THE PLACEMENT

Dr Fionntán De Brún currently serves as one of the two independent members of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund Investment Committee (ILBF), responsible for allocating the £12 million to support Irish language film and television production in Northern Ireland. This committee is managed by the Northern Ireland Film and Television Commission (NIFTC) established in 2004 as part of the Good Friday Agreement. Association with the NIFTC provided Fionntán with the opportunity to link with a variety of companies from the independent television production sector:

Zoogon Production Ltd is an independent Irish language television company established in 2005 to make television programmes and re-version programmes for Irish language television audiences.

Clean Slate Television Ltd is an independent television company established in 2005 involved in documentary commissions for both English language and Irish language television audiences.

On placement Fionntán gained an insight into the development of programme ideas and the work that goes into preparing for a commission including detail on financial costing, insurance and contractual clauses. One of the essays from the recently published, ‘Belfast and the Irish language’, edited by Fionntán, which explores Belfast’s relationship with the Irish language from its earliest roots became the focus for this process.

Fionntán shadowed the work of Mr Mairtin Campbell, Producer at Clean Slate, who commented: “Apart from Fionntán’s general level of interest in the business side of documentary production his expertise in the Irish language and more importantly, his knowledge of the history of the Irish language has made a significant contribution.”

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS

- Applications to the ILBF are assessed against criteria set out in the guidelines available on the NIFTC’s website (www.niftc.co.uk). Although Fionntán is very familiar with this process the experience of becoming attached to the media companies who action the funded projects has enhanced his standing as an independent member of the ILBF Committee.

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS

The NIFTC has established a training scheme for people interested in working in Irish language TV production. The NIFTC has indicated that BA graduates with Irish are particularly welcome to avail of this opportunity.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Existing links with the work of the NIFTC and ILBF Investment Committee to promote the Irish language raises awareness of how media can encourage peace and reconciliation within Northern Ireland. Potential follow-up work with Clean Slate Television Ltd regarding the development of ideas for the suggested documentary series on ‘hidden history’ will focus on issues of identity, difference, assimilation, alienation and rights.

PERSONAL LEARNING

Fionntán commented: “In the light of the NIFTC training scheme opportunity for students my time on placement has greatly enriched my understanding of the Irish language TV sector and its needs. I now feel much better qualified to prepare students at St Mary’s to consider media as a possible professional pathway.”