

# JTO defends unit standards

by Jonathan Dow

The national media industry training body for journalists has defended the role of unit standards after recent criticism from a university professor.

Bill Southworth, executive director of the Journalists Training Organisation, says unit standards do not interfere with academic freedom at a university.

Southworth, responding to an article from Massey University associate professor Frank Sligo in *Pacific Journalism Review*, says unit standards are not a method of teaching students but a method of measuring student performance.

"When I read the article, I thought someone was confusing an industry teaching method with the industry's right to expect that journalists have been marked at a level that it can have confidence in," says Southworth.

Sligo, head of Massey's department of journalism and communication, questioned the place of unit standards in tertiary journalism education.

Sligo also questioned the JTO's role as the "gatekeeper and standard setter for the content of academic programmes".

He wrote that although universities must not ignore training they must "transcend it to also encompass education".

Sligo was critical of the behaviourist philosophy of competence-based training (CBT) on which unit standards are based.

"In any discipline of some complexity, such as journalism, the CBT approach to learning does not engage the learner's intelligence and thus potentially

trivialises the field."

He told *Te Waha Nui*: "More and more, universities are having to be credible internationally."

"If unit standards are seen to be the entirety of what journalists get as training, then I think international universities would be raising their eyebrows," says Sligo.

But Charles Riddle, vice-president of the Journalism Education Association of New Zealand, says Sligo is wrong to assume that journalism trainees should be concerned with a university's international ranking.

"What should concern students is their employability at the end of their course," says Riddle.

Southworth doesn't see unit standards as a problem.

"There is plenty of time for universities and others to teach students those things they think are important," he says.

At the Jeanz conference last December, Ruth Thomas, a senior lecturer in journalism at AUT, said in a paper the unit standards were six years old and needed to be reviewed.

Thomas, who is researching for a doctorate in journalism education, said she was "horrified" to be "teaching to the requirements of a document which the JTO cannot or will not fix".

"Unit standards have been upgraded in the past and we hope to do this in the future," says Southworth. "In fact, next year there is likely to be a major review."

Thomas sees the debate as a conflict between academia and industry.

"The whole thing is about

industry control," she says.

"I don't think you need the big stick waved over you."

Sligo says academic freedom at Massey means staff "individually and collectively have the choice of whether to use unit standards".

Dr Grant Hannis, head of the journalism school at Massey, says Sligo has made this academic freedom

clear. "I'm 100% committed to teach unit standards. It gives journalists all the basic skills to enter the journalism industry and Massey will continue to teach unit standards on its internal graduate diploma in journalism," says Hannis.

Sligo says he is comfortable with the fact that the Massey staff who teach the graduate diploma in journalism at Massey use unit standards.

Massey is due to be moderated by the JTO later this year.

Sligo says the media industry is in transition, and the old cadetship scheme has been replaced by university education for journalists.

"It's a matter of evolution really. Evolution rather than revolution."

Canterbury University offers a postgraduate diploma in journalism and does not teach or assess according to unit standards.

"Universities have traditionally taken the view that unit

standards are not a rigorous or desirable form of assessment," says Jim Tully, head of the Canterbury journalism school.

Tully says they do teach everything in the unit standards because "they are the sort of material a practical course

would want".

"Whether people are taught to unit standards isn't important.

"It's more important that they are taught skills that are needed in industry."

Jim Tucker, president of Jeanz, says good teachers are not constrained by unit standards.

"Some of Dr Sligo's points make sense if viewed in a purely academic environment, but journalism education sits uneasily there," he says.

"We all aim to produce generations of new entrants who will challenge conventions, think for themselves, display independence — and do it better than we did when we were in the industry."

The unit standards dictate what is taught in professional journalism courses which lead to the National Diploma in Journalism.

Twelve polytechnics and universities offer courses leading to this qualification.



BILL SOUTHWORTH



HARD AT WORK: Student journalists in a campus newsroom.

## PIMA calls for more Pacific Islanders in NZ media

by Sudesh Kissun

Four years ago a group of Pacific Island journalists got together over "diet coke and meat pies" to discuss issues affecting their work.

This fellowship gave birth to the Pacific Islands Media Association (PIMA).

The association's membership now includes radio and television broadcasters, newspaper publishers, journalists and film makers.

The association will hold its annual conference at the AUT conference centre on October 8-9.

PIMA chair Kalafi Moala says the group felt major issues concerning Pacific region were not dealt with accurately and ade-

quately by New Zealand media.

Moala says Auckland was considered the capital of the Pacific islands and was a key city for the region.

He says a lot of Pacific region issues were ignored by New Zealand media, despite the country essentially being a Pacific Island nation.

"Our fellowship over diet coke and meat pies made us realise the need for PIMA," he says.

Moala says PIMA has organised workshops to promote Pacific issues and runs a media scholarship programme with AUT.

Speakers at this year's conference have not yet been finalised but a number of well-known sports stars of Pacific descent are expected to address the conference.

PIMA will also announce their AUT scholarship awardees at the conference.

Current scholarship holders include post graduate students Mere Lomaloma Elliott, Christine Gounder and Kitekei'aho Tua'akalau and Bachelor of Communication Studies student Leilani Momoisea.

Moala says PIMA would like to see more Pacific Islanders in mainstream media in New Zealand.

"The impact the Pacific Islands have made in New Zealand is huge," he says.

Moala says *New Zealand Idol* winner Ben Lummis is a Pacific Islander. So is the All Blacks captain Tana Umaga.

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## BaseFM: mixing up the local airwaves

by Dean Campbell

Neo-soul, hip-hop, jazz, funk, reggae, drum and bass, or lounge music: new Ponsonby based radio station Base FM aims to offer them all and more to the people of central Auckland.

Base FM began broadcasting in May. Programme director Manuel Bundy says there has been a big response from local people in Central Auckland since the launch.

The new station takes over the 107.3 frequency from UpFM and joins other low power FM stations such as KFM, Fleet and Julia, all operating in the Auckland CBD.

Bundy says it is a mixture of different forms of music that is played at the moment.

"There are shows on other stations, but no station dedicated to it," he says.

Forty-two DJs have shows on the station, a mixture of the well-known — DLT, Submariner — and new talent such as Nabeel Zuberi who teaches film

history at the University of Auckland.

Bundy says he has people ringing in all the time looking for opportunities.

"I thought I had my work cut out for me looking for DJs, but the response has been overwhelming — for example, DLT basically rocked in and said, 'When do I start?'"

Bundy says most of the DJs have experience and are keen to "have a go" on the new station. "They are passionate about what they do, passionate about music."

Bundy believes the station is going to fill a void in the local radio market, and does not have any direct competitors.

"The first rule of hip hop: You have to be original," he says.

Base is owned by fellow Ponsonby station George FM.

"We are thinking of George as the main room, and Base as the lounge," he says.

The station can be listened to in the central city, through a live stream on the internet, or on Sky Digital.



