

QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP MEETING

DRAMA & THEATRE STUDIES

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the quality review of Drama & Theatre Studies was held on 28 September 2009.

Present: Professor David Cox, Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences
Dr Ger FitzGibbon, Chair, Board of Drama & Theatre Studies
Dr Franc Chamberlain, Board of Drama & Theatre Studies
Dr Roisin O’Gorman, Board of Drama & Theatre Studies
Ms Bernadette Cronin, Board of Drama & Theatre Studies
Dr Norma Ryan, Director, Quality Promotion Unit
Ms Deirdre O’Brien, Administrative Officer, Quality Promotion Unit

General Comment

DTS were gratified by the overwhelmingly positive response of the PRG and concurred with the vast majority of their recommendations. DTS undertook to move ahead with the formulation of a Strategic Plan for the development of the discipline, bearing in mind the outcomes of the QR process and the recommendations of the PRG.

Accommodation: The PRG Report identified at several points the inadequacy of the current DTS specialist teaching space (one dedicated studio). DTS agreed wholeheartedly with this assessment and with the recommendation that a feasibility study be undertaken into development of a purpose-built centre to accommodate DTS on the Pres complex (possibly in conjunction with other disciplines such as Music). In the short term a second, larger, dedicated space needs to be provided as a basic facility as the shortage of appropriate teaching space impacts directly on all DTS undergraduate training, obstructs recruitment of practice-based researchers at MPhil/PhD levels and inhibits the research of staff in practice-based areas.

The PRG Report recommended urgent action regarding the current DTS office provision and that teaching and administrative staff be housed in the one building. Urgent action by the Space Allocation Committee is required.

Headship: DTS fully supported the recommendations that immediate steps be taken to second the current Head on a full-time basis to Drama & Theatre Studies and to seek the establishment of a discipline Chair. DTS felt that such a move is crucial for succession planning within the area.

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

HR: Human Resources

DTS: Drama & Theatre Studies

VP: Vice-President

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

CACSSS: College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences

SER: Self-Evaluation Report

| PRG Recommendation | QPC Recommendation | Action | Follow-up Report Sept 09 |
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| Recommendations to the University | | | |
| That the University should undertake to ensure the complete separation of financial matters (in terms of cost codes, etc.) for DTS from any department. | Recommendation endorsed. | Head College ACSSS | Implemented |

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| That the University develop its policies and workable formulae for budgetary aspects and resource allocation for interdisciplinary degree programmes in the context of the RAM (Resource Allocation Model). | Recommendation strongly endorsed | UMT | On-going. AC has approved a policy framework for interdisciplinary degree programmes. However modification of the RAM is still under consideration in the University. |
| Governance | | | |
| That a dedicated head of unit be appointed. | Recommendation strongly endorsed, noting however that if additional resources are required to implement this that the Head of College will need to allocate these and that this may not be possible immediately. | UMT Head College ACSSS | Not yet implemented. The Head of CACSSS declined to comment on this recommendation. The Board of Studies for DTS is being reconstituted along the lines of the AC Policy on Interdisciplinary Studies. The College ACSSS is still considering the issues. |
| Consideration be given by the University to ways of incentivising the participation of schools and colleges in interdisciplinary degrees. | Recommendation endorsed. QPC noted that if the funding and governance issues were resolved there would be greater participation | UMT | Not yet implemented. The new UCC Interdisciplinary Studies Policy, approved by AC, should address this recommendation. It was noted that the current funding cutbacks are de-incentivising. |
| Teaching and Learning/Accommodation | | | |
| <p>That access to specialist spaces is extended to facilitate teaching and learning agendas in DTS.</p> <p>That additional appropriate teaching space is made available to allow scope for expansion.</p> <p>That an immediate housing of all Drama & Theatre Studies staff (including teaching and administration staff) within the one building is essential.</p> <p>That the tension between the demands of the timetable and the need to travel between teaching spaces should be urgently addressed.</p> <p>That a purpose built accommodation would be</p> | Recommendation endorsed. | Head of College ACSSS Space Committee UMT | Not yet implemented. The space currently occupied by DTS is not sufficient for their teaching requirements. It was noted that issues of space allocation are a matter for the Head of College ACSSS in the first instance. The Head of College is a member of the University Space Committee. |

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| desirable and important. | | | |
| That a designated placement co-ordinator to prepare students and supervisors {for placement} is necessary for optimum results. | Recommendation endorsed. | Director Board of Studies Head College ACSSS | Not implemented. A designated placement co-ordinator has not been put in place; however, this module is now optional and this has relieved the burden of work somewhat for DTS. The role is shared among the members of the Board of Studies. |
| Curriculum Development | | | |
| That a single honours undergraduate programme in DTS is introduced and that the University seeks to facilitate this development through appropriate resourcing of the discipline. | Recommendation endorsed. QPC noted that this is not solely at the discretion of the Board of Directors or the Head of College and discussions need to take place within the College as to how this is implemented. | Director Board of Studies Head College ACSSS | Not yet implemented This recommendation has been stalled to due a lack of resources and space; however DTS are still considering this recommendation in the context of developing their 5 year strategic plan. |
| Research and Scholarly Activity | | | |
| That a research officer be appointed with a clear remit to further promote and progress the research agenda, including the 4 th level agenda and to increase the number of PhD students | Recommendation strongly endorsed QPC noted that a Research officer is already in place and welcomed positive response of the Board of Studies and the actions planned | Director Board of Studies | Implemented. DTS have a research officer in place and will move to extend and define more clearly the remit to include 4 th level recruitment. |
| Staff Development | | | |
| That greater opportunities for sabbatical/research leave to pursue research agenda(s) are provided. | Recommendation endorsed in principle QPC noted the request for additional resources necessary to implement this recommendation and recommended that the staff and Board of Studies discuss these with the Head of College. | Head College ACSSS | Not yet implemented. The Head of College is currently considering how to implement sabbatical leave in smaller departments. |
| That each member of staff is supported in constructing a five year research plan. | Recommendation strongly endorsed | Director Board of Studies | Not yet implemented in full. The Research Officer is currently drawing up a 5 year plan for DTS; individuals will be supported in contributing to the |

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| | | | plan and the plan will reflect individual contributions. DTS was awaiting the outcomes of the research quality review conducted by UCC in 2008/09 to finalise the research plan. |
| That the issues around the tension that staff experience in terms of their own career advancement are addressed, specifically in terms of balancing research, teaching and professional responsibilities. | Recommendation strongly endorsed | Director Board of Studies Head College ACSSS | On-going, DTS will continue to seek innovative ways of reconciling these demands in the context of its Strategic Plan. |
| Staffing | | | |
| That a Chair in Drama & Theatre Studies be established. | Recommendation endorsed in principle QPC noted that additional resources will be required to implement this recommendation and that the decision as to whether a Chair be appointed is for the UMT | Head College ACSSS UMT | Not yet implemented. DTS strongly support this recommendation which has been re-iterated in the Research Review report. The Head of College is of the view that the Chair is unlikely to be established in the near future due to the current economic situation. |
| That there is an increase in staffing and other resources for DTS, both as a precondition of single honours provision and to progress the 4 th level agenda. | QPC noted the recommendation and the response of the Board of Studies QPC recommends that the Board continue to progress and develop programmes in DTS, noting the interest and increasing numbers of students registering for the existing programmes. Increases in student numbers will assist in the direction of resources towards the programme | Director Board of Studies Head College ACSSS | Not yet implemented. DTS are still in the process of considering the introduction of single honours programme in the context of developing their 5 year plan. DTS are not entirely in agreement that an increase in staffing is a prerequisite for this to occur; amendment of priorities may also facilitate introduction of the single honours programme. |
| That the current over-reliance on part time and contract staff is redressed. | Noted the recommendation and the response of the Board of Studies | Director Board of Studies | Not implemented. DTS continue to use contract staff as these working professionals bring valuable skills to the programme. |
| That a clear succession plan is needed to ensure the ongoing growth and development of DTS | Recommendation endorsed. | Head College ACSSS UMT | Not implemented. The Head of CACSSS confirmed that there is no succession planning in the College and that this is a very difficult issue at the |

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| | | | moment due to the current economic situation. CACSSS is adopting a reactive approach rather than a proactive one. |
| That additional teaching and technical staff are needed to consolidate developments and to progress DTS profile both nationally and internationally | Endorsed in principle QPC noted that in the current financial restrictions progress may be slow in this area | Head College ACSSS | Not implemented. Contrary to international norms, DTS do not employ any technical staff. Some technical support is provided from part-time staff. |
| That a strategy regarding staff progression and the development of promotional opportunities and career paths for staff in DTS is essential. | Endorsed – applicable to all staff in UCC | Head College ACSSS UMT | Not yet implemented. The University has incorporated these issues in its strategic plan. Staff in DTS will be able to avail, as all staff in UCC, of any promotional opportunities etc. as they arise. |
| Recommendations to the Board of Studies | | | |
| That DTS develops a strategic plan by the end of 2008, led by someone with appropriate leadership skills and experience such as the current Director, working with the Management Committee | Recommendation strongly endorsed. This is essential if some of the other recommendations are to be implemented | Board of Studies | On-going. DTS is currently developing a five-year strategic plan. |
| That the interdisciplinary basis of the taught programme be reviewed and negotiated to address issues of strategic and operational management in the context of structural changes within the institution. | Recommendation endorsed QPC welcomed response of Board of Studies which included a commitment to development of a strategy for DTS. | Board of Studies Head College ACSSS | On-going. Will be implemented following development of the strategic plan for DTA and in line with the new policy for governance of interdisciplinary programmes approved by AC in 2008/09. |
| Governance | | | |
| That DTS moves to more formalised structures. The opportunity exists under restructuring to suggest new structures. | Recommendation strongly endorsed QPC welcomed response and actions already taken | Board of Studies | Implemented. DTS have put formalised structures in place, including a Management Committee, consisting of the Head of Discipline and all fulltime staff. Allocated duties (e.g. appointment of a Research Officer) have also been assigned. |
| That there needs to be a suitable academic synergy between DTS and future partners. | Recommendation strongly endorsed | Board of Studies | On-going. DTS are currently pursuing potential connections with other |

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| | | | HE institutions. |
| That a five year plan needs to be constructed incorporating specific preferences regarding the alignment of DTS with other departments/disciplines. | Recommendation strongly endorsed | Board of Studies | On-going. School affiliation is being addressed under the five year plan. |
| That the management committee should make recommendations to the Board of Studies regarding proposals for the strategic development of DTS. Once the position of DTS within the new structures has been consolidated, the new DTS Board of Studies should begin by establishing clear terms of reference. | Recommendation endorsed | Management Committee Board of Studies | On-going. This is being addressed under the five year plan currently under development. |
| That students be represented on the Board of Studies and/or a formal staff:student liaison committee be established. | Recommendation strongly endorsed QPC welcomed action already undertaken in regard to implementation | Board of Studies | Not implemented. Students are not represented on the Board of Studies. DTS feel that current informal structures re staff:student liaison are working well and that a formal committee is not necessary at this point in time given the small number of students in DTS. Year coordinators have been appointed. |
| Teaching and Learning | | | |
| That feedback on assignments and performances is more structured. Specific protocols need to be developed and formalised. | Strongly endorsed QPC welcomed action already undertaken in regard to implementation | Board of Studies | Implemented. The Board has put in place an undergraduate Student Handbook including information on general grade indicators to assist this process and is actively reviewing its arrangements for feedback on assignments and student progress. |
| That the placement is located in the Easter period. | QPC noted the response of the Board of Studies and recommended that the Board of Studies implement the best practice possible in the light of present resources and circumstance | Board of Studies | Not implemented. DTS do not agree with this recommendation as it is not practicable. The Board are implementing best practice possible in the light of present resources and circumstances. |
| That there are more formalised | Recommendation endorsed | Board of | Implemented |

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| <p>support structures within DTS for students including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement coordination and support, including preparing the students in advance. | | Studies | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction support for First Year students, particularly mature students on the BA and MA courses. | Recommendation endorsed. QPC noted and welcomed actions already underway | Board of Studies | Implemented. DTS is providing First year students with orientation sessions and a detailed student handbook to assist induction. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That specific roles and responsibilities of staff are established, including year co-ordinators and research officer. | Endorsed | Board of Studies | Implemented |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear mechanisms and protocols are required for feedback on written and practical work and for maintaining ongoing communication with students. | Recommendation strongly endorsed | Board of Studies | Ongoing. Some mechanisms have been formalised in the handbook. |
| That an exit presentation for students be considered which includes career planning, preparation for interview and construction of CVs and other issues relating to their future outside of UCC. | Recommendation endorsed QPC noted and welcomed planned actions | Board of Studies | Ongoing. DTS continue to try and improve in this area. Professionals have been invited in to speak to the final year students regarding career options. |
| Curriculum Development | | | |
| That the more technical and administrative areas of the course are further developed. | Recommendation endorsed Noted comments of Board | Board of Studies | Not implemented. DTS agrees with the recommendation as being desirable but points out that this is dependant on staffing. DTS does not have any fulltime technical staff. |
| That the issues which emerged from discussions with students around weightings are addressed. | Recommendation endorsed | Board of Studies | Implemented. DTS has taken steps to redistribute some workloads related in particular to Year III and will take this issue into account in reviewing the overall degree structure. |
| Research and Scholarly Activity | | | |

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| That the connections between DTS and the VP for Research be extended. | Recommendation endorsed | Board of Studies VP Research | Ongoing. |
| That DTS should take an active role in the development of new models of clustered research thereby, building on the existing connections. | Recommendation endorsed | Board of Studies | Not yet implemented. This recommendation will be considered in the context of the five year plan currently under development and incorporating recommendations from the research quality review. |
| That an integrated research strategy be drafted in Drama & Theatre Studies and that a Research Committee attached to the discipline be established to facilitate this; to explore synergies and common themes in the research of all staff and to explore the potential for the joint submission of applications for research funding | Recommendation endorsed | Board of Studies | Ongoing. DTS is considering all of these issues in the development of the 5 year plan. |
| That <i>Perforum</i> should be further developed. <i>Perforum</i> was identified as a unique contribution that DTS makes to the broader cultural life of Cork and anchors it within this context. | Recommendation endorsed QPC noted comments re funding requirements | Board of Studies | Not implemented. Due to cutbacks in expenditure. DTS is considering how this can be achieved either through identifying a sponsor or through linking <i>Perforum</i> to research strategy in order to maximise effectiveness. |
| Communications | | | |
| That communicating with other key areas of the university is important and that DTS needs to represent its own interests better – optimally drawing on the wider resources of the university and becoming a more visible presence. | Recommendation endorsed QPC noted that this is linked to the lack of university –wide management and governance structures for interdisciplinary programmes | Board of Studies | Ongoing. DTS is encouraging its staff to participate, where possible, in university committees. |
| That the website is upgraded and regularly maintained for optimum profile. | Recommendation strongly endorsed | Board of Studies | Ongoing. |