

LTC13D017

Title: Report of the Institutional Review of Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts

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Report of the Institutional Review of Mountview Academy of theatre Arts

Issue

Attached at Appendix 1 is the report of the Institutional Review of Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts which took place on 8 October 2013.

Recommendation

The Learning and Teaching Committee is invited to recommend to the Senate of the University of East Anglia that Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts be re-approved as a partner institution of the University for a period of up to five years commencing October 2013.

Resource Implications

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity

Not applicable.

Further Information

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University of East Anglia

**REPORT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF
MOUNTVIEW ACADEMY OF THEATRE ARTS**

8 October 2013

1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 An institutional review panel met at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts on 8 October 2013 to consider the re-approval of the Academy as a partner institution of the University of East Anglia (UEA). Membership of the institutional review panel is shown in Appendix A.
- 1.2 The panel met with a range of Mountview staff and a group of students including a recent graduate from the range of UEA validated provision (as listed in Appendix A). The panel were also provided with a tour of facilities including the library, student common room and teaching rooms.
- 1.3 Discussions were informed by an evaluative report on the operation and management of the partnership produced by UEA and a self-evaluation document prepared by the Academy, accompanied by a range of supporting documentation.

2 Summary of discussions

The Move to the New Premises and Future Plans

- 2.1 The panel were interested to learn more about Mountview's plans to move to new premises at Hornsey Town Hall and the ambitions and medium term strategy. The Principal and Deputy Principal explained the complex nature of the project including the financial commitment, the state of the building and the level of heritage refurbishment needed. It was envisaged that the commitment to go ahead with the move would be determined by Christmas 2013 and in this case the move would likely take place for the 2017/18 academic year. The panel noted that there were a number of outstanding issues to be resolved in order for the planned move and it acknowledged that a Plan B would be necessary if the plans for Hornsey Town Hall were not realised.
- 2.2 The panel discussed Mountview's five year strategy with the Senior Management team which aimed at reducing numbers on the existing courses so that teaching cohorts were 16-24, while diversifying the offering by looking to introduce more programmes, including the development of additional postgraduate programmes, that might include song making and song writing. The target for the institution was to recruit additional numbers of international students and increase the size of the institution from 400 to 600 students, subject to the move to a suitable location. The students noted the current high level of individualised support they received from teaching staff and a number of students cited the small class sizes as one of their reasons for choosing to apply to Mountview.

Requirement: Develop a strategy that ensures an appropriate student experience is maintained at the current Academy site while plans to move to a new location site are being finalised.

- 2.3 With respect to the staffing strategy it was noted that there were no plans to increase the number of staff substantially but that during the previous five years staffing costs had increased and the core teaching teams and freelance staff numbers had grown. Any new programme development would need to take account of the workload on current staff in order that the student experience was maintained.
- 2.4 The Mountview Board were currently in the process of developing ten year business plan which would take account of the plans identified above.

Learning Resources

- 2.3 Following the panel's tour of the library resources they asked both staff and students to comment on the availability of learning resources. The Librarians were commended for being helpful and providing guidance to students on library resources. Some students noted that they relied on the support from the Librarians to access the resources, specifically online journals, and that the development of the library catalogue had been a helpful tool. Some students were aware of and had visited other external libraries that could be accessed to support the substantial resources available at Mountview.
- 2.4 Additional resources were purchased following dialogue between academic staff and students and using the judgement of the Librarian. The panel noted that although there was sufficient budget for learning resources it was not clear whether this should include spend on IT resources within the library.

Requirement: Create a clearer and visible inventory of the resources (hard copy and electronic) available from the library at Mountview and detail where students can access additional learning resources in the immediate location to Mountview and central London.

IT Infrastructure

- 2.5 The panel enquired about the current level of IT infrastructure that supported teaching and learning at the Academy. Students and staff both commented on the lack of Wi-Fi availability in certain buildings and a computer network, outdated PCs in the library and lack of intranet. The panel noted that there were on going plans to upgrade the IT infrastructure and the introduction of a student and staff intranet, including an allowance in the budget, but these plans had not yet been implemented.
- 2.6 The Senior Management Team acknowledged that a resolution to this issue had been outstanding for a long period of time and must take a high priority for the benefit of staff and students.

Requirement: Produce a clear strategy and timetable, with identified resources, for upgrading IT systems at the Academy including Wi-Fi facilities and a central network hub, in a core building on the Academy site.

Student Experience and Student Voice

- 2.7 Students were very complimentary about the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff and the support they received from their tutors. They described their experience at Mountview as challenging, exceeding their expectation, supportive and that they were given a strong foundation that prepared them for the profession. The Panel noted that the students were particularly glad to gain experience from the amount and variety of freelance staff/ practitioners that were integrated with the core teaching team.

Commendation: The hard working, commitment and passion of staff for the subject and the student learning experience.

Commendation: The industry appropriateness of the courses which was evidenced by the panel and the students.

- 2.8 The students were asked about assessment and feedback and responded positively by outlining how both assessment and feedback were continuous processes with feedback given to every student at the end of every lesson. Staff described feedback and critical reflection as integral to the programmes in order to prepare students for the profession and the panel noted the processes in place for ensuring that freelance staff were briefed on assessment and supported in giving feedback to students.

Commendation: The high standard of and individualised nature of the feedback given to students.

- 2.9 The panel asked the students about the Student Union and the methods of student feedback to the Academy. Students commented that they did not always think of the Student Union as the first port of call for advice and support and that its presence was not as strong as at other higher education institutions. The panel noted that the Student Union had provided social activities for students but that both Union officers and students were busy with their own studies and did not always have time for extra curricular activities. The Senior Management Team noted the increasing contribution of the Student Union to the development of the Academy and were keen to continue to increase this involvement.

Recommendation: Continue to develop the role of the Student Union and seek advice and guidance on how to proceed.

- 2.10 The panel discussed the methods for student feedback at the Academy and noted the process for Student Representative meetings which occurred three times per year. The students informed the panel that their feedback was taken on board by staff at the Academy. The Senior Management Team noted that a graduate student sat on the Mountview Board but that there were a number of developments to be made with respect to formally documenting and enhancing student representation at the Academy.

Requirement: Produce a strategy to enhance the current methods for formal student engagement that can be applied consistently across the organisation.

Staff Development and Scholarly Activity

- 2.11 The panel asked staff about development opportunities, involvement with scholarly activity and personal and professional development. The panel were informed that staff were supported in engaging in staff development opportunities and this formed part of the appraisal process. A number of staff had completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education at Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance which had proved useful in sharing good practice in learning and teaching. Equally the majority of staff continued to work in the profession which fed into curriculum development.
- 2.12 The panel were interested to hear about the peer observation process at Mountview which involved all staff being engaged in learning specific peer observation rather than just subject specific observation. Staff received feedback within a week of being observed to identify good practice and areas for development. This also enabled staff to get a sense of activities in other areas of the Academy and to share practice.

Recommendation: Build on the current processes for identifying and sharing good practice across the institution.

Commendation: The on-going process for and commitment to peer observation within the Academy.

Partnership Working

- 2.13 The panel asked the Senior Management Team to reflect on the nature of the partnership with UEA and noted that the relationship was considered to be supportive and helpful, particularly with respect to the Planning Office and the Library more recently, as well as positively critical when appropriate. There had been some good examples of partnership working such as the Mountview audition workshop held at UEA in December 2012. The panel noted that although there was an amount of partnership work they also expressed a desire to develop this further.
- 2.14 UEA London provided an opportunity for combined events in London and the validation of the FdA and BA in Theatre Production Arts would expand the opportunities for partnership working with UEA. Both the Academy and UEA were keen to develop the academic collaborative activity.

Recommendation: Review the current level of collaborative activity with UEA and consider opportunities for widening this activity outside the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing.

3 Summary of Conclusions

The panel resolved to recommend to the Senate of the University of East Anglia that Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts be re-approved as a partner institution of the University for a period of up to five years commencing October 2013. Recommendations are contained in the action plan at Appendix B.

4 Commendations

- 4.1 The hard working, commitment and passion of staff for the subject and the student learning experience.
- 4.2 The industry appropriateness of the courses which was evidenced by the panel and the students.
- 4.3 The high standard of and individualised nature of the feedback given to students.
- 4.4 The on-going process for and commitment to peer observation within the Academy.

Hannah Jackson
Partnerships Manager
October 2013

University of East Anglia

**Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts
Institutional Review**

Tuesday 8 October 2013

At Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts

Chair: Dr Gibson D'Cruz, Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing Sciences, UEA

UEA Academic Representative: Dr Brett Mills, Teaching Director, School of Film, Television and Media Studies, UEA

External Academic Subject Expert: Dr Claire Mera-Nelson, Director of Music, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Library Representative: Mrs Heather Wells, Head of User Services, UEA Library

Mountview Representative: Ms Sally-Ann Gritton, Head of Acting and Musical Theatre (Undergraduate)

Mountview Student Representative: Ms Lucy Sutton, 2nd year, BA (Hons) Performance, Acting

UEA Partnerships Office Representative: Mrs Sally Walker, Head of Partnerships

Secretary to Panel: Mrs Hannah Jackson, Partnerships Manager

MEMBERS OF MOUNTVIEW STAFF INVOLVED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PANEL

Sue Robertson, Principal
William Harris, Deputy Principal and Academic Registrar
Jacqui Somerville, Head of Acting and Musical Theatre, Postgraduate
Peter James, Head of Theatre Directing
Lainie Baird, Head of Dance
Cath Baxter, Head of Voice
Meredith Dufton, Head of Movement
Chris Nolan, Head of Singing and Music
Anthony Teague, Librarian
Kathy Allman, Senior Programme Manager

MOUNTVIEW STUDENTS INVOLVED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PANEL

Lloyd Bagley, BA (Hons) Performance, Acting (2nd year student)
Hakirat Bhambra, MA Performance, Acting
Hannah Boland, MA Theatre Directing
Leila Briggs, BA (Hons) Performance, Musical Theatre (2nd year student)
Joseph Cox, BA (Hons) Performance, Acting (1st year student)
Rebecca Stanier, BA (Hons) Performance, Musical Theatre (1st year student)
Daniel Stanton-Wright, BA (Hons) Performance, Acting (3rd year student)

Elizabeth Williams, BA (Hons) Performance, Acting (3rd year student)
Chris Woodley, MA Performance, Acting (graduate)

Institutional Review Outcomes Action Plan

Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts 8 October 2013

The panel resolved to recommend to the Senate of the University of East Anglia (UEA) that Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts be re-approved as a partner institution of the University for a period of up to five years commencing October 2013.

Outcomes				Course Team's Response
Type*	No.	Details	Deadline	
Req	1.	Produce a clear strategy and timetable, with identified resources, for upgrading IT systems at the Academy including Wi-Fi facilities and a central network hub, in a core building on the Academy site.	13 December 2013	
Req	2.	Develop a strategy that ensures an appropriate student experience is maintained at the current Academy site while plans to move to a new location site are being finalised.	13 December 2013	
Req	3.	Produce a strategy to enhance the current methods for formal student engagement that can be applied consistently across the organisation.	13 December 2013	
Req	4.	Create a clearer and visible inventory of the resources (hard copy and electronic) available from the library at Mountview and detail where students can access additional learning resources in the immediate location to Mountview and central London	13 December 2013	

* Outcome Types: Con (Condition) – must be addressed prior to an institutional re-approval, by agreed deadlines
Req (Requirement) - must be completed by given deadline, once institutional re-approval has started
Rec (Recommendation) – must be responded to by given deadline

Rec	1.	Continue to develop the role of the Student Union and seek advice and guidance on how to proceed.	13 December 2013
Rec	2.	Review the current level of collaborative activity with UEA and consider opportunities for widening this activity outside the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing.	13 December 2013
Rec	3.	Build on the current processes for identifying and sharing good practice across the institution.	13 December 2013

* Outcome Types: Con (Condition) – must be addressed prior to an institutional re-approval, by agreed deadlines
Req (Requirement) - must be completed by given deadline, once institutional re-approval has started
Rec (Recommendation) – must be responded to by given deadline