

## TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN



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### PROVOST'S REPORT TO COUNCIL ON THE REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL OF DRAMA, FILM AND MUSIC

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the outcome of a review of the School of Drama, Film & Music. An external peer review visitation was undertaken from the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010 by Professor Maureen Carr, Pennsylvania State University, Professor Roberta Pearson, University of Nottingham and Professor Chris Balme, University of Munich. The internal facilitator was Dr Sarah Smyth, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies, Trinity College Dublin.

The report is based on (i) feedback from the External Reviewers received on the 9<sup>th</sup> August 2010, (ii) a submission from the School of Drama, Film & Music received on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and (iii) a submission from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences received on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

The main purpose of the School review is (a) to provide a structured opportunity for the School to reflect on its activities and plans for development, while benefiting from a constructive commentary by senior colleagues external to College; (b) to ensure that quality and standards in teaching, research and administration are being maintained and enhanced and that areas of concern in this regard are identified and addressed. Each School in College is reviewed systematically once every seven years.

#### 2. OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL

##### 2.1 Aims and Objectives of the School

The School of Drama, Film & Music was formed on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2006 with the merging of the Schools of Music and of Drama/Film. The School aims to be the primary centre for arts research and teaching in Ireland. Each of the School's three disciplines is committed to providing research-led teaching to an international student community at undergraduate and postgraduate level and aims to build a graduate student environment that is interdisciplinary in essence and international in outlook. The School hopes to establish the Samuel Beckett Centre for the Arts (a multi-purpose arts venue), expanding the existing theatre resources to include a cinema and concert hall, as well as provide a corporate identity for the School to help foster interdisciplinarity in all its activities. This new centre will be the focus for the arts in College, will provide access to the arts for the wider Dublin community, and will attract the very best international practitioners. The School also seeks to develop an arts technology initiative combining the expertise of all three disciplines that will be at the cutting edge of arts teaching and research internationally, while interacting productively with stakeholders in the professions. It will also help develop an Academy for

the Dramatic Art (ADA) that will provide professional training in acting, directing, playwriting, design, etc in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London (RADA).

## 2.2 Programmes to which the School provides teaching

### Undergraduate:

- ✓ B.A. in Drama & Theatre Studies
- ✓ B.A. in Music
- ✓ TSM

### Postgraduate:

- ✓ M.Phil in Theatre & Performance
- ✓ M.Phil in Irish Film, Music & Theatre
- ✓ M.Phil in Film Theory & History
- ✓ M.Phil in Music & Media Technologies

## 2.3 Research

The School of Drama, Film and Music aims to be the primary centre for research and teaching in Drama, Film and Music in Ireland. It aims to establish the Samuel Beckett Centre for the Arts, to include a theatre, cinema and a venue for the performance of contemporary music, as well as provide a corporate identity for the School to help foster interdisciplinarity in all its activities. It also seeks to develop the Arts Technology Research Lab as a cutting edge facility and encourage practice-based research in all three disciplines.

**Drama Studies** has a wide range of research interests consistent with a small department. Its strengths currently lie in the field of Irish Theatre, Shakespeare, Theatre and Nation, Interculturalism and globalization, and Performance and Technology. These principal research activities fit squarely with the College's strategic plan. From a research perspective, the profile of **Film Studies** is at present most associated with the study of Irish cinema and the cinemas of the Irish diaspora. The three principal areas of research expertise in **Music** are musicology and analysis, composition, and music technology.

## 2.4 Summary Statistical Profile of the School for the Academic Year 2008/09<sup>1</sup>

Full-time Staff FTE	Undergraduate FTE	Postgraduate FTE	School Staff: Student Ratio	Faculty Staff: Student Ratio
<b>16</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>

<sup>1</sup> The staff FTEs include all Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers funded from the core HEA grant, or from self-financing courses, and all part-time and occasional staff and demonstrators, converted to an FTE, who are funded from core grant or from self-financing courses.

Figures from Senior Lecturer's Annual Report approved by Council at its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009

## **2.5 Accommodation and Facilities (Physical Resources)**

The School is based across five separate locations – The Samuel Beckett Centre, the Film Department on Pearse St, House 5, Áras an Phiarsaigh and the Arts Technology Research Laboratory (ATR) off Pearse St. A single building complex with designated spaces for the individual needs of the disciplines, together with a large number of shared spaces, would address the current needs of all three disciplines and also lead to an expansion of research possibilities.

### **Drama**

The Samuel Beckett Centre opened in 1992 to house the Department of Drama. It contains the Samuel Beckett Theatre, a black-box space with flexible seating (maximum 210) and a 13m by 13m stage area; a dance studio rehearsal space (11m x 11m); a small foyer; 7 academic staff offices on the top floor, 4 administration offices on the ground floor; a seminar room with AV facilities (seating 20); a costume construction room; a carpenter's shop and technical office; dressing rooms and sanitary facilities; and a basement for storage. In addition, the Centre houses a small theatre and rehearsal room for Dublin University Players, a student dramatic society which operates independently of the Department of Drama. The Department also occupies two small acting studios at the rear of 191 and 192 Pearse St., each approximately 60 square metres in size.

### **Film**

Film Studies occupies rooms in early 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings facing Pearse St. These buildings are unsuitable and cramped for the subject, not available to a student with a mobility disability, and, like the other four sites of the School, do not benefit from the synergies which would flow if the School was based in the same building.

### **Music**

All the Music Department's premises are in House 5, Front Square apart from the M.Phil. course facilities in Aras an Phiarsaigh and the research facilities in the ATRL (Arts, Technology Research Laboratory), which is located in the Trinity Tech Campus off Pearse St. In House 5, there are four small rooms available for teaching, and one large room. Three of the smaller rooms will take up to 15 students, and one will take around 20. There is one room that can take up to 50 students. This large room is under especially severe pressure, partly because it is the only place with built-in projection facilities. There are two small studios; but neither is adequately soundproofed; nor is there a live room. The main teaching and workstation room has just 11 workstations. Especially towards the ends of terms, or when assignments are due, the pressure on these facilities is extreme. For that reason, students have 24-hour access. That pressure is all the more significant because of the need for technological access by all students.

### 3. REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS

The Reviewers recommend that;

1. A systematic sabbatical system be instituted;
2. A systematic mentoring of early career researchers be instituted with regard to publication strategies and the pursuit of external funding;
3. Greater emphasis be put upon the pursuit of external funding and upon collaboration with external bodies;
4. Issues of creative practice and practice based research be addressed;
5. Robust student feedback systems be instituted;
6. Greater administrative oversight of M.Phil degrees be created;
7. Greater integration of teaching across the school and across other disciplines be facilitated;
8. Movement of students across disciplines be encouraged;
9. Mandatory training and supervision of post-graduate teaching assistants be imposed;
10. More systematic professional training of postgraduates be provided;
11. The School should cease the proliferation of M.Phil degrees; in particular do not institute an M.Phil in digital film theory and practice unless there is adequate staffing and resources;
12. The launch of a single-honours Film degree should not go ahead; there simply aren't the resources to do this. Similarly they urge caution with regard to the institution of a structured PhD based in Film.
13. Rationalisation of administrative structures should be encouraged to prevent duplication of roles;
14. Centralization of the budget in the School should be considered if this is in keeping with College policy, while at the same time providing individual allocations for each of the disciplines to cover operating costs;
15. A full time position for a school administrator be provided;
16. The issue of the School deficit be addressed;
17. The re-integration of Film into Drama should be considered, since Film seems to be experiencing the most severe difficulties with regard to research and teaching. The difficulties suggest that Film is not a large enough unit to exist independently.
18. The College should urgently formulate short-term ways in which to address the lack of teaching resources as well as formulating a longer term plan for a single, well-equipped building to house the School;
19. If the school is going to rise to the Provost's challenge to the disciplines within the School to align themselves with the creative industries, then a significant infusion of funds will be required to ameliorate the weaknesses pointed out in this report. The reviewers recommend that a cost item analysis be conducted at the School level as part of a strategic plan in order to show what it would take to realize the enormous potential of the School for meeting the Provost's challenge.

#### 4. PROVOST'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

In the light of the Review Report and the responses from the School of Drama, Film & Music and the Faculty Dean, it is recommended that:

1. The School working closely with the Dean of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and other relevant Academic Officers, should consider the detailed recommendations of the Review Report and draw up an implementation plan<sup>2</sup> for Council approval.
2. The School of Drama, Film and Music, in conjunction with the Faculty Dean, the Vice-Provost and other relevant College Officers, should seek to grow its teaching staff from its existing baseline of 16 to 30 over the next five to ten years through, among other things, actively recruiting practitioners as adjunct professors and lecturers to contribute to the teaching of existing and new courses. The use of practitioners will not only enhance the School's creative capacity but will also significantly enrich the student experience.

#### 5. REVIEWER'S REPORT

##### **Quality Review: School of Drama, Film & Music, University of Dublin Trinity College<sup>3</sup>**

**External Reviewers:** Professor Christopher Balme, University of Munich  
Professor Maureen Carr, Pennsylvania State University  
Professor Roberta Pearson, University of Nottingham

The reviewers were provided with full and extensive documentation that described all aspects of the School's teaching, research and administration. The reviewers met with members of the staff and the administration as well as with students for full and frank discussions related to all dimensions of the School's activities. Members of the staff representing the Quality Office provided excellent support both before and during the reviewers' visit and are to be commended for the thoroughness of their efforts as are members of the administrative staff within the disciplines of the School who were involved in preparations for the review. The Internal Facilitator and the Head of School provided invaluable assistance to the reviewers.

The School came into being on 13 July 2006 with the merging of the Schools of Music and of Drama/Film and is still adjusting to the amalgamation of its various components into one administrative unit. Nevertheless, there is enormous potential for the School to benefit in terms of research, creative activity, and teaching from the synergies amongst its individual disciplines as well as the opportunity to engage with the creative industries at local, national

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<sup>2</sup> See Procedures and Protocol for Quality Review of Schools 2008/09 at <http://www.tcd.ie/vp-cao/qu/qopdf/adrapp2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Sections of this report have been edited for presentation to Council; names of individual staff members have been removed, and some typographical errors corrected.

and international levels. At present, however, the School suffers from severe limitations in its infrastructural and human resources, while the proliferation and duplication of administrative structures are placing heavy burdens on staff. Cohesion and forward planning are hindered by the physical dispersion across the campus, the maintenance of devolved cost centres, the employment of numbers of fixed-term contract staff, the hiring freeze, and uncertainties about the extent of the School's financial deficit. The development of a long-term strategic vision is quite difficult given all of these constraints.

### **Research and Scholarly Activity**

The level of research and scholarly activity varies considerably across the three disciplines.

Some senior members of staff within Drama are well known in the international community and are highly visible. Newer colleagues are gaining visibility quickly, especially the initiator and director of the new Arts Technology Research Laboratory (ATRL). Over the past five years staff members have published a number of monographs and edited volumes, most with highly reputable publishers such as CUP, OUP, Palgrave MacMillan and Routledge. In addition, one member of the academic staff is co-editor of a very active book series, 'Studies in International Performance'. In general we can say that the Drama Department is publishing consistently and to the highest international standards.

Film is less active in research terms but two of its academics have clear and distinct research profiles in Irish cinema - one has produced several monographs and edited collections on Irish cinema and the other a monograph on Irish cinema with Routledge as well as a number of edited volumes, one of which is with Wallflower, an up and coming press in the field. The focus on Irish cinema, however, will inevitably constrain international visibility. One academic staff member has imminent potential with a co-edited collection with Rodopi Press, Amsterdam including a co-authored introduction and single authored chapter. While collectively the staff are quite productive and Film has a national profile, it will struggle to achieve an international profile given current research foci, publication strategies and staff numbers.

Within the Music discipline, there are four streams: Musicology, Theory, Composition and Music Technology – with staff members who are recognized nationally and internationally and have published their research with prestigious presses, such as Cambridge University Press and Amadeus (in conjunction with the Paul Sacher Stiftung of Basel, Switzerland). Commissions have also been received from all over the world to write compositions and one member of staff is currently working on a piece to be performed at Carnegie Hall in 2011. Accomplishments by another staff member in sound design are well known through activities locally as well as in Seville and Edinburgh. In addition, half-time members of the music discipline are research active: one plans to produce editions of representative works commissioned by the Cork International Choral Festival, while another is known internationally for his research and writes on music for *The Irish Times*. It is hoped that these part-time colleagues will be granted full-time status in the Music discipline because of the high quality of their work and because of the instructional needs brought about by increased enrolment. The musicology position that is currently unfilled should be reinstated immediately in order to maintain the excellence of the research profile. Additional full time

faculty staffing in music technology will be necessary to support the anticipated new position in composition.

The School has recently attracted significant external research funding for the ATRL (1.7 million) and an additional 125K from the HEA for high definition video capture equipment. These developments have the potential for significant impact upon the School's research and postgraduate environment. However, the majority of staff in the School have not attracted significant external funding and greater efforts need to be made in this regard. There seems to be the absence of a research culture that encourages external grant application, although the establishment of the new research committee might address this to some extent.

The reviewers note with concern that staff research profiles are negatively impacted by the absence of a systematic research leave scheme. We urge the institution to develop a centrally administered scheme that would enable staff to have study leave on a regular basis. The status of creative practice and the potential for practice-based research should also be urgently addressed, particularly in light of the potential for collaboration with external bodies.

## **Teaching and Learning**

### **Undergraduate curriculum**

**Drama and theatre studies** offer both single honours and TSM degree programs. In the student intake from 2006/07- 2009/10 65 students were doing the single honours degree, with 92 TSM students for the same academic years 2006/07 -2009/10. Instruction in both programs balances academic and practical work whereby a single honours program has a higher percentage of practical instruction than TSM. Most courses/modules consist of a combination of lectures, seminars, and practical workshops. External examiners consistently rate the academic achievements of students very highly so that the external reviewers have little criticism in this respect. The large amount of practical work in drama, while unusual for a university, is quite in keeping with the way this subject is taught at UK universities in particular and in other English-speaking countries.

Interviews with students have drawn attention to a number of deficiencies in the teaching program, although student assessment of undergrad teaching was overall very positive. Specific areas of criticism relate to the use of log books as a form of assessment. While students praised the log book as a helpful means of reflective practice which is especially useful for revision of practical classes, they critiqued the grading of the logbooks "as being too arbitrary" and highly heterogeneous as assessment differs markedly from colleague to colleague. Nevertheless marking criteria are set out in the undergraduate handbook. Students were very positive in their overall assessment of staff accessibility, although they did note that one or two staff members were particularly difficult to contact. They regretted that there was no form of organised feedback between students and staff members and said that the review procedure itself was the first meeting of its kind they had experienced. They also stressed the need for student evaluation of classes or modules, which does not take place.

They also noted considerable differences in the standard of teaching between experienced staff members and teaching assistants. They were especially hopeful that in the future such teaching assistants should be made to attend an in-service training course before they begin teaching. The students also made more specific recommendations; such as making reading lists available much earlier; they also wanted provision of reading texts to be made available on Blackboard or available in PDFs, either of which would constitute a marked improvement compared to existing practices. Generally, they welcome better and more intensive use of the existing theatre space for drama instruction. (The reviewers were later told that this under utilization is temporarily due to the phasing out of the acting degree). The external reviewers passed on these criticisms and suggestions to staff members, who welcomed this feedback.

Staff Feedback: **Department of Drama** – students criticisms were discussed with the Department of Drama staff who reacted positively to the suggestions made. Staff agreed that they need a standardized system of criteria for assessing the logbooks and some staff stressed that they already distributed reading material through Blackboard and email. There was agreement that a new high quality copier with a scanning network facility should be purchased to facilitate the distribution of texts. Student requests for more practical work in the theatre is restricted by teaching loads and the current staffing levels are such that courses are extremely time consuming – a practical course leading to a production usually involves staff members in a 60 hour week. It was mentioned however that the department is investigating the possibility of a director-in-residence who would be primarily responsible for supervising productions. The current staffing situation means that some teaching loads are too heavy and the fluctuation in staff members means it is sometimes difficult to deliver consistent courses over long periods of time. There was general agreement that academic teaching space in the Beckett centre is inadequate though the theatre itself is a major asset. The external reviewers regard the option of relocating the dept and the school to the area adjacent to the ATRL as a positive step forward, although timetabling, especially for TSM students, was seen as a major problem as was the separation from life on the main campus that might occur. Staff voiced significant reservations and such a move would have to be very carefully considered.

The **film studies** staff are delivering a solid, if traditional film studies course that concentrates on film theory, history and criticism with a focus on national cinemas (Irish, European and American). The decision to establish a programme dealing solely with film rather than including other media was made in order to distinguish the TCD programme from media studies programmes available at other Irish universities as well as with regard to the very small number of staff on the programme. An additional motivation was the need to dovetail with the rather traditional humanities disciplines which form the other component of the TSM courses. Students reported that generally the two elements of the TSM dovetailed well. There is a degree of progression within the course from the beginning training in history and theory to the optional modules available in the later years and to the dissertation which permits students to engage in extensive study of a topic of personal interest. Students are also given the opportunity to have some practical experience in modules such as Digital Video Production (compulsory for Junior Sophisters), Scriptwriting (compulsory for Junior Sophisters), Editing (optional for Junior and Senior Sophisters), and Practical Documentary (optional for Junior and Senior Sophisters). External examiners have



reported favourably both on the overall curriculum and upon pedagogy. Staff, however, are aware of the limitations of the current curriculum, particularly with regard to the inclusion of modules on non-Western cinemas. Staff are hoping that a new blood hire in the area of digital film will permit the inclusion of modules on digital film production and digital film theory. As it stands, the programme's intellectual aspirations are comparable to well-established programmes in both the UK and the US which focus solely on the medium of film.

Students reported that they were drawn to the programme precisely because of the opportunity to fully engage with the discipline over the four years of the course. Students generally reported satisfaction with the curriculum and with the delivery of modules. However, a review of current modules, together with discussions with students and staff have highlighted some areas for improvement with regard to teaching and learning strategies.

- 1) The assessment on the large majority of modules consists simply of traditional essays and exams. While staff are somewhat constrained by College regulations concerning the percentage of unseen exams required on a degree course, reviewers urge that they begin to think more creatively about assessment and consider the inclusion of group work, presentations, learning journals and the like. The current assessment strategy is not providing students with the transferable skills that they will require for employment.
- 2) Students reported that seminars are run along traditional lines, focused almost entirely on the discussion of the week's reading rather than on more innovative activities. Some students observed that the size of seminar groups in one module of twenty five students was the same as the lecture size (students are not split into two groups for seminars). Students are concerned about the lack of feedback related to participation in seminars.
- 3) Film staff reported on-going discussions regarding developing relationships with the film industry and with practice-focused educational institutions, especially Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology's National Film School as well as frequent classroom visits by external practitioners. Students however did not mention these developments and expressed a desire for greater contact with local and national industries.
- 3) Students expressed frustration with the number of film options available in their third and fourth years, which forces them to take modules in other subjects in the School. Students fear that this disadvantages them relative to the other students in the module and might result in lower marks, of particular concern when the marks count towards their degree class. This is particularly the case this year with a music module taught by Dr. Simon Tresize and administered by the Music department which requires the final essay to be submitted in DVD form; film students say that they don't have the requisite technological skills to do the assignment.
- 4) There appears to be a discrepancy between staff views that robust student feedback systems are in place and student views that student feedback is not very effective. This is an area that the School should review. Class representatives were generally seen as more interested in the social than the pedagogical aspects of the course.

**Music:** The undergraduate students in the Single Honours (77) and TSM (32) participate in a logical sequence of modules that are scheduled to take place over all four years. External examiners expressed high praise for the quality of instruction and the music reviewer reaffirmed this opinion after looking at the reports of the external examiners and at some of

the graded assignments. The content of these courses/modules is in keeping with the curriculum at top tier research institutions in the USA and other English-speaking countries. The pedagogy meets the highest national and international standards.

Staff report that there are not as many modules available to students as in previous years due to staff cutbacks which results in fewer choices for the students. The students are excited about the material taught within the modules and commented on how the different modules complement each other. Students praised faculty members for being so approachable and are pleased that they are being taught by experts in their fields of study in Musicology, Theory, Composition and Music Technology. In this time of transition to the semester system students feel that more balance should be established from one module to another, so that credit weightings will be distributed equitably across the modules. Students look forward to more standardisation or harmonisation. Students were particularly interested in the various emphases on performance practice; students were intrigued to use 17<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts for interpreting musical notation. They were also inspired by the study of the musical sketches in comparison with musical scores. At the same time, students are very concerned about the increase in enrolments in specific modules. In their own words, they wrote the following: "The limited staff means that the . . . pressure placed upon staffing issues due to unforeseen circumstances throws much of the department into disarray. Lecturers do try and deal with this as best they can." Having acknowledged the fact that they appreciate being taught by experts in their fields of study, students are concerned that the current budget shortfall has necessitated the use of non specialists in the teaching of certain lectures. Students expressed the need for a practical course in the techniques of orchestration.

Staff reinforced the concern about the lack of sufficient instructional staff to take up the enrolment increase especially in the core modules required of students in all four streams of the Music discipline. Emergency measures should be taken to restore the position in musicology that was left vacant when a colleague left to take a position at Duke University. The position in question was one of two posts created after the failed search to fill the Music Chair in the last century. The decrease in staffing coincided with the increase in enrolment and threatens to undermine the quality of instruction and the excellent reputation of the Music discipline at Trinity. Graduates of the College who graduated in one of the areas of the Music discipline have distinguished themselves in the field – most especially Dr. Aine Heneghan who teaches at a leading University in the USA and is an Oxford University Press author.

Other graduates have gone on for further studies in Hungary and in Austria.

Students also feel that Music is not taken "seriously as an academic course. . . . It seems that the University is essentially unaware of how much music is an ongoing learning process where each facet affects every other part of the course, and cannot be modularised in the same way that other subjects can." The music reviewer encourages the administration to fill the musicology position and to expand the two part time positions to full time to demonstrate that they do take the Music discipline seriously as an academic course.

Students also expressed the need for additional practice rooms, mentioning that "Two practice rooms between around 100 students, which will probably increase to around 140 students in the next couple of years, does not cover our needs by a long shot." They are also

concerned about problems of sound transmission. The music reviewer also encourages the administration to address technology needs in the class room. For example, a document reader would enable students to share the results of their analytical assignments for the sake of discussion. The students already seem quite proficient with matters of technology, based on brief conversations with students using the new computer equipment.

**School.** There seem to be deficiencies in some disciplines within the School with regard to robust systems of student evaluation and feedback and with the performance of teaching assistants, who do not seem to be receiving consistent mandatory training prior to teaching or consistent weekly supervision by module convenors.

A final observation regarding the Bologna system: although courses are called modules and provided with ECTS points, there were questions whether modularization has been implemented properly. Since definitions tend to vary from country to country and even from university to university, the reviewers were not really qualified to make a clear assessment. A module usually consists of at least two separate classes in Germany taught by different instructors. The Student Information System (SIS) is not compatible with modularisation at present in TCD even though the College encourages it.

### **Postgraduate courses**

The School should review postgraduate administrative structures. The director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning reported that almost all of her time is spent on PhD matters and that the individual heads of each discipline have primary responsibility for the individual M.Phils. This may partially account for some of the severe problems with the M.Phil in Film Theory and History reported below. While the reviewers applaud the establishment of the School's new research committee, the specific responsibilities of each administrative post need to be clearly set forth. In particular, the remit terms of reference for the director of research and director teaching and learning needs to be brought into line with College practice.

### **Doctoral Training**

The School has a large number of PhD students and many staff are at maximum supervision capacity (a particular problem in Film given the very small number of staff). The main problem apart from staffing is to attract adequate scholarship funding, a problem exacerbated by the recent economic downturn. Currently there is only one scholarship across the whole school for both currently enrolled students and new students. In addition the new four year completion rule is seen to be placing additional pressures on students, many of whom have to work to support their studies. The course coordinators remarked that the new PAC online admissions system was extraordinarily inefficient.

Staff perceived a weekly research seminar for theatre and film PhD students as highly effective in delivering research training and a supportive research culture. Staff and students reported that in addition there was a two hour training session on professional development which addressed issues such as cv writing, getting published and employment. The reviewers consider that this one-off provision does not constitute adequate

professional training and that the School might consider more systematic delivery across the entire course of study.

The assessment of the PhD and post-docs within the school was overwhelmingly positive. Candidates expressed satisfaction with the degree of supervision that they receive as well as opportunities afforded to teach. Music PhD candidates regretted that there was no systematic research seminar/colloquium comparable to that offered to film and theatre students. There was also interest expressed in receiving structured student evaluations of their teaching; some teaching assistants/PhD candidates appeared unaware of the training possibilities offered. We strongly recommend that all doctoral students teaching on the undergraduate course be required to undertake training before teaching and that this requirement should be clearly and unequivocally communicated. A doctoral candidate in film currently teaching on the undergraduate course reported that she wasn't required to attend the module lectures, instead being provided with the lecturers' power point presentations. She also reported that while she received some general guidance at the beginning of the semester with regard to leading seminars, she did not meet on a weekly basis with the module convenor to discuss the teaching and learning strategies for that week's seminars. This is unacceptable both in terms of the quality of undergraduate teaching and the professional training of doctoral candidates and could well result in student complaints (see above for one such complaint). By contrast the music students seem to be closely mentored by the module convenors. Although film students are speaking regularly at conferences the perception of the reviewers is that students receive their information primarily from Drama. It was difficult for the reviewers to assess how effective the PhD Reading Group operates as a Forum for communication in Film Studies. The reviewers think that there could be improvement in this area which would be of great benefit to the research culture amongst the film doctoral students. The film PhD reading group on the other hand was praised as being an effective forum for discussing current research in the field.

### **MPhil degrees**

The School offers four postgraduate degree courses at MPhil level: the MPhil in Irish Film, Music and Theatre, the MPhil in Film Theory and History, the MPhil Theatre and Performance and MPhil in Music and Media Technologies. Some of these courses have been running for a few years, some are new courses. The large number of courses on offer or in the planning stage can only be explained by the monetary incentives provided. At present schools can immediately invest any revenue earned from MPhil courses which may be the main reason for offering so many even though staffing levels in this very overstretched School are probably not really adequate to this level of post-graduate teaching. In addition there is a proposed MPhil in Theory and Composition which will come on stream if another composer is recruited to the dept. An MPhil in musicology and theory has been approved but not yet offered to students. The MPhil in Music and media technology is seen by staff as hugely successful but also very expensive. This program was also assessed by the reviewers in very positive terms regarding its innovative potential and ability to attract high quality students.

Three MPhil degree courses have a full compliment of students; 50% of them are overseas, non-EU students, who bring in significant revenues for the School. In the MPhil Theatre and

Performance there were last year 40 applicants for 15 places. The relatively new MPhil in Film Theory and History began in 2006 and currently has fourteen students enrolled. The modules on this degree are all delivered separately from undergraduate provision. The MPhil in Irish Film, Music and Theatre has only begun this year and is undersubscribed with only 5 students (three Irish students); this situation could be addressed through better publicity. The MPhil in Theatre and Performance currently has 13 students and draws from the senior sophister courses to provide full complements of modules. The reviewers were concerned that this form of polyvalency does not conform to the Bologna standards which in fact preclude vertical cross-instruction of this kind.

Student assessments of the MPhils must be discussed separately because the areas of concern voiced by the students cannot be generalised across the whole school. According to the sole student representing the **MPhil in Irish film, music and theatre**, the course corresponded to her expectations. Her only reservation concerned the fact that she couldn't choose all three streams. This raises a question in the mind of the music reviewer as to why "Music" would be included in the degree rubric if no formal study in music is required. If it is truly an integrative course in Irish film, music and theatre, then a strong component in music should be required upon entrance to the program. The students on the **MPhil in theatre and performance** had mixed views of the teaching quality and content of the modules. The compulsory module, 'Strategies of Analysis', which is taught by several members of the staff, was generally well regarded. On the other hand, the module 'Contemporary Irish theatre in Context' (CITIC), delivered principally by adjunct staff and local practitioners, was seen as deficient in both organization and effectiveness of teaching. The students specifically reported that the tutor permitted lengthy digressions off topic during student discussions, saying that "we are being taught by professors who don't know how to run a classroom." There was general criticism of the drama department regarding a perceived resistance to modern forms of communication. The phrase used by one student was "an antagonistic attitude toward organisation."

The situation regarding the film MPhil is yet more alarming than that of the drama programme. While the external examiner's reports for previous years have been highly positive, some currently enrolled students felt that they do not receive enough guidance on their essays and that they have experienced miscommunication about the timing of screenings and other matters. Some lecturers were seen as giving the impression of "not wanting to be in the classroom". One international student said that the quality of the course was far below that experienced as an undergraduate and that s/he no longer wanted to go to class.

Postgraduate staff feedback revealed no awareness of problems on either of these degrees. It is absolutely essential that some kind of regular student evaluation be implemented which would quickly reveal dissatisfactions which if unaddressed could severely damage TCD's reputation.

### **Service to College and Society**

The Drama department has an active international life outside of the college. The applied theatre program here (whose main lecturer is currently on a three-year career break) has developed successful outreach activities. The Drama Department's Beckett Theatre is used

during festivals including the Dublin theatre festival. Physical access to the theatre is limited, however, because there is no parking for public performances and no car access through Pearse Street. The recent announcement of an agreement with a major private donor to build and run a new Academy of Dramatic Art (ADA) in conjunction with RADA is clearly a major achievement that documents the drama department's excellent reputation within the wider community.

One member of the Drama department is a past Chairman of the Irish Film Institute (IFI) and a current board member of the National Film School, DLIADT. He also makes an important contribution to Irish film including the Irish Film and TV Research Online website ([www.tcd.ie/Irishfilm](http://www.tcd.ie/Irishfilm)). Film staff indicated that they are seeking to strengthen relationships with the film industry and culture in Ireland and abroad, although given that they are at full stretch with both undergraduate and postgraduate research this could be difficult.

As one of the founding members of the Crash Ensemble (1997), and as a composer, the creative work of one of the academic staff in the Music department is highly regarded nationally and internationally. He is commissioned to write a composition for Dawn Upshaw that will be premiered at Carnegie Hall in April 2011. Through publications, other full- and part-time members of the music discipline have made a positive impact on the scholarly community.

It is hoped that the relationship with the Royal Irish Academy of Music could be developed. The potential exists for members of the music discipline to reach out to the community by providing lectures to accompany public viewings of Opera or Ballet Performances that could become available in the future on a digital screen. Similarly, lectures could also serve to introduce live performances as well. For example, the Perm Ballet from Russia performs in Dublin on occasion and this ballet troupe includes ballerinas from Ireland. This would be a natural link for a discussion of Irish contributions to Russian culture.

## **Resources**

The standard of premises in the School of Drama, Film & Music ranges between the sublime and the abysmal. The Arts Technology Research Laboratory (ATRL) is comparable with the highest international standards and TCD should be proud of it.

The Beckett theatre is only partially suitable for modern university teaching. There is only one room in the Beckett theatre that meets the requirements of modern university teaching standards and that has digital equipment (Drama Seminar Room). The theatre itself is a fine performance space as is the dance studio on the top floor, which is used extensively for practical classes, but the theatre building does not really cater adequately for the academic side of university teaching and research.

The film premises should be condemned as unsuitable for a world-class university such as TCD (or in fact any university), that is seeking to attract and retain students who are highly qualified and motivated to become successful in their chosen field. The film screening and teaching room is not networked, forcing students to access wi-fi from the next door hotel. The viewing facilities are antiquated, with continued reliance upon VHS videos for screenings and student self-study. Furthermore, opening hours are limited. First year

students should be made aware of all the opportunities available to them with regard to film viewing and film production.

Teaching spaces in the Music building are totally inadequate though the music facilities are slightly better than the Department of Film Studies. The teaching spaces in Music need to be more conducive to the use of technology such as power point. Additional space with sound proofing is drastically needed. Currently there is no soundproofing. The music technology lab (Music Building) is very well equipped. Major performing space is inadequate.

Recommendations - Smart classrooms may be needed so that music theory, musicology and music technology can be taught in an environment that has a digital projector and a document reader. Other digital audio equipment is also necessary. The School may be missing an opportunity for teaching cross disciplinary courses with Art History, Dance and Film if it is not possible to import digitized video excerpts of performances for specialized topics requiring live feeds. In addition to streaming digitized video excerpts, the potential exists for beaming lecturers and live performances from all over the world.

Staff offices are cramped and small in Drama; reviewers had no access to staff offices in Music and Film Departments. There is no shortage of office space in the Drama Department due to understaffing, but there would be a problem if they were fully staffed. The students have no social spaces and need a common area with wifi and PC and printer access.

## **Organisational Structures and Planning**

### **Schools plans and budgeting**

The Head of School is in the middle of drafting the School Strategic Plan for 2010-2015 but was only sent College guidelines on drafting that plan very recently which makes alignment between the School and College strategic plans problematic. But as stated at the outset, many factors mitigate against the construction of a realistic five year strategic plan in a School which is struggling to maintain day-to-day operations. Of particular concern here is the lack of a full-time School administrator to assist the Head of School not only with daily operations but with long-term forward planning.

The administrative structures of the School can be summed up as top-heavy. The over-abundance of administrative functions became abundantly clear to the reviewers during the two and a half days of the visit when we met staff members on multiple occasions fulfilling three or four functions. The amalgamation of the three disciplines should have reduced the number of administrative roles, but in fact has had the opposite effect. Some staff expressed the belief that certain functions could only be fulfilled by people within a specific discipline, but we would recommend that serious consideration be given to reducing administrative functions by the creation of School rather than discipline-specific administrative posts. At present, the proliferation of administration is affecting the ability of staff to do research and this could negatively impact the School's research profile, particularly in Film. There also seems to be a degree of unnecessary duplication with regard to the duties of the support staff. For example, there currently exist both music and film

libraries, with relatively senior staff charged with dispensing material to students. Surely these two libraries could be combined with a post-graduate student hired as the 'librarian'.

Staff and administrators expressed great concern about the College's new financial structures. The new financial regime makes it more difficult to be flexible and makes it difficult to buy in teaching for new modules as well as to staff existing modules. The new financial arrangements are also creating great uncertainty amongst all staff. We recommend that the College urgently address the issue of the School's deficit in order to provide a realistic basis for forward planning.

### **Overall view and recommendations**

While the extent of the problems with regard to research, teaching, resources and administrative structures differs from discipline to discipline, the reviewers' overall conclusion is that there are many areas within the School that are currently failing to meet the standards to be expected of a world-class institution like Trinity College. Many of the current provisions both in terms of administrative structures and resources would be regarded as unsuitable at the reviewers' own institutions; there is a worrying disconnect between TCD's external reputation and current conditions in the School. However it may be difficult to implement our recommendations given the high level of teaching, the relatively low level of staffing resulting from the hiring moratorium and the lack of funds for infrastructural developments. Therefore we wish to emphasise that the College must as a matter of urgency do its utmost to help the School implement the below recommendations. As we said at the outset, the amalgamation of the three disciplines has great potential in terms of research, teaching and outreach, but this potential can only be realised with the College's full support. At the moment, however, it is not a matter of realising future potential but of keeping the School functioning on a day-to-day basis.

### **Research**

- Institute systematic sabbatical system
- Institute systematic mentoring of early career researchers with regard to publication strategies and the pursuit of external funding
- Provide greater emphasis upon the pursuit of external funding and upon collaboration with external bodies
- Address issues of creative practice and practice based research

### **Teaching**

- Institute robust student feedback systems
- Create greater administrative oversight of MPhil Degrees
- Facilitate greater integration of teaching across the school and across other disciplines
- Encourage students moving across disciplines
- Impose mandatory training and supervision of post-graduate teaching assistants
- Provide more systematic professional training of postgraduates



- Cease the proliferation of MPhil degrees; in particular do not institute an MPhil in digital film theory and practice unless there is adequate staffing and resources.
- Do not launch a single-honours Film degree; there simply aren't the resources to do this. Similarly we urge caution with regard to the institution of a structured PhD based in Film.

### **Administration**

- Encourage rationalisation of administrative structures to prevent duplication of roles
- Consider the centralization of the budget in the School if this is in keeping with College policy, while at the same time providing individual allocations for each of the disciplines to cover operating costs
- Provide a full time position for a school administrator
- Address the issue of the School deficit
- Consider the re-integration of Film into Drama, since Film seems to be experiencing the most severe difficulties with regard to research and teaching. The difficulties suggest that Film is not a large enough unit to exist independently.

### **Resources**

The College should urgently formulate short-term ways in which to address the lack of teaching resources as well as formulating a longer term plan for a single, well-equipped building to house the School. Several staff members expressed severe reservations about a new, off-campus building in the vicinity of the ATRL and the new Academy of Dramatic Art, but the reviewers are of the belief that cost and space constraints might point to this as the most obvious solution for long-term infrastructural development if expansion along Pearse Street cannot be effected.

### **Strategic Direction**

If the school is going to rise to the Provost's challenge to the disciplines within the School to align themselves with the creative industries, then a significant infusion of funds will be required to ameliorate the weaknesses pointed out in this report. The potential is guaranteed. The funding is not. The reviewers recommend that a cost item analysis be conducted at the School level as part of a strategic plan in order to show what it would take to realize the enormous potential of the School for meeting the Provost's challenge. Hope springs eternal that the administration can wave a magic wand and secure the necessary funding. The reviewers would be the first to applaud the success of such a venture.

## **6. RESPONSE FROM THE SCHOOL TO THE REVIEW REPORT FOR DRAMA, FILM & MUSIC**

There are many useful recommendations from the reviewers, which need to be taken seriously by the College, particularly the understaffing in Film, Music and the ATRL, the inadequate premises for Film Studies and Music, the need for a single building (or contiguous buildings) to house the School, the lack of technician support in Music, Film and the ATRL, the lack of administrative support in the ATRL, the need to fill the Chair of Music, the need for a full-time School administrator, the overburdening of academic staff with multiple administrative responsibilities, the lack of funding for study leave, and the arbitrary accounting system that presents the School as constantly in deficit. These are all issues of which we are well aware.

There was also some valuable advice that we are taking on board such as the need to organise regular feedback sessions with undergraduate and postgraduate students and with regular course evaluations, which, although these already occur, need to be extended to all areas; and the suggestion that PhD students, who are engaged as teachers in the department, be instructed in lecturing and be mentored and monitored closely. We are also aiming to extend our mentoring of research students with regard to their career development. We have recently created a School research committee and are planning to introduce a systematic sabbatical policy, and to encourage greater emphasis on the pursuit of outside funding and collaboration with outside bodies. The research committee is currently investigating issues of creative practice and practice based research, as well as reviewing the MPhil courses offered by the School and considering how they can be strengthened. We are planning a modular structure for options at the MPhil level that can interweave with Masters courses in Engineering and Computer Science as well as the Schools of English and Comparative Literature. We are tightening up policies with regard to the MPhil programmes and encouraging more collaboration within the disciplines in the School. We are also considering the suggestion that postgraduates and undergraduates not attend any of the same classes in the MPhil in Theatre and Performance.

The School Review, which should have been a positive experience for the School staff and students, was very much soured by the Reviewers' Report, which greatly disappointed and offended some members of the academic staff in the School, especially because it quoted complaints from students that could not be rebutted by staff.

Steve Wilmer  
Head of the School of Drama, Film and Music

## **7. RESPONSE FROM THE FACULTY DEAN TO THE REVIEW REPORT FOR DRAMA, FILM & MUSIC**

This comprehensive report highlights the difficulties encountered by the constituent parts of a small School, both in terms of streamlining historical roles and practices and in reacting to a period of budgetary and staffing constraints.

I support the recommendation that the School should reduce the number of administrative roles held by academic staff by making them at School- rather than discipline-level. Similarly I would urge the School to engage with the Staff Office to implement a plan that reduces 'the degree of unnecessary duplication with regard to the duties of the support staff' and makes better use of existing resources.

There appear to be differing practices across the School, such as in the area of doctoral training, where ideally the same experience should be available to students.

The report points to problems with gathering student feedback and the recently-approved Council policy on Student Evaluation of Modules will go some substantial way to rectifying these. The Early Career Mentoring Initiative is available to those who wish to avail of the opportunity. I support the mandatory training of all teaching assistants before they undertake teaching.

While appreciative of the particular constraints of small disciplines I would urge the School to consider implementing a rota for leave of absence in line with the Faculty policy on leave of absence – if necessary organizing the teaching programme to facilitate this.

The report highlights the wholly inadequate physical facilities of the School. In the short-term I will work with the School and the Director of Buildings Office to ameliorate its existing space. Longer term, consolidation of the School into new premises, meeting its particular requirements would obviously be a significant positive development, but one that requires a commitment from the School.

Given the size of the disciplines involved and College's financial situation the School should review its provision of postgraduate taught courses and prioritise those it believes it meet the School's strategic aims and can meet cost-effective recruitment targets.

I congratulate the School on the state-of-the-art facility in the ATRL and look forward to its full incorporation into the School's activities.

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Professor Michael Marsh  
Dean  
Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

27 October 2010