

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/19/1h)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

13 March 2019

Agenda Item 4.5

EXTENSION OF APPROVAL

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

MA Journalism and MA International Journalism: Hostile Environment Reporting

COVER SHEET

Action is required of the Committee as indicated below.

To consider a request from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences for a one-year extension of approval.

# UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

## REQUEST TO EXTEND APPROVAL AND POSTPONE REVALIDATION

Form CA6b)

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### SECTION A: FACULTY REQUEST

**FACULTY:**

Arts, Humanities and Social Science

**SCHOOL:**

Communication and Media

**SUBJECT UNIT NUMBER AND NAME:**

Media Studies 19bi and 19bii

**MONTH/YEAR CURRENTLY SCHEDULED:**

**PERIOD OF EXTENSION REQUESTED:**

(eg one year to include the September 2018 intake)

**One year only**

**COURSE(S):**

(Identify specific courses unless the whole unit)

Whole unit which comprises MA Journalism

MA International Journalism; Hostile Environment Reporting

**REASON FOR REQUEST:**

(a) Changes of campus are under negotiation for staff in Coleraine at present due to the move of BA Media Studies and Production (replacement course starting in Belfast called BA Screen Production) and BSc Interactive Media. These staff changes may result in implications for the postgraduate journalism teaching. There may also be resource and support staff implications.

(b) The MA International Journalism; Hostile Environment Reporting was validated in April 2017 and only took its first cohort in September 2018. It is the first pilot for the accrediting body for its developing framework for international accreditation. Feedback on the pilot will not be available until at least September 2019 when a full cohort has completed. This will feed into the re-validation.

**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)

Both programmes are accredited by the industry accrediting body, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ). They largely follow its curriculum in the skills area, law and public affairs. These programmes of study are updated by industry each September to ensure they remain relevant. The courses are also monitored continuously for quality assurance by the NCTJ. This is done via monitoring exam results, student council and also random visits. Staff teaching on the courses must also attend every two years compulsory training with the NCTJ. The external examiner's report for the MA Journalism was very good in 2017 and 2018.

The MA International Journalism; Hostile Environment Reporting, was chosen by the NCTJ's as its first pilot for its new Qualification in Practical International Journalism. It is also the first industry accredited course of its kind internationally in hostile environment reporting and was developed with input from Sky News, BBC, BBC NI, International Red Cross, British Armed forces, international security experts (ex PSNI special operations unit who then served in Afghanistan and Iraq), and disaster healthcare specialist at several universities (Ulster University and University of South Wales). It took its first intake

in September 2018 and thus has not run through a full cycle of graduates. It was put through the validation panel in April 2017 headed by the former head of news BBC UK Prof. Jonathan Baker. It was put through NCTJ pilot evaluation in July 2018. There are no external examiner reports due for it as yet but student feedback to date has been very positive alongside semester 1 grades and it is establishing itself as a world-class programme with interest from India, Germany, Spain, Libya, Africa, China and Columbia. The course has already been nominated for a national innovation award in journalism education such as the new multidisciplinary teaching techniques being used.

**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 last several external examiner's reports for the MA Journalism programme. Also the national postgrad student survey. Both show

Note that the MA International Journalism; Hostile Environment Reporting will only have these in October 2019 when the external examiner has seen all the work and the students have had an opportunity to complete the survey.

**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)

Yes. The NCTJ undertakes its own evaluation separate to that of the University and also undertakes constant monitoring of standards.

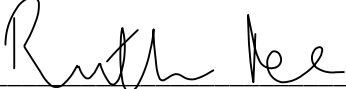
**DEMAND:**

The MA Journalism continues to meet its recruitment targets as prescribed by the faculty and what is recommended as good practice given the resources from the NCTJ. There will be about a intake of 16 this year.

The MA International Journalism; Hostile Environment Reporting is a unique and pioneering international programme and is in its developmental stage. It will recruit to its faculty target in 2019 and to date has application numbers that will exceed it. It has strong support from industry like Sky News, BBC and the non-for-profit sector like the International Red Cross and St John's Ambulance, both which provide support-in-kind.

**FACULTY PARTNERSHIP MANAGER'S ASSESSMENT (for partner institutions only):**

**FACULTY CONFIRMATION:**

SIGNED:   
Associate Dean (Education)

DATE: 7 0 3 19

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

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**SECTION B: ACADEMIC OFFICE COMMENTS:**

The external examiner reports for the MA Journalism and the postgraduate student survey data, together with successful NCTL visits collectively provide assurance that the quality and standards of that provision have been maintained to a high standard. The MA International Journalism: Hostile Environment Reporting was evaluated in April 2017 and had an initial intake in September 2018 so that programme is in its infancy. The Academic Office notes that the subject area has a strong track record and a good reputation in the industry sector and supports the Faculty's proposal for an extension of approval for one year.

*Gary Kudell*

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: 7 March 2019  
Academic Policy and Standards Manager or Head of Academic Office

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

*Sandy M. H. Huggins*

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ 7 March 2019  
Head of Quality Enhancement

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**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