosaic level, students suggested that there was little evidence of deadline co-ordination between Kairos and the Centre. Similarly although students were accustomed to using the Moodle learning environment for their Media Studies courses they suggested that Moodle was never used by Kairos. Again, this is not to suggest that Moodle should be obligatory for all lecturers or even that it is always an appropriate tool regardless of course content. However, it does point to room for improvement in the integration of the various centres/schools making inputs to the degree. These issues are to be worked through. Clearly the combination of these three areas produces an unusual nexus of skills that put the Centre in an excellent position to track and lead developments (e.g. in digital humanities, in the future creative sector, in the expanded media sector). This investment is very valuable and needs to be cherished. In the short term it would be interesting to see if Kairos and the

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work of the Computer Science department might come together through 'media-centric' projects, particularly at doctoral student level. This also has interesting implications in relation to the further development of digital humanities research.

4. Structural Issues

As has already been rehearsed elsewhere in this report, the Centre for Media studies has much to be proud of. It offers a suite of coherent courses, has maintained a flexible approach to course content, its faculty produce excellent research and also please their students. That said, the reviewers feel that, if there is a one outstanding issue that needs to be addressed with regard to the Centre, it relates to the question of management structures.

In personnel terms, the Centre is constituted by three permanent lecturers (who are all on the "lecturer" step of the NUI Maynooth career ladder), two fulltime lecturers on contracts of limited duration (including one with expertise in practice) a handful of occasional lecturers plus the equivalent of one and a half administrative staff (constituted by three individuals).

Because the Centre is a "centre" (i.e. not a school or department) academic and administrative leadership resides in the person of the "Subject Leader", a position for which there are effectively only three candidates: the three permanent lecturers. Thus far, the position has rotated in two-year cycles (rather than the more usual three) between two members of staff and logically, would fall on the shoulders of the third when the present two year cycle comes to a conclusion in August 2011.

On a day to day level it is obvious that the staff enjoy good working relationships with one another. Since the responsibilities of the Subject Leader position have moved so rapidly from the shoulders of one lecturer to another, there is little sense of hierarchy within the centre: the current Subject Leader incumbent is then *primus inter pares*. As a consequence staff describe an environment of mutual respect for each other's capabilities and a freedom to "get on with" their core teaching and research functions.

However, the fact that effective leadership of the Centre falls on the shoulders of "ordinary" lecturing staff does raise the question of why the School of English, Media and Theatre Studies has not taken on some of the academic administration and academic leadership of the Centre. It is notable that, according to the website of the Department of English, four of its 17 academic staff are professors; in contrast every member of the Centre works on the lecturer grade. In practice, however, there is limited evidence of meaningful support for the Centre for Media Studies from the School. This is reflected in the "Flow Chart

of Governance for the Centre" included in the self-assessment document which, although it places the Head of School at the top of hierarchy makes no reference at all to the rest of the School.

Thus on the one hand there is a department where nearly a quarter of the staff are professors and, on the other, there is a Centre where none of the staff are above the lecturer pay grade (even if their actual duties are more appropriate to a more senior position), and where all are still establishing and developing research careers (albeit at high levels in the case of some faculty). This is not intended as a criticism of the either the School of English, Media and Theatre studies or any of its staff. Indeed, the School shows commendable ambition for future programme development, notably in the area of Theatre Studies, and it may therefore be presumed it does wish to develop the Centre further. However, the contrast in governance structures could hardly be more stark.

It is worth rehearsing how this anomaly came about. The Centre for Media Studies was established by a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English who essentially personified the Centre for the first three years after its inception in 2002. In 2005/6, a lecturer was appointed as the first dedicated member of staff. At that time, it was anticipated that the Centre would develop organically, adding courses, increasing student numbers and thus legitimating the employment of additional staff across a range of salary grades. Much of this did occur, leading to the current complement of teaching and administrative staff. The elevation in 2007 of the Senior Lecturer to a professorial position and Head of the School of English, Media and Theatre Studies then left a vacancy at the head of the Centre. Under normal circumstances, as the Centre gradually expanded its staff and student numbers it might have been expected that normal promotional conditions would prevail and that the Centre would either see its own staff promoted to Senior Lecturer or Assistant Professorial levels (with concomitant pay increases and reduction in teaching) or that an external candidate would be appointed at Professorial level to offer some strategic direction for the Centre as a whole.

However, with the introduction of a moratorium on promotions and new posts in the Irish Public sector in early 2009, the scope for making such appointments was severely constrained. The publication of a second version of the moratorium in March 2011, makes it even harder to envisage such appointments given that these rules require universities not to exceed the disposition of grades as they stood at December 31 2010. In other words, the personnel status quo as of end 2010 appears to be the very best a department like the Centre for Media Studies can hope for.

As a consequence, however, since 2007 and for the foreseeable future the direction of the Centre has lain in the hands of lecturer grade staff. This management structure is not the ideal outcome of a planned evolution, rather it is a situation which simply "happened", the result of a series of indirectly connected appointments/decisions made both within the School and in the wider public service.

That this situation is somewhat anomalous is immediately obvious: it is extremely unusual for a staff member at the lecturer-grade to be placed in a position of such authority, especially given that the Subject Leader's position includes direct responsibility for the Centre's budget line, which of itself constitutes a significant administrative burden. Moreover the situation is not merely unusual - it is problematic for a variety of personnel and strategic reasons. The reviewers' sense is that, thus far these problems have been held off and largely mitigated by dint of sheer hard work on the part of the Subject Leader position incumbents. However, it is unrealistic to expect three staff on a relatively junior grade to continue fire-fighting indefinitely and it is also clear that this is likely to have a deleterious impact on the development of the research careers of the individual staff and on the Centre as a whole.

4a) Impact on Centre development

The current management setup does not necessarily pose administrative problems on a day-to-day basis. Feedback from students and lecturers, suggest that the Centre "works". It is clear that the Centre has been ably administered by the two Subject Leaders assisted by the Senior Executive Assistants. It is also important to acknowledge that this is partially due to the fact that the Centre's lecturing staff are more or less omnipresent on campus, i.e. working in their offices when not actually delivering lectures. This clearly facilitates the speedy resolution of any staff or student difficulties and the lecturers concerned as to be commended for this.

What is less clear is whether the Subject Leaders have had the luxury of being able to perform the academic leadership functions associated with their nominal role and, in this regard, it is important to state that the reviewers see no _de facto_ distinction between the Centre Subject Leader and a Head of Department in terms of responsibility. The strong sense coming from the previous and current Subject Leader is that the heavy obligations of teaching and administration are such that there is almost no time left for future-oriented strategic thinking. It is also apparent nonetheless that despite being _de facto_ head of the Centre – and

taking on the work load associated with this role, the Subject Leader does not enjoy the same status (and one would presume influence) as a Head of School. The reviewers feel that this is likely to place the Subject Leader (and by extension the Centre) in a position of relative weakness when it comes to making demands on the rest of the university. The decision by faculty to take on the role of leadership for two rather than three years, designed to protect their research has to be respected, but also brings with it its own problems in relation to this; their authority is weakened further.

There is a final indirect impact of the current structure that should be considered which relates to the School's research function. That the school has managed to attract any research postgrads at all is an achievement given a) it's relatively recent arrival and b) the low level of financial support available for funded studentships. Beyond the university's Hume scholarships (which the Centre can effectively bid for once every two years) there is no local financial support for doctoral candidates. In this context the impressive research output of the Centre's teaching staff has undoubtedly played a key role in attracting the research postgrads who are attached to it. The high level of research output to date (in terms of both quality and quantity) has been facilitated by the granting of sabbaticals for research leave and the policy of blocking out one day a week during term for research purposes. However, there is already evidence of increasing encroachment of teaching and admin into research time. For example in the case of the one member of staff who is jointly employed by both the School and Centre. it has not always proved possible to schedule his teaching commitments in a way that leaves one entire day free. Similarly, as both staff who have held the Subject Leader position have pointed out, maintaining a research profile while fulfilling the Leader role is exceptionally difficult. This is problematic in itself, but it is particularly significant given the role played by the Centre staff research output to date in attracting high quality postgraduate students.

4b) Impact on individual personnel

In the normal scheme of things, appointment to a quasi-managerial position such as Subject Leader, would be a natural outcome of professional and promotional advancement. A professorial appointment brings with it administrative responsibilities concomitant with the status and salary that position implies. However, this is not the case of the Centre for Media Studies where appointment to the Subject Leader position actually has the potential to retard advancement. In effect then, far from being regarded as promotion the Subject Leader

position is regarded with some dread by all of those eligible within the Centre; those contemplating taking on the role again as well as those who might take it on for the first time.

That this is the case is partially due to the current moratorium on promotions. One side effect of the moratorium across the third level sector is to create a backlog of staff on the lecturer grade who, under normal circumstances might reasonably have expected to secure promotion to senior lecturer in the period since 2008. In other words when (if) the moratorium is lifted there will be an unusually long list of individuals who can reasonably apply for promotion. As a rough rule of thumb, the workload of academic staff in Ireland is understood as divided between teaching, research and administration in roughly the following proportion: 40:40:20. The same metric is used to assess the prior performance of candidates for promotion. As a consequence, the appointment of lecturer grade staff within the Centre for Media Studies to the Subject Leader position places those staff in a position where they must dedicate a disproportionate amount of their time to administration, the area which attracts fewest "points" in a promotion context. The double irony here is that since the head of the Centre is designated as a "Subject Leader" rather than as a Head, this may lead to Subject Leaders being ranked behind otherwise equivalent staff from other departments who actually occupy Headship positions.

Part III:Recommendations

In the light of the above we would like to set out a number of recommendations:

1. The relationship between the School and the Centre needs to be re-assessed. It is clear that the current arrangements – including the arrangements for academic leadership in the Centre - were intended to be temporary but have, due to various external circumstances, come to be more or less permanent. It is our view that some of the pressure on junior faculty attempting to sustain their own research careers whilst also providing for Centre leadership needs to alleviated. In this review consideration should be given to re-organizing this relationship with the aim of integrating senior faculty from the School further into the intellectual project of the Centre and into academic-management leadership.

Our view is that this review should consider seriously a series of measures up to and including the re-integration of the Centre budget into the School. This latter would remove a series of academic management tasks from academics in the Centre and would in particular lighten the load of the rotating post of Subject Leader.

2. The lack of supervision from the Centre over the content of Kairos courses is a cause for concern (this is not to imply the courses themselves are not excellent). In relation to this:

- The number of External Examiners with practice expertise needs to be expanded naturally over time.
- Thought needs to be given immediately to ensuring that Kairos-based work is adequately 'covered' in the External Examiner system. In the short term we suggest considering extending the role of the current MA external.
- A formal mechanism should be established to facilitate discussions between the Centre and Kairos regarding development of current and future course content.

3. The Centre's links with Kairos and (internally) computing both produce some risks, but both also position the Centre as unusually well equipped to develop new inter-disciplinary directions emerging around new media/digital media convergences. It is recommended that that these exciting connections are maintained and developed further.

4. Whilst recognizing the benefits of the various elements of the degree – we do suggest consideration be given to possible combinations that might allow more specialism – either in media theory or media practice - to take place.

Part IV: Acknowledgements

Finally we would like to thank Marguerite Lohan for her help and assistance in organizing practicalities, Richard Watson, a generous host, and the faculty and students at the Centre and its partners at Kairos and elsewhere for their friendliness and help.

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