

Media

AUT open to talks on intern plan

by Helen Twose

AUT University says it is still open to talks over a journalism internship scheme being offered for the first time this year by Fairfax Media.

Fairfax is offering prospective students a place at one of four journalism schools, reimbursement of their study fees and work at a Fairfax newspaper in exchange for being bonded for two years.

Under the Fairfax internship scheme, the company would run a candidate selection process in lieu of the university's selection criteria.

AUT journalism curriculum leader Denise Ryan says the school was approached to become involved.

She says AUT is having further discussions with Fairfax to achieve a solution.

"With 61 graduates each year, we clearly have strong, positive links with industry."

AUT receives more journalism applications than it has places available.

Dr Andrea Vujnovich, AUT's director of governance and legal support, says the university must ensure that its selection processes are "free from bias, robust and transparent".

"This is because the places allocated to students are funded by the taxpayer and the public has an expectation that each student has an equal opportunity for selection."

The Fairfax internship would have required AUT to accept Fairfax interns without subjecting them to usual university processes.

"In our view, this would give preferential access to Fairfax interns over other applicants who could be turned away," says Dr Vujnovich.

Professor Barry King, head of AUT's communication studies, says: "We are, as much as Fairfax, committed to improving the quality of New Zealand journalism. So given goodwill, a positive outcome is not ruled out."

AUT had proposed that Fairfax select its

interns from AUT's pool of successful applicants — the usual process with university scholarships. Fairfax declined this option.

The University of Canterbury is one of four journalism schools participating in the scheme, which also includes Aoraki Polytechnic, Massey University and Waikato Institute of Technology.

Jim Tully, head of political science and communication at Canterbury University, also took legal advice on participation in the Fairfax scheme. He says the school "could see nothing in this relationship that was compromising or difficult for us".

Tully says the memorandum of understanding allowed all institutions to "opt out" if they were seriously concerned or felt compromised.

"It's not as if Fairfax is coming to us and saying, 'Here are two, three, four, five people, whatever, that we want you to take as part of the scheme — here they are.'"

"We'll be involved in the selection process and we'll have the right to say 'no'. It seems pretty straightforward to me," he says.

"If perchance something was unfolding that was seriously compromising the integrity of our selection process or our programme, then we'd say 'no, sorry this is not working'."

Fairfax Media's editorial development manager, Clive Lind, says Fairfax will run the initial selection, including the written application process, testing for general knowledge, writing ability and grammar, but the final interview will include representatives from the institutions.

"The final say as to which paper they go to rests with the editor. The final say with which school they go to rests with the school," he says.

"I see this as a relationship that's built around mutual trust and respect and will be subject to negotiation and discussion rather than something which is remotely adversarial," he says.

Aoraki Polytechnic will also take part

Final year journalism students:

Aoraki:	16
AUT:	61
Canterbury Uni:	20
Chch Polytechnic:	20
Massey:	28
Southern Institute:	20
Wairariki:	18
Waikato:	34
Western Institute:	25
Whitireia:	24

Source: New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation, 2006.

and although it did not take legal advice, faculty head Greig Richardson says that as a vocationally focused institution, it is always looking for ways to work with the industry.

Richardson says that no places would be set aside specifically for Fairfax interns but under a "partnership" arrangement Aoraki would be involved in the interviews and final selections.

"At the end of the day we'll be looking at each case on its merits, and as I say, it's a partnership, so we would be working on all issues," he says.



NZPA news change boosts media competition

by Mathew Grocott

Opinions were mixed last year when NZPA announced it would produce all its news stories internally after Fairfax and APN decided to stop filing their reports to New Zealand's wire service.

But now the new model has been running for more than six months it appears the change has had positive repercussions for New Zealand's print media.

NZPA editor Nick Brown says the change has "created a more competitive environment" where the papers need to monitor what their competition is doing.

NZPA is owned by New Zealand's print media. In the past all papers shared copy with each other, including between Fairfax and APN.

The reasons behind the change are well documented. After APN launched the *Herald on Sunday*, Fairfax papers stopped filing stories on Saturday, depriving their competitor of national content.

At a meeting held in April last year Fairfax and APN, which are NZPA's major shareholders, agreed to stop filing stories to NZPA, although they agreed to continue to subscribe to the wire service.

Before the change NZPA handled 180 domestic reporter produced news stories each day, including sports.

Roughly half of these were produced by NZPA.

Now they average 120 each day from staff writers and freelance contributors.

The NZPA also "acts as a sorting house" for international wires such as Reuters and Associated Press, says Brown.

Dominion Post editor Tim Pankhurst says the change has been a positive move for the industry.

"We think it's a great move, positive for competition and for journalism generally."

"What we are seeing emerge is much more distinct character in the competing flagship papers of the two major groups, APN's *Herald* and Fairfax's *Dominion Post*," says Pankhurst.

Both Fairfax and APN continue to share stories internally between their own papers.

Jon Anderson is editorial coordinator for Wirestream, the network that Fairfax papers use to share their stories.

"From my perspective, the system has strengthened the news coverage for Fairfax papers."

Anderson says Fairfax is sharing more stories and features within the group which is supplemented by the coverage supplied by NZPA.

However independently-owned newspapers must rely on NZPA for all of their coverage of national stories.

Editor of the independently owned *Westport News* Colin Warren says the results of the change are as he expected.

He does not miss out on coverage of the big national interest stories and describes

the NZPA content as "adequate for our requirements".

"NZPA has risen to the challenge very well and should be commended."

But he now misses "small stories that the big metropolitans aren't interested in".

He says there are fewer colour stories and "laments the loss" of the ability of a reporter from Gore to file a colourful story that a large metropolitan newspaper may pick up and run.

"We see nothing from Nelson or Blenheim." Fairfax owns the newspapers in both towns which often publish stories his readers would be interested in.

Brown says NZPA concentrates on news of a national interest but is still trying to do colour pieces and features.

He says the NZPA is also diversifying its product by creating a photo service and supplying graphics and cartoons.

The change has also allowed NZPA to sell content to non-print media such as TV3 and Radio New Zealand.

Scoop.co.nz co-editor Selwyn Manning says Scoop has provided NZPA with images from off-shore photographers working on assignments, such as the Pacific Islands Forum in Papua New Guinea last year.

"We're quite keen on a symbiotic relationship," says Manning.

Brown is confident NZPA will adapt to the changes and continue to be profitable "as long as we maintain a good income".

"At one stage our future may have looked a bit bleak, now it's looking bright."

Who owns your local news?

Newspaper ownership in New Zealand is divided between Australian-owned Fairfax Media and APN News and Media. There is also a small group of independently owned publications.

Fairfax owns: *Waikato Times, Taranaki Daily News, Manawatu Standard, Dominion Post, Nelson Mail, Marlborough Express, Christchurch Press, Timaru Herald and Southland Times.* Fairfax also own the *Sunday Star-Times, Sunday News* and *Truth*.

APN owns: *Northern Advocate, New Zealand Herald, Bay of Plenty Times, Rotorua Daily Post, Hawkes Bay Today, Wanganui Chronicle and Wairarapa News.* APN also owns the *Herald on Sunday*.

Independents include: *Otago Daily Times, Ashburton Guardian, Greymouth Evening Star, Gisborne Herald and Westport News.*