

Focus on skills and technology attracts new media students

The Queensland University of Technology is breaking new ground in innovative media studies as the 1996 academic year gets underway.

One of the country's more popular destinations for tertiary media students, QUT's School of Media and Journalism has a new head, Professor Stuart Cunningham, who has taken the helm at a time of considerable transformation and expansion.

This transformation has been underpinned by the highly successful move in mid-1995 from QUT's Faculty of Business to its Faculty of Arts.

The change has seen the development of a new major in Media Studies.

"We've got 75 students when we thought we'd get 40. There was obviously a pent-up demand for this course," he said.

Over the past few years, QUT has continued to fulfil an escalating demand for quality education in its journalism and media courses.

Pressure to get into QUT's School of Media and Journalism is intense - for example, only one in 10 first preferences eventually make it into the Film and Television course.

QUT is now offering 10-unit majors in journalism and film & television production, accommodating a strong involvement in technology- and skills-based areas.

A new, first-year journalism subject is setting new international standards under the guidance of Associate Professor Leonard Granato.

Dr Granato said the new unit, Journalism Information Systems, was at the cutting edge of the industry, teaching computer-assisted reporting skills.

"We teach the students to use spreadsheets, databases, how to find information on the net using email and this is done at the same time as they're doing basic news writing," he said.

This approach to information-gathering for journalists was developed by Dr. Granato following a visit to universities in the United States where similar courses were only available as an elective and only to final-year students.

Professor Cunningham said not only was there a strong demand to get into QUT media courses, but also employers were seeking out QUT graduates because of their high levels of practical skills. (QUT's slogan - *A university for the real world* - has an established and respected track record with industry, government and community sectors.)

"We've got a long track record with high-profile graduates scoring positions in well-known places or becoming well-known figures," he said.



Professor Stuart Cunningham . . . pent-up demand for new Media Studies major

"There is Ellen Fanning from the ABC radio news program *PM*, and Samantha Butler, a QUT graduate was plucked from almost immediate graduation to front the national ABC youth current affairs program *Attitude*."

Ten Network's newsreader Tracey Spicer, Nine Network's Tracey Curro (60 minutes reporter) and Network 7's

Carolyn Tucker (Brisbane anchor for *Today Tonight*) are also past graduates of the School of Media and Journalism.

In fact, throughout Australia, QUT media graduates have made a strong impression, with regional media being a particularly successful initial destination.

QUT film and television production graduates also are placed in advertising agencies, documentary teams and independent film houses in South-East Queensland, while two students this year started at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School.

Professor Cunningham said "full-service courses" offered at QUT made a real difference to job opportunities.

"Employability is enhanced and the students have a greater degree of understanding and comprehension of the industry. They can adopt in industry more readily than other graduates," he explained.

Outside the classrooms and studios, QUT staff are becoming known nationally, too, as they publish seminal texts in various media disciplines.

Indeed research is both encouraged and supported well on the QUT campus, with a Centre for Media Policy and Practice having been established. (Its inaugural director was Professor Cunningham.)

Additionally, QUT is playing a significant role in the new Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, a Commonwealth-funded centre of excellence based at Griffith University and jointly managed by the University of Queensland and QUT.

Professor Cunningham said the new centre was set to make significant progress in innovative advanced education, the development of regional and curriculum links with Asia, and major programs of research over the next five years.

"There are so few humanities-based key centres, of which we're one, and this is a sign of the high regard our research record and advanced teaching record is held in at the national level," he said.

Human Movement project picks up good vibrations

The right vibrations may benefit car accident victims, injured athletes and diabetics if new research from the School of Human Movement Studies proves successful.

Project leader and Human Movements lecturer Dr Graham Kerr said the research would centre on proprioceptive sensory information which he described as "the body's most important perception".

Dr Kerr said this information was produced by sensory receptors in muscles joints and skin.

"People who lose this perception when their sensory nerves die off have great difficulty walking, they don't know where their feet are and they suffer limb dis-co-ordination," he said.

Dr Kerr said the research would further understanding of how the brain co-ordinated and controlled movement.

As part of his latest project, Dr Kerr is constructing specialised equipment to assist with his study into brain behaviour.

"The vibrational system will stimulate tendons and sensory receptors in muscles in the subject's arm, while the brain's reaction to the stimuli is monitored," Dr Kerr said.

He said the machinery would take control of the arm's movement, while the brain's reaction to the stimuli was monitored.

Dr Kerr began the project two years ago in the United States and is collaborating with researchers from QUT's School of Mathematics - Professor Sean McElwain and student Monica Hurdal - who are studying the relationship between visual and brain stimuli.

"In the maths research, brain functions are mapped using EEG methods and my research will use similar methods to focus on proprioceptive information," Dr Kerr said. "For now, the project is being funded by the School of Human Movement Studies."

Dr Kerr said he planned to apply for external research funding after his nine months of pilot work was completed.

Hong Kong careers courses prove popular



Learning and Development lecturer Tony Burton . . . opportunity knocks

QUT's Education Faculty is breaking new ground, offering specifically designed guidance and counselling courses in Hong Kong.

In a university first, Learning and Development lecturer Tony Burton was recently asked to develop a distinctive range of study options for Hong Kong educators and counsellors.

These included programs that could be credited towards the Master of Education.

Mr Burton said he had a number of counselling students who wanted to complete their Education degrees at home in Hong Kong, particularly if there were only one or two units outstanding in their degrees.

"There was a fair bit of interest in counselling skills, so we designed a course in conjunction with the Dean of Education Alan Cumming, and QUT's Hong Kong representative," he said.

The project was undertaken in conjunction with the YMCA. (A huge private enterprise company in Hong Kong, the YMCA boasts hotels, many schools and employs substantial numbers of social workers and counsellors.)

The seminar program was provided at two levels. One offered a certificate of attendance when the workshops were successfully completed.

Also, for the first time, the Hong Kong-based course may be credited towards a QUT masters program if students apply after successful completion of the assessment.

The course was attended by 25 students and, Mr Burton said, the opportunities for QUT were blossoming.

"This started with demand from students over there and it's providing

a forum for the university in Hong Kong that is putting QUT's name up in lights," Mr Burton said.

Additionally, Mr Burton hosted an intensive, one-day course for 160 Hong Kong career masters who play key roles in vocational guidance in schools.

He introduced a number of vocational tools, including some computer programs - with a focus on career assessment.

"Career masters have very limited formal qualifications experience, so the association is providing a very good opportunity for QUT to provide this expertise," he said.

The Faculty of Education is also considering introducing a graduate certificate program in the area as market need grows.

During Mr Burton's two-week visit to Hong Kong he also addressed the issues of dealing with difficult students, particularly in Hong Kong's pre-vocational schools.

"Many of the students see themselves going to a lesser academic school and, as a result, their behaviour is often associated with poor self image," he explained.

Teachers, principals and senior educational staff attended a three-day program with Mr Burton focusing on teaching for improvement and change.

"Here again there is a wealth of opportunities for QUT, to get down to teacher level and start teaching valuable techniques," he said.

QUT's expanding Hong Kong initiatives have been welcomed, with Mr Burton invited back to train school inspectors and guidance masters over the coming year.

Prolific engineering author wins prestigious professional accolade



Dr David Thambiratnam . . . now a fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers

QUT Associate Professor Dr David Thambiratnam has been elevated to "Fellow" within the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE).

Founded in 1852, the American Society of Civil Engineers is the oldest engineering society in the United States and has more than 110,000 members worldwide.

The "Fellow" designation is considered one of the highest professional recognitions civil engineers can receive from their peers and is second only to the "Honorary Member" designation.

To be eligible for elevation to the grade of "Fellow" an ASCE member must be a legally registered engineer or land surveyor.

He/she must have had responsibility over 10 years, as a member, for important work in engineering or surveying and be qualified to direct, plan or design engineering works.

An ASCE member may also be elevated if he/she has been in charge

of important industrial, construction, educational, editorial, research or engineering society activity.

ASCE President James Poirot said the work of Dr Thambiratnam and other ASCE members "realises a major civil engineering goal: to serve as guardians of the public good".

Dr Thambiratnam has had a total of 23 years of engineering experience in Sri Lanka, Canada, Singapore and Australia.

He has had seven years of industrial experience in analysis, design and construction of multi-storey buildings and bridges.

In addition, he has spent 16 years in teaching, research and consulting in structural analysis, dynamics and vibration of structures and finite element modelling.

Dr Thambiratnam has more than 125 publications to his credit and was last year elected a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers, Australia.

All campuses to celebrate cultural diversity

All three QUT campuses will celebrate Diversity Week in early April with visual arts and crafts demonstrations, cultural performances, music and international food and drinks available for all to enjoy.

QUT Student Guild's Myrene Gatbonton said the celebrations would be in the first week of April, with main events between 11am and 3pm at Carseldine on Monday, April 1, Kelvin Grove on Tuesday, April 2 and Gardens Point on Thursday, April 4.

"The aim is to promote and increase our society's recognition, acceptance and mutual respect of the indigenous, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds around us," she said.