

Napier University

Response to the Cultural Commission's call for comments on the Second Phase Consultation:

'Developing Talent'

Napier University is pleased to comment on the "Developing Talent" issues raised by the Cultural Commission in the second phase of its consultation.

1. Rights, Entitlements and Responsibilities

- 1.1 We have read with interest the Cultural Commission's progress report, published in December '04, and note the emerging importance attached to the theme of life-long learning.
- 1.2 In linking life-long learning to the processes of developing talent, we believe the HE sector has a key and clear role to play – particularly, too, in promoting cultural rights and entitlements. This is, not least, as a consequence of the high priority institutions, such as Napier University, have given to social inclusion and widening access. We offer flexible, creative and innovative learning and development opportunities to the widest range of talent, across a wide spectrum of provision. In so doing we enable our graduates not only to reach their full potential as individuals, but also to make an early and important contribution to the artistic, cultural, social and economic life of Scotland. We do this formally through award-bearing programmes that embrace a very full range of creative and cultural disciplines. We also support new and continuing learners through a variety of more informal programmes, often community-based, delivered during times to suit the participants such as holiday periods and week-ends. Those with prior experience and joining us from Further Education can also benefit from 'bridging' provision that helps smooth their transition to Higher Education.
- 1.3 Other themes emerging from the Commission's first phase work such as the link between creativity and business, internationalisation and the importance of providing innovative and inspiring learning environments are also high priorities for institutions such as Napier University.
- 1.4 We have shown through both the artistic and commercial success of our students and graduates (for example, in design, journalism, film, photography and music) our commitment to providing close links between creativity and industry.
- 1.5 We have also demonstrated (for example through our work in China and Hong Kong) how the HE sector, through its international networks, can play an

important part in providing a multicultural context for innovation and creative endeavour.

- 1.6 And, the major investment we have made in our recently re-opened Craiglockhart Campus housing our Business School (with its iconic 'egg' lecture theatre and dramatic interior design) has already brought about a perceptible cultural change to the way both our students and staff respond to their work and given them a renewed confidence, enthusiasm and enjoyment of study and work.

2. Cultural Leadership, Planning & Funding

- 2.1 The HE sector has an important part to play in preparing the leaders of tomorrow, in culture as with many other disciplines, and many creative practitioners working in the sector (where they are daily engaged at the interface between theory and practice) are well placed to contribute to, and take on, leadership responsibilities more widely. Given the important role HE plays in developing high-quality talent, it would be appropriate for the sector to be represented on whatever structure and planning regime emerges.
- 2.2 With the growing importance of 'convergence' and 'partnership' in the arts as well as a greater appreciation of the value of innovative, experimental practice-based research and development, a much better understanding of the associated resourcing implications is urgently required.
- 2.3 It is in the university sector, as much as in the specialist institutions, that opportunities exist for new ways of working across disciplines and where a real productive engagement can take place between business, technology and creativity. Such activity, however, needs proper resourcing and a more joined-up approach to planning and funding would reflect these new ways of working.
- 2.4 The work of the universities involved in practice-based creative and cultural activity, including their contribution to the wider community, therefore needs to be recognised and resourced appropriately. This is vital for the future health of Scotland. Government needs to support the special nature of this provision, particularly at the higher levels, operating often in partnership or in collaboration with others, and must ensure that it is adequately funded and that Scotland is not disadvantaged, for example, vis a vis our colleagues in England & Wales.
- 2.5 Partnership development at home or overseas is also increasingly difficult where there is a mismatch between the available levels of public investment and funding. We can only remain globally competitive in the many fast growing industrial sectors dependent on high levels of creativity if we have a strong and well-funded cultural infrastructure built on excellence in life-long learning and research.

3. The role of Higher Education

- 3.1 Within the context of life-long learning, the HE sector is a key provider of creative learning opportunities for the 18+ group. It is a seedbed of innovation and ideas across a wide range of disciplines, and through cultural engagement in the arts and creativity it makes an important contribution to personal development, community development and, of course, to business success.
- 3.2 At Napier University we have a track record of producing self-confident graduates in areas that map on to almost the full spectrum of the creative, cultural and digital technology continuum.
- In **Design** (Product & Interior) with many of our students winning national awards such as the Design & Art Directors Award (D&AD) and the much respected Royal Society of Arts Student Design Awards (RSA).
 - In **Film**, our graduates regularly pick up industry-recognised awards such as the Scottish BAFTAs and along with Edinburgh College of Art our students have a virtual monopoly in the Scottish Students on Screen Awards.
 - We are a very significant provider of **Journalism** and **Publishing** education hosting the Scottish Centre for the Book
 - We have a fast growing reputation for our **Popular** and **Classical Music** provision with excellence demonstrated in contemporary composition and singing.
 - Other areas of 'creative' strength include **Interactive Computing, Multimedia, Entrepreneurship, Tourism and Events & Festival Management.**
 - We also have an emerging and developing expertise in **Cultural Studies.**
- 3.3 Our graduates are professionally recognised as being 'work-ready' with much of our creative provision already incorporating business skills, entrepreneurship and technology. We subscribe to Richard Florida's contention that 'we now have an economy powered by human creativity' and our graduates from the broadly defined creative disciplines have an impact on the wider economy as well as simply providing talented individuals to meet the demands of the creative and cultural industries.

4. Research

- 4.1 By its very nature research is where creativity flourishes - across a wide range of disciplines. Napier University is engaged in much exciting and innovative work focused on Health and the Environment, Informatics, aspects of Infrastructure, Business and Employment.
- 4.2 Our Faculty of Arts & Social Science, however, hosts our main research strengths in the more narrowly defined creative and cultural areas such as Music,

Communications, and particularly Design & Media Arts along with Social & Cultural Studies.

- 4.3 Together with Edinburgh College of Art, for example, we have recently launched the Screen Academy Scotland, as a centre of excellence for the film industry. This new and exciting initiative will provide a hub for research, post-graduate education and training serving the film industry in Scotland.

5. Residences, Summer and Saturday Schools

- 5.1 We operate a number of residences including Photography, Music Composition, and for the past five years have sponsored the Edinburgh Quartet as our Quartet in Residence.
- 5.2 Our highly popular Summer Schools in Singing, Jazz, Film Music and Piano are attract participants from the rest of the UK and as well as internationally. We also run a Jazz Saturday School for younger students.

6. Collections

- 6.1 Napier University houses the unique and historic Edward Clark Collection of books on publishing and printing as well as a growing collection of books associated with the life and work of the War Poets, Wilfred Owen and Sigfrid Sassoon.

7. Digital Media Leadership

- 7.1 Napier University is at the leading edge of on-line provision for the Creative and Cultural disciplines in Scotland. We offer a Masters in International Communication entirely on line; elements of our undergraduate Cultural Studies programme and two further Masters programmes in Design and Screen Project Development are in development - funded by substantial European Social Fund grants. Modules from these programmes will be available as CPD for creative practitioners and anyone interested in cultural issues. All our programmes are supported by Web CT Vista, a highly sophisticated on-line virtual learning environment.

8. Action for Higher Education

Priorities include:

- Enabling more high-level innovative (Masters & Research) activity through a more sympathetic resource allocation model. This should be extended to the development of HE institutions as 'hubs' incorporating facilities for business start-up and development.

- Developing operational models which allow greater cross-over activity between disciplines
- Finding ways to encourage the public and private sector to collaborate with/invest in HE on creative and cultural initiatives.
- Rewarding, recognising and supporting HE's wider contribution to the community.
- Encouraging and supporting students to work internationally.
- Further supporting widening access and social inclusion initiatives.

9. Conclusion

In ways such as those described above, the HE sector is already a significant contributor to the cultural health and wellbeing of the nation. We suggest, therefore, that the sector is well placed to further expand its influence and role and to become one of the key agents of change in the development of the new economy and to cultural and social improvement. Despite the high benefit to cost ratio of investment in creative and cultural education and research there still needs to be both a greater understanding of these benefits within government and funding bodies and a recognition that the sector's full potential cannot be realised without appropriate levels of funding. A Cultural Policy sympathetic to and supportive of the contribution of the HE sector would be both welcomed and highly beneficial to our social, economic and cultural future.