Integrating professional practice into postgraduate and undergraduate media courses

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Acknowledgements

CONTENTS

1.   INTRODUCTION: background and aim

This paper presents comparative research recently undertaken across universities and HE institutions in England investigating the extent and effectiveness of involving students in corporate video projects commissioned by 'real-life' clients.

Increasingly media production departments in HE are requested by in-house departments, external public services authorities, charities and corporate organisations to undertake media productions on their behalf. As the culture of commercial enterprise develops in the sector there is pressure to undertake work of this nature, making additional demands on limited resources. However it can also be seen as an opportunity for staff and students to develop new skills and knowledge. We were interested to uncover the level of this activity, understand some of

the tensions that can arise and also propose ideas for improving the management of projects which cross the boundary of enterprise and learning.

The Media School at Bournemouth University has developed a model providing paid professional practice opportunities throughout the academic year for students through the university's own production company Red Balloon. The research here, funded by The Centre for Excellence in Media Practice, compares this model with experiences elsewhere in the Higher Education sector and highlights good practice. The paper outlines some of the benefits and difficulties encountered by the different stakeholders, including staff, students, clients and the local production industry. The paper examines the implications for writing professional practice involving paying clients – into credit-bearing units and course documentation.

2.   CONTEXT: HIGHER EDUCATION

There have been significant changes in Higher Education in recent years which have created an environment sympathetic to the interaction of students and media enterprise. The enterprise agenda has been prioritized since the Dearing Report in 1998. An increasing number of institutions offer media practice courses. There has been increased student demand for practice-based courses and for active participation in industry placements. Staff have been searching for new ways of facilitating student involvement in industry through work placements and internships and competition for these types of experience has increased significantly. Meanwhile, lecturing staff have sought new experiences and ways of developing their own skills and involvement in enterprise. The industry training body, Skillset, has encouraged universities and HE institutions to foreground commercial and industrial approaches to media practice.

3.   CONTEXT: BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Bournemouth Polytechnic became a "new university" in 1992 and courses at the Media School have been developed with a strong industry and employability focus. Work placement is an element of many courses and opportunities for students to engage with industry are actively encouraged by guest lectures, visits and events within and outside the school. In recent years research has become a key focus of the university's strategic plan and is developing very successfully, but the 'student experience', and ensuring that students leave HE with knowledge and skills relevant to their chosen career, remains important. This is particularly the case in the Media School which has achieved a national reputation for its industry-facing courses. Red Balloon, The Media School's commercial production arm, has been contributing to this "offer" by providing students and recent graduates work experience and employment opportunities.

Red Balloon Productions

Red Balloon Productions was launched in 2000. Although it is not a registered company,

it is set up and run as a small broadcast and corporate video production company would be. Red Balloon has a dedicated producer, production office, filming and editing facilities, branding and web site and is based in the Media School. The company has a track record in both corporate and regional broadcast television, offering the Media School students key work experience and employment opportunities. Students have been employed by Red Balloon as freelancers and paid an agreed rate for each contract. More experienced alumni working on camera and editing are employed to work with students if the budget and production levels require it. In the case of the regional broadcast television series, recent graduates were given 6 month or yearly contracts to work as producers and directors and undergraduates were engaged in camera and sound operation roles. Regrettably, with the demise of regional television this opportunity no longer exists.

New Courses

The development of new postgraduate courses (MA Producing Film and Television, MA Directing Digital Film and Television and MA Post Production Editing) has resulted in opportunities for Red Balloon to work more closely with academics and has provided students with further client-led production opportunities. This has encouraged us to consider how we might (and if we should) formalise and integrate professional media practice involving engagement with 'real-life clients' into courses, and how the formal assessment of student work might operate within credit bearing units. This immediately raised issues for the different stakeholders and has prompted the research which has resulted in this paper.

4. PROJECT OBJECTIVES and TIMELINE

We set out to identify the issues and benefits of incorporating commercial production activity into the student experience. We identified the following issues at the outset of the research which we wanted to explore further:

- Timescales – would productions fit comfortably into course structures and client's schedules?

- Assessment - how might students be formally assessed?

- Client Expectations – how closely would students be supervised? Who would undertake supervision - the course tutors or the production company?

- Resourcing - What would be the impact on resources?

- Quality - What would happen if students failed to complete the task to the client's satisfaction?

- Income – would the project make money – would it cost money?

- Risk – what would be the risks attached to projects – such as commercial or

institutional reputation?

We expected that these tensions needed to be weighed against the 'value added' student experience. We identified the following benefits which we wished to research further:

Benefits to students

- How much did students benefit from working to a "real" client brief?

- Was there an evident "professionalisation" of students in work and attitude

- What was the student experience of working with alumni and freelancers?

- How did students cope with working to real budgets with real consequences?

- How significant was this activity to CV/portfolio development

We were interested to find out what benefits accrued to the institutions. We identified the following questions:

Benefits to universities

- Did institutions regard this activity as a source of additional income?

- Did the institution perceive a benefit from increased links with business?

- Did institutions recognize a value in this activity for marketing/recruiting?

- Was it a benefit to have practising professionals and alumni on site?

- Did this activity enhance and enrich teaching and learning?

- Did this activity benefit staff development?

We perceived that there were benefits to clients who were approaching universities with requests for video production. We wanted to identify these benefits:

Benefits to clients

- Were clients seeking increased involvement with the local university?

- Was the university perceived as a lower-cost option for clients who could not otherwise afford video?

- Did clients appreciate fresh ideas from new talent?

Timeline

These objectives provided a framework for our inquiry over a twelve month period from June 2008 to June 2009. Initial consultation and project design took place in summer 2008, stage one consultation by phone during October 2008, and stage two consultation by visit and interview during November and December 2008. An interim report was presented at the MECCSA conference in Bradford in January 2009.

5.   METHODOLOGY

We were interested to compare the experience at Bournemouth University, with its evident and suspected tensions and benefits, with activities in other institutions. The aim was to identify best practice in the provision of corporate video production within the HE sector. Our method involved the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data from institutions based in England. We conducted an online survey of 37 Higher Education institutions and Universities. Of these, 14 appeared to be undertaking professional video services to external clients using students in key production roles. A further 21 appeared to be undertaking a range of professional services but specialising in different areas such as radio, graphic design, web design, and music recording and some provided these services to clients through incubator units, short courses and hire facilities rather than an in-house production company. Furthermore, not all of these 21 appeared to use students or pay students. Having identified a sample of 14 institutions we emailed primary contacts with a short questionnaire to identify the scale and nature of the activity, how many productions, the size of average budgets, how much students were paid, and whether students were assessed using the work. Based on these responses, we identified 6 Universities and HE Institutions with a North/South geographical spread to visit and record interviews with decision-making staff involved in the activity to create 6 case studies. It was agreed to keep all participating institutions anonymous in the presentation of the findings.

6.   RESULTS

From the sample of 6 institutions we identified four production models:

1. Formal Production model

2. Ad Hoc model

3. Academic model

4. Incubator model

It should be noted that these models are types rather than actual structures: local practices and influences mean there is some cross over between the boundaries and some institutions may be in the early transition stages from Ad Hoc to a more Formal Model. However we identified enough clear and distinct differences between approaches to enable us to identify practices and construct models in this way.

MODEL 1:   FORMAL PRODUCTION MODEL

In Model 1, there is an established 'company' working within the institution, mirroring the practice in the wider industry and set up as a formal 'production company' run with at least one dedicated producer and support staff plus an academic. The production companies working with this model have separate branding to their university/college and value their separate identity. They also have ring-fenced resources separate from teaching resources.

Case studies A and B conformed to this model – see Appendix 1.

MODEL 2:   AD HOC MODEL

Model 2 displays a more organic approach which has grown out of staff interest rather than institutional planning. There is no separate branding or formal structure and each job is approached in a different way. Sometimes projects are used for students' course work, sometimes projects are treated as staff projects, generally depending on budget and timescales. Despite the informal arrangements, it can be a well established practice – case study C has been working like this for at least 18 years. Production opportunities rely solely on word of mouth and the reputation of the institution and there is no marketing or active searching for work. There are no ring-fenced facilities.

Case studies C and D conform to this model – see Appendix 2.

MODEL 3:   ACADEMIC MODEL

Model 3 is pedagogically driven. In this instance production opportunities have been developed by course leaders to fit course requirements, generally by responding to and developing relationships with local organisations. There is no commercial framework with no marketing, no contracts, no staff projects, and no engagement of alumni or freelancer staff.

Case study E conforms to this model – see Appendix 3

MODEL 4:   INCUBATOR MODEL

Model 4 involves lecturing staff farming incoming work to university-supported incubator companies set up by graduates. Clients tend to be charities, Small-Medium Enterprises and arts organisations. Often these new companies are filling a local vacuum in a regional media economy. There is no pedagogic engagement but there may be informal student involvement. Such activity is highly-regarded and formally supported by the university, promoted and viewed by the university as a positive course outcome.

Case study F conforms to this model – see Appendix 4

7.   EMERGENT THEMES

One of the clearest themes to emerge from the research was the extent and variety of corporate media activity across the sector. Although this research was focussed on video production, the initial online survey would seem to suggest that the findings reflect the wide range of activity and organisation across the media spectrum. Those institutions specialising in areas such as radio, graphic design, web design, and music recording were also provided to clients through a variety of different arrangements such as incubator units, short courses, hire facilities and in-house production companies. The involvement of students was also variable: while some engaged students in paid or unpaid positions, others did not. Across the sector local practices and informality predominate. Often this has been a response to the local economic environment, where individuals working in institutions situated in regions where there has been little media production activity have answered a local need. At the same time, local requests to universities for help in providing media services have been viewed as opportunities for student learning and career development, particularly in places where staff and student access to formal media organisations such as production companies and broadcasters is limited. It is also important to note the value placed on the opportunities presented by such activity for staff development in a way which is local, flexible and manageable within the constraints of all the other pressures on staff time. Whilst these themes would seem to suggest a generally positive experience, generated by informality and local engagement, it is interesting to note the reported difficulties institutions have faced in creating a suitable framework to facilitate the intersection of learning and enterprise

through media production. There are particular tensions evident in balancing staff workloads and in the communication of the role and purpose of such activities internally. However, it would appear from the research undertaken that many of those working in the sector believe that there are significant opportunities for further development which would benefit students, staff and institutions if this can be communicated within their organisations.

8.   CONCLUSIONS

The organic variation of practice due to institutional history, geography and the needs of the local economy will probably always be the case and local solutions should be embraced. However, the fragility of infrastructure due to lack of institutional support and continuity of funding in most of the organisations identified often leads to a shortage of staff and resources and a lack of inspiration to change or develop practices. With some exceptions (see case study B which had start up funding from HEIF and case study A which is developing further with institutional funding) most models are dependent on one or two key members of staff to drive forward initiatives, even where the activity is well established. This puts an additional workload on the staff involved and contributes to a reluctance to develop new pedagogic initiatives which might benefit student learning. Tensions were greatest where professional practice is seen as a driver of enterprise alone and is being regarded as a source of third stream income.

Our research suggests that all models provide excellent and worthwhile professional practice opportunities for students, staff and their institutions. Despite the difficulties of execution, all contributors felt the practice to be worthwhile. Different models offered different opportunities and tensions:

Model 1 (Formal Production) offered an experience closer to industry norms: students are employed and benefit from the support of a professional producer, alumni and freelancers. However, bigger projects are more difficult to integrate into courses and the dual imperatives of professional practice and income generation mean productions tend to be higher budget and require higher production values. This can mean the need to employ more professional staff/freelancers and productions can be more difficult to fit into academic timetables. Assessed work placement can be a solution to integration. From an institutional perspective this model has the added advantage of raising significant enterprise income.

Model 2 (Ad Hoc) and model 3 (Academic) offer full integration into courses but limited staff time can limit learning opportunities for students due to a lack of tutorial support: students may have to manage clients and projects on their own which can be identified as a risk to institutional reputation as well as potentially damaging to staff, student and client confidence. Students do not enjoy the opportunity to work with freelancers, alumni and professional production staff which can be a valuable learning opportunity.

Model 3 (Academic) could provide a more valuable experience to students than the Ad

Hoc model. In this instance the clients/projects were chosen more deliberately for their learning opportunities. There may also be more time to complete projects due to the way the project is structured to occur at a particular stage in the course, for example, in the last term. However, as in the Ad Hoc model there is no opportunity for students to work with alumni or professional freelancers and students do not receive payment other than expenses.

Model 4 (Incubator) tends to be beneficial as a launch pad for media production graduate entrepreneurs, and can draw in students with production and craft skills. However, this does require significant institutional investment and support and can be dependent on a high level of staff engagement in gate-keeping projects. It is particularly suited to areas without a tradition of media production activity.

In terms of student learning, Model 1 (Formal Production) seems to offer most potential because of the opportunities for working alongside other professionals and alumni. However, this model requires enough investment in staff, institutional and academic support to allow the creation of learning opportunities and integration into courses, alongside development of third stream income from larger projects. The Red Balloon model at Bournemouth University offers a double advantage to students who can work independently on smaller projects with academic support and on larger projects with professional/alumni support. However, it is difficult for academic staff to manage many client projects at once, to offer parity of opportunity to students across a cohort, and to write projects confidently into course documentation.

Further research might undertake formal feedback from students so that staff can evaluate what has been achieved and what can be improved in future projects. Following this research, Red Balloon will be developing a reflective learning document for all students who work on Red Balloon projects – irrespective of whether the projects form part of their academic work.

As well as being a learning opportunity for students, the research also identified the value of this form of enterprise activity as professional practice development for staff. This in turn feeds back into the balanced workload requirement of teaching, research and enterprise.

Whilst the institutions may identify this activity as an income stream, this needs to be balanced with the sometimes competing benefits and agendas for learning and teaching and staff development. Institutions who have adopted the Ad Hoc model or the Academic model may come under increasing pressure to develop enterprise income. It is important that goals and agendas are clearly defined and developments are properly resourced if models are changed. The Red Balloon model adopted by Bournemouth University would seem to offer a template for ensuring a valid staff / student experience as well as a viable income stream. Institutions considering a change to their existing model might look to the funding opportunities offered by HEIF, the need to allow ring-fencing of income and the implications of the wider changes in the economic environment. Whilst the recession may limit larger professional practice opportunities the economic circumstances may prompt a larger number of lower-budget productions more suited to student production.

APPENDIX 1

Formal Production Model

Case studies A and B

Staff levels

Cast Study 'A' had 3 full-time staff: Business Development, Producer, Editor plus an academic. Case Study 'B' had an academic/producer split 0.5 for each role + full time Production Manager with another to be taken on shortly.

Clients

Type: Mostly public sector, SMEs, charities, Media Box and some in-house

Where: Regional

Budgets: £5 - 20K   (new £30K project for B)

How Many: 10 - 12 depending on size of projects

Case study A has developed some key client relationships with local companies and has repeat business. Particular success has been achieved with outside broadcast for music festivals – working closely with another school incorporating more technically skilled students. They use this production opportunity to help market their courses – in a low-key way at interviews. Alumni and staff are used on more complicated productions.They also carry out labour intensive in-house productions – such as covering graduation ceremony filming. This stretches their resources to the limit and takes up a considerable amount of their production capabilities. Eventually 'B' hopes to develop broadcast programme ideas to create real income - rather than rely on corporate business.

"There's no reason why, in partnership with another independent production company or a direct relationship with a broadcaster we couldn't be involved in broadcast commissions. I want XX logo to be on the end of programmes. There's no reason why it shouldn't be".

Student Participation and Assessment

'A' employs students as freelancers and pay job shop rates – students complete formal time sheets and offers work experience as part of their courses – 120 hours over 3 years – or undertake two client briefs with the professional unit.

They carry out formal feedback sessions at the end of a project – plus Work Experience Reflective Practice Portfolios are written up by students in their third year.

They also have two projects coming on-line in 2009 where they will be able to offer a larger number of student production groups for each project and they are developing assessment criteria to cover these projects.

"When the course was validated 18 months ago …mandatory work experience wasn't a part of the course validation. They have now modified units in order to bring work experience really in line with what students want and indeed what industry wants from students."

"What we can do is offer the chance to come and work on projects with us to every student. Whether or not they choose to take it up ….the pro-active ones are the ones that are going to get ahead in their careers….."

In university 'B' students work unpaid unless its summer. Three weeks work experience is written into Professional Practice module and can be taken at the professional unit and requires formal assessment by way of reflective practice portfolio and report by employer/tutor. They make extensive use of paid freelance alumni who work with them on a regular basis and try to buddy students with professionals. Much of the creative input comes from freelance alumni – particularly editors. Students tend to be in production management roles. 'B' identified the opportunity for much greater responsibility for students than most professional practice /work experience offers:

"They're given a certain level of responsibility that they wouldn't be given working with a production company as a runner. They've been so pleased with what they've been able to produce…they've been pushed but they've still got a safety net from the university."

For university 'B' working with clients seen as particularly valuable, in particular the opportunity to attend client meetings. There may be more opportunities for work   experience for students with disabilities and/or language difficulties than external companies can offer. 'B' has recently taken a profoundly deaf student on work experience   for example.

Tensions

At case study 'A' they recognise a clash of culture between education and business – their initial structure of a Business Development Officer and academics was quickly abandoned as staff couldn't or wouldn't commit the time.

"Being a one man band…trying to achieve potentially the things the University want you to deliver…there's only so many meetings I could go to, so many students I can contact and I was working incredibly long hours and I very soon stood up and just said we've got so much potential but I can't do it all by myself and they did take that on board".

In case study 'B', lack of support from their institution and colleagues can be frustrating. But it's also a double edged sword: the staff like the fact they are relatively autonomous.

"Now we are making more money they pull us out of the bag when they need to."

Investment / Infrastructure

In case study 'A' they have used HEIF money to invest in production kit and additional staff to target larger budget projects. This has helped provide a TV studio, two edit suites and location shooting kit plus Blue Ray delivery. None of these facilities are shared with teaching. In case study 'B' they have limited resources: a stand alone edit suite and shared use of a TV studio. They have to rely on freelancers using their own kit.

"There's so much more we could do if we had the time and the resources – at the moment there's a limit to what we can achieve"

Despite limited resources Case Study B has been quite successful in getting local authority work around the £5K budget and a recent Media Box project for £30K.

Income

Case study 'A' is expecting to be self-funding eventually – 3 years or so – but there is no major pressure to be so at the moment. They do not have to carry out FEC (full economic costing) on budgets – but production budgets and contracts are agreed before production starts and they try to cost realistically. Self-funding will inevitably cause tensions and the fact that their "profit" is not ring-fenced for re-investment.

"Having your own set of resources, kit manpower, is another challenge all HE institutions will face, and also you just don't know what students you will get each year. You might get some really good ones, they they're gone and you've got a void. That's why we have staff in programme productions because at the end of the day to the client it doesn't matter who has done it – as long as they get what they're paying for and the university gets its income…..its a balance".

For 'B', staff recognise that self-funding is a tension but makes it more 'real'.

"For me its more exciting to have to go out and get projects – it's more motivating"

Local Economy

Cast study 'A' is part of an enterprise scheme – supporting start ups by graduates of their university – passing on work or sub-contracting to them occasionally – but they do worry about taking work away from the local economy…

"One of the things we are very conscious of is whilst we are offering services to business there is a creative industry area here ….and we don't want to harm small businesses. We do stress to companies (clients) that whilst we might be one of the cheaper options – it might take us longer- and things might not be quite right because our students are learning…we also run networking events for creative companies and they get to meet students so there's an exchange…We feel we are putting something back…we're enhancing things for the creative industry.

'B' worries that if they became more successful they could take work away from local start up companies. However, they are moving soon to a new enterprise park location where they will have a more central role working with new start up companies. At the moment anything budgeted under £1K they pass to freelancers and start ups.

APPENDIX 2

AD-HOC MODEL

Case studies C and D

Staff levels

There are no additional staff involved in this model – it relies entirely on the input of   existing academic staff.

Clients

Type: Mostly public sector, SMEs, charities, in-house

Where: Local / Regional

Budgets: £500 - 2000   (occasionally to £5K or 10K)

How Many: up to 15 per year for C, less for for D

Student Participation and Assessment

For C, Student projects pay expenses only – occasionally bigger budgets allow for minimum wage to be paid. Projects count as course work for client based video production 13 week module. Students have to show they have worked 'effectively' for a client. They encourage clients to come in and brief students who then pitch with their ideas/volunteer for each project. Assessment from the client involves reviewing final piece with comments. For bigger projects staff time is bought out and additional support is given to students who work with staff. Undergraduates and postgraduates are engaged. – projects are allocated according to where staff think it will fit best. Parity of opportunity isn't perceived as a problem – even with bigger budget and smaller budget projects:

"The process and the experience always turned out to be pretty much the same for the students. I'm gauging that from work the students do and the feedback they give me…."

There is also a perceived value in the validation of student work because it is for a client.

"They have the excitement of producing something that they know the client's going to use, its not just an exercise. A lot of their coursework otherwise is viewed as being an exercise. So they can see the true value of it".

Employability is also seen as a key driver.

> *"I think a lot of courses just rely on the work placements idea – effectively we're going to send you away to do something – you tell us what it was and we'll give you some credit for it. I'm sure there's some value to that, but for me, the idea that they're doing the course and they're doing real projects as well – its killing two birds with one stone – It feels… it is… more real".*

Tensions

Case study C cited the failure of students to complete the work for a client within the module as an issue. Some students have walked away and not attempted to finish the work, leaving staff to liaise with clients and finish the project.

> *"The problem with the module is its only 13 weeks and its quite rigid- when they get to the end we've got to see the production. So there may be a mismatch there between the client and what we need to see for assessment purposes."*

How often this happens depends very much on the quality of cohort – some years present more difficulty than others. Despite this, staff remain keen to continue offering students 'real' projects. *Not* finishing a project within the deadline can also be seen as a valuable learning experience- particularly if students are encouraged to formally reflect on the reasons why. As students don't receive any additional support or supervision beyond that which they would receive for any other project, it is important to prepare clients so they are fully aware that students can fail. Case study C suggest that most clients do understand the situation. But it also means that very little can be charged in the way of fees. Staff are not always aware that a problem may have arisen until the end of the project. With this model Students are seen as the priority, not the client, in this model. We identify this as a key difference between the Formal Model and the Ad Hoc Model where clients needs come first.

For both C and D, institutionally their work is mostly seen as acceptable local practice, or described as "benignly ignored" by their institutions, at least until recently: for C a new initiative to handle commercial enquiries coming in to the university by way of a business development officer is underway, intended to develop into a more professional/formal model of handling external clients and projects. Pressure is increasing to deliver more income to the university via enterprise or research.

> *"There is pressure – we have been presented with figures at an internal conference and the gist of it was you're not doing very much of it so other departments have to do more of it – but it could be a research project - so its not specific pressure to do production work. The reason we do it really is because we think it is so beneficial to the students. The income generation idea is sort of at the back of the mind….its really employability that's more important to us".*

Investment / Infrastructure

The projects rely on two or three key academic member of staff who have the interest and ability to get involved. Most projects taken on are accommodated within the teaching programme in some way. There are no additional staff and nor additional or separate resources for commercial projects. They do not use alumni or other freelancers. There is a perception that additional staff or kit resources are not necessary because the   opportunities are viewed as a positive element of their teaching and learning. Members of staff enjoy continuing to be practitioners, particularly where media production has   developed from an art and design background.

"Because we happen to be based in a school of Art and Design there is more a feeling amongst staff that you go out there and you do stuff. So it's taken for granted that this kind of stuff goes on. Other schools, colleagues seem much more aloof from the   production side of things…."

"It gives us (staff) a way of feeling that we're still doing something, we're still current,   we're using our skills, our knowledge and so on. It's quite valuable in that respect".

However, the nature of academic organisation and its associated pressures can be a limiting factor on ad-hoc activity as described by case study D.

"It does depend on individuals and we do have tremendous pressures at the moment on programme leadership, module leadership, turn round times for assessments, risk assessments for work the students are doing, programme boards. There is a tremendous amount of bureaucratic paraphernalia that goes on around the teaching, learning and assessment policy of the university and a lot of individual tutors will say 'I can't be bothered with dealing with all of this lot.'[additional media activity] I think it's important that media sections, media schools, whatever, do have someone who's going to be aware of this and decide how they're going to, how it's going to be dealt with, managed."

Income

Income from the projects undertaken is not ring fenced for C or D. This was not identified as an issue because the sums involved were not significant.

Local Economy

Similarly, for C and D they do not view their activity as having a significant impact. They   stated it might be a concern if the budgets were bigger.

"We have a little niche here…its sits between home movie and sort of broadcast…but not the top end corporate stuff….nobody else wants it because there's no money in it….but Its something we can get our teeth into, it can be of great value to us".

For D, it is a case of channelling the inquiries appropriately to current or former students.

"The danger of course is, and I'm sure this is coming up everywhere, the subsidising of commercial activity through a university. Now I look at this in two ways….requests quite often come to me, they'll float around the university and eventually come to me, you'll have the experience of clients looking for freebies. 'Oh I thought your students…...' You mention a budget: 'Oh I thought your students could do it as part of their work.' Well it will cost something. Now when those ideas come through, if they're low budget ideas, I will always seek to pass those on to our graduates, a number of whom have set up small businesses. I mean there's a limit to the number of wedding video companies that any region can sustain, but a lot of them actually have started in that way but are doing other sorts of work."

APPENDIX 3

ACADEMIC MODEL

Case study E

Staff levels

There are no additional members of staff involved in this model – it relies entirely on the   input of existing academic staff.

Clients

Type: Public sector, Arts / Charities, occasional SMEs

Where: Local / Regional (1 national client)

Budgets: very small, usually £500 - 1000

How Many: 8-10 per year, depend on the number of students in the cohort

(note: this is postgraduate activity. There is some undergraduate commercial activity in the same institution but there is no communication or cross over   between the two activities and this is not examined here)

Student Participation and Assessment

Work is sourced by the university for postgraduate students' portfolios. The content is negotiated in advance and any suitable commercial projects the institution offers to the   student are picked for their appropriateness to the student and the course. Students may   come forward with their own projects, and occasionally the course leader will look for   additional projects if there are not enough to offer all students.

All portfolio work is done in the last term and assessed and credits count towards final degree mark.

No money is paid to students other than to cover travel and subsistence.

Occasionally projects come in that are not suitable for the academic framework. These   are offered to students to take on themselves without university support.

Case study E sees corporate work as vitally important to the student experience and that it enhances their learning in many areas.

"I think that they (client led projects) are hugely important to the learning experience I don't think I would envisage a time when we say we only take client based work because we meet all kinds of student expectations and for some client based work is not appropriate…..but I do think that working in an outward facing way is more valuable and validating for students."

"They (students) engage with it differently…they are really put on their metal".

Client led work is seen as enormously valuable to students and employers.

"I think that students are looking for a real world experience. They love the bottom line that they're going to graduate with the skills that will enable them to work and a huge part of it is knowing the professional world and industry and I think that client based projects are part of that".

"…It professionalises them….whatever area of work they decide to go into they *approach it with more confidence and maturity".*

Tensions

The clients' expectations are seen as the major tension. The course leader tries to   ensure clients understand that students can fail and to ensure clients do not have   unrealistic expectations.

"You can explain to the client at the outset that this is an academic project, its students not fully fledged producers and they might be told that it may be a bit rougher around the edges, they just find that a bit more difficult to accept sometimes'"

"We need to have a very hands on approach to our students and the client understands *that…wherever possible we'll sit down with the client as well so it's a three way   conversation….I think that is the very best learning experience. Sometimes what a client   is demanding needs to be mediated for a student. Sometimes the client doesn't really   know what they want and can't articulate that… unless you've worked with clients in the past professionally its very hard sometimes to draw out of a client exactly what they are   thinking of".*

Tensions may arise when the student needs clash with the client needs.

"It's one of the trickiest things – working with clients – but our first responsibility is to our students and their learning…I've had an instance where the work wasn't as good as I would have liked…due to complex reasons and personal reasons for the student….I dealt with it by being up front with the client and explaining we would do the work again...99% of the time work is in excess of client expectations".

Parity of support for students is also viewed as a potential issue.Case Study E feels strongly the need to ensure that tutorial support is no different for students working on their own projects to students working on client led projects.

"You've got to be certain that the kind of tutorial support that's being offered is offered equally across the board. I'm constantly scrupulous in ensuring that even though it might   be a very, very high profile project it will not take more tutorial support than any other".

Another tension noticed by the course leader is that this type of work may not be seen as valid as broadcast or film by students.

"One of my things is to demonstrate that successful production companies (broadcast) work with all kinds of people and produce across the board….there's a real interest in commercials and that seems to be increasing and they're (students) are starting to associate commercials with cool, then they begin to approach this work in a very different way".

Investment / Infrastructure

The success of productions often depends on staff goodwill and interest. Staff sometimes have to be present on big productions, such as out of hours on OB's (outside broadcasts) as technical support. Budgets are so small there is not additional money to pay them for their additional time.

Although the university uses the client led production as a USP to promote their courses and to increase their profile in the region/sector through publicity surrounding some of the more high profile projects, it does not invest in the activity beyond the needs of the curriculum. This model allows the university to carry out client led work for its own sake rather than with an agenda of enhancing institutional income. This may be a result of their particularly fragile economic local environment. In a more prosperous area more opportunity for raising income may be seen as desirable.

Income

The income derived from this production activity is not significant to the institution. However charging clients very low amounts may be counterproductive: clients do not always appreciate the work that has gone into the production.

"I'm wrestling with this at the moment…where you don't charge people for a tutor's time, to develop an idea for example, means the client doesn't necessarily understand the amount of work or cognisance of what's going on. Even charging a small amount for the effort, or for the students' expenses, does make people realise that there's an enormous amount of activity which is going into this endeavour…."

Local Economy

This institution exists within a very fragile local media economy. The staff are very aware of upsetting the few companies that do exist.

"I am very, very sensitive to that. I deal with it by the projects that we take on are either tiny or they require so much effort that they are just not appropriate for anyone else. I am

constantly checking my clients and thinking about why and when".

However the offering of a low cost service to a fragile local economy and to organisations that would not normally be able to afford the services can also be seen as a benefit to the community.

APPENDIX 4

INCUBATOR MODEL

Case study F

Staff levels

Work is forwarded to the Graduate Incubation Centre by academic staff (staff have a separate production company for faculty professional practice and research). The service is run by a project

manager employed by the university. A deputy manager deals with day to day issues and there is a centre receptionist.

Academic staff were initially funded through HEIF as mentors but now carry on that role in a non-funded capacity.

Clients

Type: Public sector, Arts / Charities, SMEs

Where: Local / Regional

Budgets: Usual quotations range from zero up to around about £1,000 per finished minute of corporate production.

How Many: Started with accommodation for 18 corporate entities, each with their own office.

Student Participation and Assessment

"Generally speaking what we say to them is they should be fully engaged with their programme of study. However, what tends to happen, is those who have entrepreneurial ambitions and those who have those skills start their negotiation with [the incubator facility] quite early on and so they become virtual tenants and they start working out their business plans, sometimes even as early as in the middle of their second year on the undergraduate programme, so they're engaged."

Graduate entrepreneurs are encouraged to come back and deliver talks to students. Paid and unpaid informal work experience is available to current students.

"I think it's so energising for the students to realise that making money out of creative ideas is possible and it works. And if you've got the skills and you develop the skills, you can make a living out of it and you don't have to go off to London."

Tensions

The main tension is the additional workload on academic staff through mentoring.

Investment / Infrastructure

The initial facility has been established for 6 years and has now been added to with a virtual resource for supporting companies which are forming but do not need a formal space. These companies have access to meeting rooms and a coffee bar area.

"So they're virtual, we regard them as virtual tenants."

The facility is managed by the university which bids to the regional development agency   for funds.

"And previously we've had HEIF money as well, although HEIF keeps changing   its requirements in terms of what its there, designed to develop. HIEF has been a very useful strand of revenue for us to help fund our business development."

The university is highly supportive and the facility is promoted positively by the university as an outcome from the course. It is viewed as providing good public relations for the   university and a contribution to the community.

Income

There is no additional income to the university.

Local Economy

The facility is viewed as a way of building the media and creative sector in the region   which was virtually non-existent before this initiative. This has been supported by the city   council and country council as well as the regional development agency which are now   providing facilities for companies moving beyond the incubator stage.

"Back in the year 2000, there was a survey done which showed that [local]   businesses, a very low percentage of them, had ever spent any money on their corporate   image, corporate branding, corporate marketing activity. And there was a very good   reason for that which is that predominantly a large number of [local] businesses had   grown up out of   the rural economy. …. As the economy here has moved and evolved   away from solely rural into more commercial activities ………. companies have had to   grasp the issue of the value of media. And so really it's across all sectors of activity. I   mean it's law firms, it's retail, it's corporate organisations, who, some of whom may have   traditionally done advertising before, but, beyond that, there's been this huge growth in   corporate messages and corporate information to either shareholders or stakeholders or pressure groups etc….. It's a real shot in the arm, because we needed a new economic   sector and it's definitely   addressing that."

APPENDIX 5

Red Balloon Case Study (Formal Production Model)

Staff levels

Red Balloon is a well-established production unit with dedicated staff of producer and   admin support plus exec producer (Head of Enterprise).

Clients

Type: Corporate, public sector, charities, SMEs, and internal clients which can

be significant in some years. Previously regional broadcast series for ITV   Meridian – Freescreen and Just a Moment with…

Where: Regional, some national

Budgets: £2000-15,000 corporate

How Many: 10-15 per year

Student Participation and Assessment

Red Balloon operates a two tier system: small/low budget projects are channelled towards student course work or student portfolios. Projects with higher level budgets – for corporate clients or internal clients use freelance alumni with undergraduate and postgraduate students in lower level roles. Students are paid based on minimum wage or above for students and new graduates. This is paid as an 'agreed fee' per project based on a realistic estimate of the time involved. Payment leads to increased expectations. Being paid while undertaking production is viewed very positively by students. Freelancers are engaged at a negotiated daily rate and this provides additional networking opportunities for current students. Occasionally students are taken on for unpaid or paid work experience.

The opportunity to work with clients is see as central to the added value of the student experience with Red Balloon. The following comments were typical:

"Great experience to be working at industry standard whilst still studying."

"I learnt a lot about working to clients needs."

"It is good experience and gives you an example of what it's like in the real world in a professional environment. After all these are the sort of projects you would need to do to pay the bills."

"It did influence my decision to go to Bournemouth as it would give me the chance for some professional paid work in promos that I had no experience in."

"It shows that I can work in a professional editing environment with clients and adds to my freelance credits."

"It allowed me to use the experience that I had gained from the course in practice."

Until recently students working on Red Balloon productions were undertaking this activity as extra-curricula and therefore non-assessed. Feedback has been informal. Red Balloon is looking at ways of changing this through integration with course work and more formal reflective learning/feedback.

Tensions

The key tension is the need for more dedicated production staff. At present one producer is required to cover most productions (with occasional support from an academic if   production is part of course work). Not enough time can be spent developing new/bigger   budget projects. The Institution cannot commit additional funds for staff unless a project   has the budget to support it: this chicken/egg situation has restricted the growth of Red   Balloon.

There is a potential clash of agendas: enterprise targets versus student learning   opportunities. Small projects present valuable learning opportunities for students   but   don't bring in much income. Running two levels of projects creates more workload for   staff: many students have to be closely supervised to ensure work is produced to a high   enough standard for the client. Some postgraduate students come with little practical   production experience. These students need the most support but learn quickly from the   smaller projects that offer invaluable opportunities for them to be really embedded in a   production. One or two day shoots fit in much better with student

workloads and make it easier to match with student coursework deadlines.

Investment / Infrastructure

Red Balloon has a separate identity and branding and separate resources of production office, broadcast standard camera, lighting and sound kit and Final Cut Pro edit suite. It actively seeks clients although the majority come through reputation and repeat business. The university has invested in the production unit and expects it to be self-funding and achieve income for the university. In addition, Red Balloon is used by the university as a USP for course marketing on open days: it contributes to the appeal of the university for media students.

Income

Red Balloon is viewed as an opportunity to create third stream income – particularly in the case of broadcast and larger corporate projects. There is Institutional top-slicing (up to 45%) and FEC (full economic costing) even for internal projects. This can make it difficult to be competitive.

Local Economy

Red Balloon serves a town which has little in the way of an established media economy. It has created an identity for local businesses and organisations to come and receive a professional service representing the university in the region and nationally. The local economy benefits from the jobs created for recent alumni, local production support services and companies. This has helped to build a local media community. There are further opportunities through collaboration with partner colleges other institutions, particularly using students from drama and costume or make-up courses that are not offered at the university. It helps to foster a collaborative working environment between local institutions.

Appendix 6

The integration of commercial corporate production into assessed academic work at Bournemouth University

In January 2009 Bournemouth University Media School introduced a video production for a corporate client into the assessment of students undertaking the postgraduate unit "Production Management". Students taking the unit were drawn from MA Producing Film and Television and MA Directing Digital Film and Television and were paired as producers and directors. Each pair was required to manage the pre-production, shoot and edit of a two-minute component of a video for a client. Students were required to meet the client, recce the location and undertake the production within a given deadline. Postproduction was undertaken by students studying MA Post Production Editing. Students earned a fixed payment for the job and used this to contribute to the costs of other productions they were undertaking. One student editor was paid additionally to compile the different components of the project and worked closely with the client on the final cut and DVD authoring. The client was very satisfied with the final outcome and has asked to repeat the exercise next year. The stable relationship with the client and staff confidence in the provision of alternative clients, together with flexibility in the way the course documentation has been designed, has ensured that there is little risk and significant benefit in maintaining this opportunity for students to work

with and for real-life clients.