

Quality Promotion Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting of 11 February 2011

Present: Professor Jim Walsh (Chair), Dr Honor Fagan, Dr Bernard Mahon, Dr Tom O'Connor, Mr. Aengus Ó Maoláin, Professor Rowena Pecchenino, Dr David Redmond, Dr Richard Watson (Secretary).

Apologies: Professor Tom Collins, Mr. Robert Dixon, Mr. Cathal McCauley, Mr. Colm Nelson, Professor Ray O'Neill.

1. Minutes and Notes of meeting of 21 January 2011

The draft minutes and notes of this meeting had been circulated and were accepted.

2. Matters arising

None

3. Self Assessment Report from the Centre for Media Studies

The QPSC reviewed the draft Self Assessment Report (SAR) of the Centre for Media Studies. The Sub-Committee considered that the SAR provided a good description of an impressive amount of progress made by the Centre, particularly in delivering a range of degree courses and programmes with a small number of staff. It was thought also that the SAR describes an admirable dedication to ongoing quality review of these courses and programmes.

Much of the discussion centred on the position of the Centre within the School, the Faculty and the University as a whole. Concern was expressed that the Centre seems to be somewhat isolated, with only weak linkages to the School. There is little mention in the SAR of the School of which the Centre is a part, and little evidence that the School provides any significant support. The SAR does not indicate what teaching of modules in their courses is provided by lecturers from outside the Centre, apart from what Kairos provides, yet there are overlaps in interest with other Departments, and indeed with An Foras Feasa. Again, the difficulty any small unit has in devising a research strategy might be overcome to some extent at least by relating individual research interests with other people in the School, or in the wider University. On the administrative side, it might be possible for the School, with several members at professorial level, to make up some of the structural deficits in the Centre's staffing. More input from the School may help also in the future development of the Centre: the revolving position of Subject Leader does not contribute to strong leadership, and may make it difficult for the Centre to develop a coherent vision of its future. There is no note of criticism of the excellent work of the members of the Centre in these observations: rather, they spring from concern that the

Centre may be seen as vulnerable, given its size and the difficulty of increasing its staffing levels over the next few years. In this context, the Sub-Committee suggests that the Centre adds to its SAR some mention of how it differs from its competitors, what the niche market is for its graduates, and how attractive its courses are.

The QPSC suggests that the Subject Leader discusses some of the above matters with the Head of School, Professor Chris Morash, with a view to preparing a short, one page, document, describing the present and future role of the Centre within the School. The Head of School might well have helpful views on the direction and leadership of the unit. The document emerging from the discussion could be imbedded in the SAR or attached as an Appendix.

The QPSC would welcome also a more extended mention of students in the SAR. It is generally recognised that the Centre has succeeded in attracting very bright students, as evidenced by the figures for CAO points on page 9, but they seem to be almost absent from the picture of the Centre. Can the Centre provide any feedback from the students, beyond what is provided in Appendix 2? What difficulties and challenges do they face? Where do they go after graduation? And on a related matter, should they play a greater role in the monthly departmental meetings?

The QPSC would welcome a fuller description of the relationship of the Centre to Kairos, perhaps with input directly from someone who can provide the Kairos perspective. It might be appropriate to provide this once again in a short, one page document to appear as an Appendix.

Finally, the SAR contains a few typos and some minor obscurities which the Director of Quality will convey to the Subject Leader.

4. AOB

None.