

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/20/29d)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

3 December 2020

Agenda Item 5.3.2

COVER SHEET

EXTENSION OF APPROVAL

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Unit 19Bi: BSc (Hons) Interactive Media

Presenter: Professor R Fee

To consider a proposal for a further one-year extension to the period of approval for BSc (Hons) Interactive Media.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
3 December 2020

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REQUEST TO EXTEND APPROVAL AND POSTPONE REVALIDATION

Form CA6b)

SECTION A: FACULTY REQUEST

FACULTY:

Arts, Humanities and Social Science

SCHOOL:

Communication and Media

SUBJECT UNIT NUMBER AND NAME:

Media Studies 19bi

MONTH/YEAR CURRENTLY SCHEDULED:

March 2021

PERIOD OF EXTENSION REQUESTED:

(eg one year to include the September 2018 intake)

One year. However, the Faculty is keen to work with the Academic Office on the complex timescales faced by the Academic Office due to the impact of Covid across the institution. We recognise the impact faced not only by course teams but by all supporting departments.

COURSE(S):

(Identify specific courses unless the whole unit)

Whole unit which comprises BSc (Hons) Interactive Media (NB proposal below to combine this with another programme in the same School).

REASON FOR REQUEST:

There are two reasons for this request.

1. Workload due to Covid Mitigations and Over-Recruitment

There has been a substantial increase to staff workloads this academic year due to the delivery of (and risk assessments for preparation of) CAT1 teaching, and managing increased numbers to meet MASN targets (+10%). In CAT1 modules delivered on campus, all modules are being double taught (in some cases triple taught) by core staff alongside online teaching. Moreover, due to ongoing issues with restructuring within ISD we have been unable to appoint a Digital Media Technician, having to source PT hours to support this work. In week six of semester one, the person covering the technical role through PT hours has withdrawn from teaching due to health reasons. This has had a significant negative impact on the team and has been the tipping point in terms of staff wellbeing and their ability to carry on with the revalidation.

The course team are also heavily involved in the REF submission (both with substantial output profiles and forming a unit Impact Case Study), and the internal mock REF review.

The team will address some of the core matters to bring the program in line with policy and best practice (e.g. roll out of rubrics across the programme) through CA3 this academic year (by August 2021) and postpone a full revalidation to March 2022.

2. Unit Size

The BA (Hons) Screen Production degree was validated two years ago and this year had a significant increase in MaSN (+20%), leading to an early review of provision through an extensive CA3 process to manage curriculum and student numbers. The degree is located within the same School as Screen Production. In discussions with the teams and the new Director of the Screen Academy, it has been proposed to combine these two degrees into one unit and revalidate together. This will necessitate the Screen Production programme being brought forward in the cycle but a more coherent and consistent review of these two programmes will be of benefit to stakeholders.

CURRENCY AND VALIDITY:

(Please confirm that the curriculum remains current and valid and provide evidence of this (eg extract from most recent external examiner reports and those of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body)

The Interactive Media course is based on the synergies between media scholarship and experiential media practice. The methods of teaching and learning support and develop the knowledge, critical synthesis, and practical production skills, required for the Interactive Media students to develop innovative media outcomes.

The most recent external examiner report (2018/19) has identified that the students are exposed to a broad curriculum that is in line with similar programmes in this discipline. The examiner found evidence of scholarship informing the curriculum and its pedagogy, and lecturing staff having made a concerted and ongoing effort to ensure that the curriculum is current. A reminder to the External Examiner to provide their report has been sent to the EE.

The course underwent substantial CA3 changes this year in the removal of a core module, and revisions to one of the core level 6 modules. The course has evolved considerably on a yearly basis since the last revalidation and the team is keen to work on some key areas to update the course in line with Learning and Teaching guidance and policy during this academic year, focusing on reducing the Module Level Learning Outcomes to 4, and adding Rubrics to all assessments. This is a course that is consistently evolving and kept under review at School and Faculty level.

STANDARDS AND QUALITY:

(Please confirm that quality is high and there are no concerns. Provide evidence of this through external examiner reports and **annual monitoring datasets and reports**)

Please find attached the most recent external examiner's reports for the Interactive Media programme. The external examiner has identified evidence of effective student learning across all years of the programme and that this is in line with other programmes of this nature nationally and internationally. The NSS data for the course is in line with University and Sector averages, and there is a strong course culture. NSS overall 2020 – 82.35% and 2019 – 85.19% with strong returns in the areas of Learning and Teaching. There are areas that are currently being addressed in terms of the timing of feedback, and course administration. We have an unfilled post for a Digital Media Technician, which means that academic staff are often filling curriculum holes as is the current case. The students have raised this in SSCC on a number of occasions, but unfortunately due to delays in the appointments process the course team cannot address this matter although we understand the timescale for completion of the ISD process will be the end of this calendar year. This is very welcome by the course team as this has and continues to have a significant impact not only on workload but other linked matters such as NSS. The matter has been repeatedly raised with the Faculty, who raised the matter with the former DVC for Education in her monthly meetings. Most other granular scores in the NSS are above the benchmark average.

PSRB (if applicable):

(Please confirm that any deferral will be accommodated by the PSRB and that accreditation will be ongoing for the full duration of the deferral) N/A

DEMAND:

Although applications to the course have levelled off last academic year there is a school meeting to address Coleraine based recruitment scheduled for November with the course teams from Interactive Media and UG Journalism. Both programmes proposed for this unit of assessment over-recruited in the last academic year.

FACULTY PARTNERSHIP MANAGER'S ASSESSMENT (for partner institutions only): N/A

FACULTY CONFIRMATION:



SIGNED:
Associate Dean (Education)

DATE: 4th November 2020

The completed form should be returned to the Academic Office, Room J410, Tower Building, Coleraine.

SECTION B: ACADEMIC OFFICE COMMENTS:

The BSc Hons Interactive Media programme was due for revalidation in 2019/20 but had its' period of approval extended for a year to 2020/21 and this is a request for a further extension of approval for another year on account of the workload associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. The request includes a proposal that the course would be combined with BA Hons Screen Production (due for revalidation in 2023/24) in a unit for revalidation during 2021/22.

In the previous extension to approval request for Interactive Media ASQEC noted that the Faculty was in the process of fundamentally revising the provision in Media Studies and the extension was agreed to provide time to incorporate course changes arising from the Faculty's revision process.

The current request points to ongoing operational difficulties relating to a lack of technician staff (that have been experienced for a significant period) that have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is unclear whether a delay to revalidation is the best course of action given the prolonged technician difficulties. The two latest available reports from the external examiners (17/18 and 18/19 are by different examiners) both affirm that quality and standards are satisfactory but they both also make reference to the small team, very high SSR and the latest report states that recruitment of a full-time technician would be 'crucial for the team to continue to provide excellent teaching and guidance to their students.'



SIGNED:
Academic Policy and Standards Manager

DATE: 13 November 2020

SECTION C: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT ASSESSMENT (reflecting annual monitoring data)

SIGNED: Sand M H Meyer
DATE: _____ 17 Nov 2020 _____
Head of Quality Enhancement

**SECTION D: ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
(delegated authority from Senate)**

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING:

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

Late requests (in-year and no imminent Committee meeting) (actioned by Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) on behalf of ASQEC)

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)

DATE REPORTED TO ASQEC:

Academic Office
July 2018