

Periodic Review Report Template

Faculty	Arts, Design & Social Sciences
Discipline Name	Media & Communication
Date of Review	26 & 27 February 2013
Review Panel (approved by Review Sub-Committee)	<p>Internal Panel Members Dr. Kevin Robertson (Chair): Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching); Faculty of Health & Life Sciences. Nigel Coates: Principal Lecturer/Programme Director; Faculty of Business & Law. Carrie McCulloch: Principal Lecturer/Programme Director; Faculty of Arts, Design & Social Sciences. Andrew Cheung: Students' Union; Vice President Activities & Development.</p> <p>External Panel Member Professor John Storey: Professor of Cultural Studies and Director of the Centre for Research in Media & Cultural Studies; University of Sunderland.</p> <p>Facilitator Sally Iles, Academic Co-ordinator (Review), Academic Quality.</p>
Method of Review	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Handbook (February 2012 version), available from http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/review/intrev/

Section 1	Discipline Aims and Context
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The Department of Media is one of the five academic Departments which comprise the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences. The Department's academic staff, specialist technicians and, administrative staff are engaged in the management and delivery of a vibrant and diverse portfolio of creative and critical undergraduate and postgraduate programmes designed to meet the needs of the contemporary media and communications sector. It supports 775 undergraduate and 40 postgraduate students. In the last two years the Department has undergone a number of changes and reorganisation of the subject area. This includes major curriculum review of a number of programmes, the introduction of new programmes aimed at the international market and the incorporation of the BA (Hons) Media, Culture & Society into the Department, from its former home in Social Sciences. The Department is based upon four distinctive but cross-cutting areas of provision: Journalism, Advertising, Media Production and Mass Communication / Media theory. The Department currently has within its portfolio nine undergraduate programmes and two postgraduate programmes.

The Department of Media's staff consists of sixteen academic and five technical staff, a team of enthusiastic and highly proactive skilled theorists and practitioners who provide a rich and diverse range of subject expertise. Recent departmental developments include: refashioning UG programmes to reflect the department's unique combination of theory, practice and creativity, introducing new option modules that reflect the department's commitment to research-informed teaching. All of these reflect the department's high quality research, pedagogical development and strong international links, including delivering programmes internationally in partnership with institutions overseas.

The overarching aim of programmes within the Department of Media is to understand the major principles of media within the contemporary world and, with regard to practice-led programmes, enable students to graduate with the key skills that will enable them to professionally engage with contemporary media industries. Furthermore, the Department of Media's objective is to produce graduates and postgraduates who are equipped with the excellent educational and practical communication and transferable skills required to make significant contributions to the wider world of work and / or further study.

Media teaching accommodation is based largely in and around the Squires Building on the third floor, although some larger lectures theatres and specialist IT facilities sometimes necessitate the scheduling of

classes in parts of the city campus like Lipman Building and Squires Annexe and the use of the Mac Lab (SW101) within the Squires Workshop area. In terms of immediate access, there are computer facilities on the Squires third floor in the form of a student hub area, but there are also computers located for student use within the Squires foyer area, first floor Squires Building, the Lipman Café and floors two and four of the Lipman Building. Specialist facilities include a television studio and gallery, radio studio, newsroom, 18 Avid editing suites including Protocols software, green screen, specialist computer areas for Creative Suite and there are current plans for a new creative space for Advertising & Media students.

The media context will benefit from a range of developments following its merger into a new Department of Media and Communication Design in January 2013. Opportunities for research collaboration, technical resource and expertise sharing and enhancement, and planned improvements to facilities will significantly improve the contexts for learning and teaching, as well as research, within the new Department.

Strengths endorsed by the panel during review:

- * Opportunities created by Faculty merger and the reconfiguration of the Department.
- * Collective vision demonstrated by staff and their involvement in the change process.
- * Balanced mix of industry practitioners and research staff.
- * Proportion of REFable staff and the research achievements facilitated by weekly RSA day.
- * Resources investment including the excellent Mac Lab, TV and radio studios.

Areas for development / enhancement:

- * Strengthening the research mentoring arrangements.
- * Consider extending the resource provision for radio studio to include an additional low spec facility, and the upgrading of the screening room.

Section 2

Curricula and Standards

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- Blend of theory and practice provides excellent academic and industry grounding for students.
- High quality academic input supporting students' preparation for further study including PhDs.
- Impressive technical and practical skill development which is endorsed by employers.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- Revisit the design of the completion award to consider the inclusion of a project / dissertation.
- Consider expanding the postgraduate portfolio to enhance the opportunity for students to continue their studies at Northumbria.
- Review the structure of the PG programmes to ensure that January intake students are not disadvantaged.

Section 3

Management Information Trends

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- Good awareness of trends revealed by Management Information and evidence that these are being responded to proactively.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- Further consideration needs to be given to factors impacting on graduate-level employment and how these can be addressed within and outside the curriculum.
- Identify mechanisms for increased recruitment to the PG programmes and consider strategies to improve completion rates.

Section 4

Student Experience

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- Excellent industry-relevant facilities that were fully appreciated by students and contributed to their preparedness for the world of work.
- Effective student rep system that has started to utilise social media sites to enhance

communication.

- Excellent examples of responsiveness to issues raised by the students that have resulted in curriculum and resource developments.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- Further strengthen and standardise the communication back to students on the resolution of issues raised via programme committee or student reps.
- Investigate potential inconsistencies / inequalities in the accessibility to student resources across the programmes for example, the equipment booking process, book stock, specialist equipment.
- Consideration to be given to the inclusion of 'live' broadcasting opportunities within the curriculum in order to better prepare students for the rigours of industry.
- Whilst the panel recognises the difficulty in securing effective placement opportunities for students, more consideration should be given to how this aspect of the provision could be enhanced to better support students and create a more equitable experience across all programmes.
- Create opportunities to share best practice with regards to employability enhancement activities and ensure that these equitably apply to all programmes.

Section 5

Enhancement Strategies

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- A passion for research informing the curriculum and its contribution to the general intellectual culture.
- An animated spirit of creativity that guides many of the practice-based elements of the curriculum.
- Excellent staff-employer contacts that enrich the provision.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- Consideration needs to be given to the internationalisation agenda with regards to curriculum development, student integration, support and mobility, including capitalising on the potential created by strategic international partnerships.
- Increase the provision of guest lecturers from industry to add value to the curriculum, but ensure that students are better prepared in order to benefit fully from this experience.
- Within the new Faculty structure, establish mechanisms for the co-ordination and management of enhancement.
- Further exploit the staff-employer contacts to create strategic employer partnerships.

Section 6

Discipline Response to Report

Discipline Aims and Context

Strengthening the research mentoring arrangements.

All staff now have an allocated research mentor. Six staff in the current department are taking sabbaticals in 2014/15 and a number are embarking on PhDs.

Consider extending the resource provision for radio studio to include an additional low spec facility, and the upgrading of the screening room.

A basic sound recording booth has been built to run alongside existing radio facilities in Squires Building. The room has tie-lines to send audio to a new 'mixer' room which uses pro-tools software.

Curricula and standards

Revisit the design of the completion award to consider the inclusion of a project / dissertation.

A project/dissertation is now included in the curriculum for 2014/15.

Consider expanding the postgraduate portfolio to enhance the opportunity for students to continue their studies at Northumbria.

An MA in Luxury Brand Management is being validated for 2014/15.

Review the structure of the PG programmes to ensure that January intake students are not disadvantaged.

For January start students who begin late and miss enrolment, there is now a second induction programme.

Management Information Trends

Further consideration needs to be given to factors impacting on graduate-level employment and how these can be addressed within and outside the curriculum.

Employability is the top priority of the Department's new Learning and Teaching Champion. Employability is now built into Level 6 Core Modules and an extra placement module has been built into Media and Journalism for 2014/15. We have reviewed all modules to increase employability skills and to create new modules which are industry focused.

Identify mechanisms for increased recruitment to the PG programmes and consider strategies to improve completion rates.

The Department has a newly appointed Director role with a postgraduate remit. A programme of postgraduate funded studentships has been confirmed by the Executive. An MA in Luxury Band Management will launch in September 2014/15 and has been developed for both home and international markets. The postgraduate guidance and support system has been reviewed and revised.

Student experience

Further strengthen and standardise the communication back to students on the resolution of issues raised via programme committee or student reps.

Programme Leaders will feedback the responses from issues raised at programme committees via the ELP. Students will also be able to see the feedback from module review forms via the ELP.

Investigate potential inconsistencies / inequalities in the accessibility to student resources across the programmes for example, the equipment booking process, book stock, specialist equipment.

A new risk assessment system has been introduced to replace Parashoot. The 48 hour rule for booking equipment remains to allow the management of resources and risk assessments to be approved. Staff are being urged to submit reading lists to the library well in advance. Where particular issues are being raised in Programme Committee Meetings, the Programme Leader liaises with the library and module tutors.

Consideration to be given to the inclusion of 'live' broadcasting opportunities within the curriculum in order to better prepare students for the rigours of industry.

We are investigating the possibility of broadcasting the live work of Level 5 and Level 6 students on the screens on the third floor of the Squires Building.

Whilst the panel recognises the difficulty in securing effective placement opportunities for students, more consideration should be given to how this aspect of the provision could be enhanced to better support students and create a more equitable experience across all programmes.

Create opportunities to share best practice with regards to employability enhancement activities and ensure that these equitably apply to all programmes.

A placement module has been added to Media and Journalism for September 2014/15. The Director of Placements is reviewing the use of employer forums and how they can be developed.

Enhancement strategies

Consideration needs to be given to the internationalisation agenda with regards to curriculum development, student integration, support and mobility, including capitalising on the potential created by strategic international partnerships.

An international champion has been appointed to continue to develop student integration. We will also continue to review and develop the curriculum. A new induction programme has been developed for International students to address some of the issues around student integration. New Erasmus partnerships have also been developed.

Increase the provision of guest lecturers from industry to add value to the curriculum, but ensure that students are better prepared in order to benefit fully from this experience.

Guest speaker events are being organised in support of National Student Survey action plans. We have also begun to exchange industry events with other local universities to open up opportunities for students.

Within the new Faculty structure, establish mechanisms for the co-ordination and management of enhancement.

We will continue to develop our industry relationships. The Learning and Teaching Champion will be establishing mechanisms for the co-ordination and management of enhancement.

Further exploit the staff-employer contacts to create strategic employer partnerships.

We are planning to launch an employer work placement database.