

Statement of Access, Participation and Public Good

Introduction

Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, one of the UK's leading drama schools, is a small specialist conservatoire which was founded in 1945 and relocated to Peckham, South London in 2018 from its previous home in Wood Green, North London. We currently train approximately 515 students each year for theatre and its related industries and we have a long standing and international reputation for providing the highest quality training at a foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate level in performance and theatre related industries.

We know that our environment will be enriched by embracing local, national and international students from a cross-section of backgrounds, experience, ethnicities, cultures and learning needs. Working together with our students we are pro-active in fostering changes that will make our training accessible and achievable to groups and individuals who might otherwise have been excluded due to their life circumstances.

This statement is designed to reflect our serious commitment to access, participation and contribution to the public good. We are committed to careful monitoring, identification of further progress that is needed and careful planning of action to achieve success, measured against our goals.

This statement reflects on three key themes highlighted by the Office for Students (OfS) and also serves as our Public Good Statement, as required by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

Theme 1: The Areas we are Seeking to Address

Access

Mountview has an inclusive approach to recruitment, and this is represented across courses. Our student community includes neuro-diverse people; trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people; Black African-Caribbean, Asian and Global Majority people; as well as students from both rural and urban areas across the UK and internationally.

A breakdown of our students by their Ethnic Origin for the academic year 2020-21, can be found in Appendix 1.

Auditions/Interviews

We are committed to developing the very best practitioners, irrespective of social, financial or cultural background and we audition or interview every applicant to our courses, demonstrating our commitment to open inclusion. Recognising that there is a significant pool of talent who wouldn't traditionally consider drama training to be accessible, Mountview created a Scouting Outreach Programme, generously supported by the Noël Coward Foundation¹. Through the scheme, we work with a network of over 50 scouting partners in order to identify young talent from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and young people who will consider a three-year vocational drama training to be culturally or financially unattainable. Those identified receive free auditions and support, removing initial barriers and giving them the very best chance of success.

¹ <https://www.noelcoward.org/>

In addition to auditioning or interviewing every applicant to our courses, we have now introduced an online first round audition and interview process, saving candidates the time and cost of travelling to London, in order to make auditions accessible to as many people as possible. We have also reviewed our audition fees and instead of all applicants (who are not eligible for the free auditions) paying a £45 audition fee, all applicants pay a £20 online audition fee and then only the successful applicants who are recalled pay the further £25 recall audition fee. Moreover, Southwark residents are eligible for one free audition to any of our courses.

Further information about our auditions and interviews can be found on our website:

<https://www.mountview.org.uk/courses/auditions-and-interviews/>

Foundation Programmes

Our current provision for Foundation level training courses at Mountview now includes both full time and part time programmes for Acting and Musical Theatre. These options support and widen opportunities for prospective students without prior attainment and enable them to train in the Mountview environment whilst deciding if the school is right for them.

Disability

Our building in Peckham is accessible to disabled students, including wheelchair users, and is Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. This includes the theatres, studios, all front and back of house areas, as well as all other training and public facilities. As a result of this, we can engage more confidently in the inclusion of disabled students, as well as staff, who are wheelchair users.

Funding

A diverse student body is only possible with significant scholarship support, and we are committed to helping students navigate the financial challenges of living and studying in London. Over 50% of undergraduate performance students at Mountview are studying on Trinity Diplomas alongside their BA Performance training and are in receipt of Dance and Drama Award (DaDA) funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). For 2020-21, we currently have 142 students studying Trinity Diplomas and in receipt of this funding, totalling £1.65m.

We provide opportunities for students to apply for other external scholarships and bursaries; those that require an audition, such as the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Scholarship, are equal in terms of gender balance to ensure fairness.

We have substantially increased the level of internal bursaries and scholarships for those in financial need, and will continue to do so in the coming period. The Judi Dench Fund for Access to Drama Training² – named in honour of our President – has been established as a major new fundraising initiative, aiming to increase support for initiatives that break down barriers to drama training including scholarships, hardship support and free auditions.

The budget for widening participation is integrated into a range of areas including admissions, student support, touring, outreach workshops and short courses. This helps to support Mountview's visits to schools, colleges and arts centres across the UK, leading workshops, holding auditions, touring productions and networking with communities. Across these areas of activity, our estimated total spend on widening participation in 2019-20 was at least £80,000, which represents around 1.5% of total student fee income for the year.

² <https://www.mountview.org.uk/support-us/the-judi-dench-fund/>

Success

Retention

Retention remains one of Mountview's strengths for all students. For instance, 100% of BA Performance Actor Musicianship and BA Performance Acting students, as well as 92% of BA Performance Musical Theatre students from the 2017-18 intake graduated in 2019-20. There is no trend of withdrawal or intercalation decisions being made amongst underrepresented groups. The intensive nature of the training that Mountview provides places a significant focus on collective learning as an ensemble and this very supportive method of delivery contributes to our extremely high student retention rates.

Results

In addition to retention, our results remain high. In 2019-20, 36% of BA Performance graduates achieved a first class degree with the remaining 64% achieving an upper second degree.

Black and Global Majority students represented 29% of the BA Performance graduates in 2019-20. 20% of these graduates achieved a first class degree and the remaining 80% of these graduates achieved an upper second. In comparison, 42% of white BA Performance graduates achieved a first class degree and 58% achieved an upper second.

29% of BA Performance graduates with a disability³ in 2020 achieved a 1st and 71% achieved a 2:1. All students with a Specific Learning Disability on all BA courses graduated with an Honours degree, but we have identified that there is still room for improvement and we hope for more BA Performance students with Specific Learning Disabilities to achieve first class degrees going forward.

Visual representations of these statistics can be found in Appendix 2.

These statistics suggest that whilst our Black and Global Majority students and students with disabilities are achieving success across all pathways, they currently require more support than their white counterparts. In part, this is due to the intersection of Black students that come from low-income households, those living in areas of low higher education participation and those with Specific Learning Disabilities. We continue to develop additional support mechanisms for these students.

Progression

³ Either a specific learning disability, a mental health condition, a disability, impairment or medical condition

Graduate Destinations and Employment

Given the vocational nature of the training, all Mountview students are intensively prepared for employment throughout their training and in their final year they actively seek agent representation and employment. All of this activity is supported by Mountview's Industry Liaison Manager. It is unusual in this environment for students to choose to go on to further study immediately and this tends to be an option explored by alumni after an average of five years out and working in the industry.

100% of 2020 BA Performance graduates (all pathways) are currently signed with agents and a large majority of graduates are currently working in the industry, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns.

It is important to recognise that given the very specific nature of the industry, there is often little correlation between agent representation and employment gain and indeed there is rarely any correlation between degree classification and employment or agent representation. We simply encourage our students to achieve excellent results across all three of these measures: grades, agent representation and employment, and ensure that they have the skills to do so. Whilst some students are not always in paid employment in their industry of choice, all students have transferrable skills due to the high level of communication skills taught on all courses. The nature of the employment that Mountview students seek is short term freelance contracts, typically ranging between a two-day filming contract to a one-year contract in a West End Musical.

Alumni

Our alumni continue to be supported by us throughout their careers, using Mountview library resources, booking studios at a discounted rate, meeting with staff and receiving ongoing careers advice and communications.

Theme 2: Our Ambitions and Strategy

Mountview's ambition is to create an environment where difference is celebrated, and equality of opportunity is embedded for all students and staff. In joining the Diversity School Initiative and partnering with other organisations such as Stage Sight, we are helping to get the message across of accessible high quality drama training to talent all over the UK and around the world.

Drama training is intensive and challenging, and for those students who haven't been afforded prior high-level training, it can be difficult to adjust. As well as supporting those with disclosed mental health conditions and Specific Learning Difficulties, we recognise that wellbeing and welfare provision is vital, so that all students can thrive throughout their training.

We continue to work on closing the attainment gaps noted in 'Theme 1 – Success' and ensuring visibility of the range of support available to students.

Our prior action plan set out a number of aims and initiatives to assist us in enhancing and developing our commitment to access and participation and contribution to the public good. We will continue working on these initiatives through our Academic Quality and Planning Committee (APQC) and our Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) working group, which is currently being revised.

In addition, we will continue to develop our existing commitment to access and participation through:

- Working with the Diversity School Initiative to identify new goals
- Running regional auditions and taster workshops
- Staff mental health first aid training, and expansion and diversification of our student counselling offer
- Growing the Community Academy in the heart of Peckham
- Working closely with all students and the Students Union to reflexively provide enhanced support for students
- Employing diverse practitioners as exemplars for underrepresented groups

We will monitor our progress against these initiatives and continue to innovate strategically towards our aim of access of opportunity for all.

A full list of Mountview's strategic aims and priorities can be found in Appendix 3.

Theme 3: Our Activities and Support for Students

Equality in Performance Opportunities

Mountview employs colour, gender and identity conscious casting and selects materials for students that will offer a balance of opportunities from writers of all ethnicities and backgrounds. This ensures fairness and equality for assessment and opportunities for all, enabling students to achieve success.

Diversity and Inclusivity in the Curriculum

We continue to repair the curriculum and provide wider choice for students in terms of structure and content. We created a Cultural Reading and Resource List which is regularly updated through recommendations. Teaching staff regularly engage with initiatives to diversify and make the curriculum more inclusive.

Community Academy

Mountview has become a thriving resource for the local community, offering weekend and evening classes, to both adults and young people. Particularly successful is Generation N*xt, our principal young people's programme, which is not only is this an excellent resource for the local community, but it also helps historically excluded young people to experience conservatoire training and create pathways to drama training / careers later in life.

Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments to learning and assessment are implemented for students with Specific Learning Disabilities and additional 1-1 support is provided where necessary. Students working in English as a second language are also given support. Mountview staff are skilled at working with students to create adaptations for learning and assessment and in using a wide range of learning styles in their teaching. Staff also attend training sessions on Specific Learning and Educational Needs (SEND) and share best practice at teaching and learning sessions. We have now fully developed our Summary of Reasonable Adjustments process.

Pastoral Care

All undergraduate students are assigned a Personal Tutor and this scheme supports both learning progress and pastoral support throughout their training through individual and group tutorials. Postgraduate and Foundation students can access this support through their Course Leader. A majority of Personal Tutors and Course Leaders are now trained Mental Health First Aiders.

The links between mental health wellness and its impact on educational outcomes for students is becoming much clearer across the sector and in January 2020, our Student Welfare Manager introduced a new, increased and diversified counselling provision for our students. Information about this service can be found here: <https://sway.office.com/WhtWUXb18ETPSbrP?ref=Link>

Mountview is also signed up to the Mental Health Charter #timeforchange which is a sector-wide initiative to raise awareness of mental health issues and sign of commitment to promoting change in attitudes and providing practical support.

Identity

Over the past few years, we have also been focussing on identity and inclusivity, and developing schemes and initiatives to combat unconscious bias to ensure all our students feel included in our community, no matter their background.

We have also been engaging pronouns in various ways as a strategy towards gender diversity/trans inclusion. We encourage staff to share their pronouns when meeting students for the first time and invite students to do the same. We also have pronoun badges available for students and staff to wear when they are in the building to enable students to share their pronouns visibly. We are continuing this work by organising gender inclusion workshops and working on how best to support trans and gender non-conforming students throughout their training.

We believe that our names are a crucial part of our identity, linking us to our past, to our family and to our culture. It is like our fingerprint, owned by each of us exclusively and when someone does not call you by your real name they are taking uninvited ownership of your property. In 2020, alongside the newly formed African-Caribbean Society (ACS), we delivered 'What's in a Name?' training which inspired the 'Say it Right' initiative, aiming to ensure that people's names within our organisation are not mispronounced. We began by reaching out to the student body and asking whether they felt their names could be or have ever been mispronounced. If so, we asked them to send us a recording of their name as they wish to hear it going forward. We have compiled these recordings, along with a phonetic transcription of each one, and staff and students are encouraged to listen to these recordings and commit to pronouncing names as per the 'Say it Right' database.

In addition to these initiatives, we have been holding staff and student training sessions on unconscious bias awareness and the five pillars of anti-racism.

Black Lives Matter

In June 2020, in response to the murder of George Floyd and the rising up of Mountview students and alumni, Mountview committed to play our part in addressing the structural and systemic forms of racism and privilege. We identified a target-driven action plan and formed a working group of trustees and staff to oversee it. We committed to regularly report our actions to trustees, students and alumni. Our Black Lives Matter Statement of Intent is available on our website: <https://www.mountview.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Black-Lives-Matter-Statement-of-Intent-and-Action-Plan-081020.pdf>

Our action plan is dynamic and will be part of an ongoing dialogue with students and staff about

measurable systemic change. Committed to taking a proactive stand in the fight against racism, inequality and discrimination, we will actively challenge systemic and endemic prejudice, exploitation and intersectional oppression. The process of constructing an authentic plan meant fully consulting with students and alumni before deciding priorities / thinking strategically. This was the first significant step in our learning and it highlighted the naïve assumptions we had made previously around issues of equality in our environment.

The focused energy with which we have begun to enact and accelerate change has enabled us to achieve our time sensitive targets so far. Our areas of action include: Train and Educate, Represent, Listen, Support and Connect, Advocate. Each of these break down further with granular actionable tasks. Whilst we work to complete actions, many will require ongoing commitment. For example: Anti-Racism training for staff and students which is an essential rolling commitment, not only for new starters but for refreshing learning. Learning remains the key word on this journey and we are taking our many freelance and sessional staff along with us. This new start is an opportunity to reimagine our equality and diversity practices in a meaningful way. We are remaining curious, trying to avoid making assumptions and we are open as we discover new learning.

Widening Participation During the COVID-19 Pandemic (March 2020-January 2021)

The quick turnaround period of the first lockdown in March 2020 created a challenge to move our entire portfolio of courses online within a matter of a few weeks. Like many providers, we met this with great energy and with no previous experience. As a smaller provider, we benefitted from smaller student numbers in terms of logistics. However, given the nature of our vocational training, and the contact hours we deliver (over 30 per week) being far higher than a traditional University degree, we had to immediately prepare nearly 1500 practical classes for small cohorts to go online. To resolve this academic challenge, we used our artistic skills and embarked upon what continues to be a creative journey.

Technology has been a crucial part of our strategy for dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic over this academic year as it has allowed for classes and rehearsals to take place online as well as for a number of staff to work from the safety of their own homes. We have been working with staff and students to ensure that the online training runs as smoothly as possible and we have carried out a full audit to ensure that all staff and students have access to the online teaching environment. We have invested in access to online platforms such as Zoom and many other online teaching resources such as Drama Online, EBSCO Information Services. Mountview has loaned computer equipment to staff and students to enable them to continue working and we will continue with this until such time as online teaching reduces. If students are absent from classes during this time or are residing internationally, they are able to access class recordings online to ensure that all students have equal access to training during this difficult time.

Student feedback from the first lockdown noted how online learning had fostered a greater sense of independence for them. The surprise for everyone at Mountview has been just how creative a challenge these parameters could prove to be. A great benefit of this period has been the level of artistic experiment our students and staff have engaged in, using the new medium as an inspiration rather than a barrier to learning. Indeed, our results artistically and academically remain exceptionally high and during lockdown some students excelled beyond even their own expectations. We have also increased our learning support for students during this period to try and release them from the widespread levels of anxiety provoked by the pandemic and resulting lockdowns. Wellbeing has been a key focus in enabling these changes to work and we have worked

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together with our students to meet these needs. Fostering a sense of community and an environment of support during these times is essential, indeed any meaningful learning will not take place without it.

Also as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, our audition recall stages and interviews for 2019-20 were carried out online in both recorded and live formats. This happened very effectively and allowed us to carry on with full recruitment to our courses. The online auditions continued for 2020-21 and plans are in place to ensure that our audition commitments are met whether the auditions take place live or online.

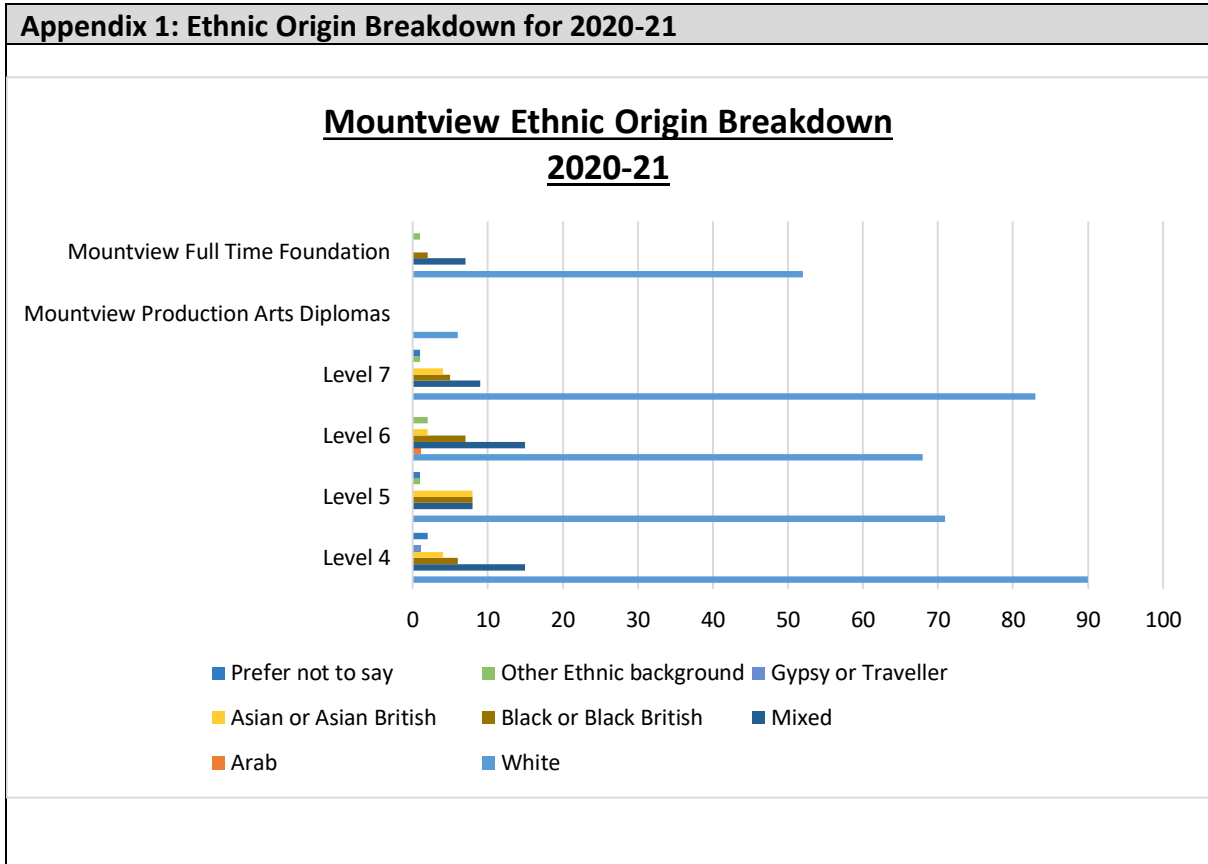
Coronavirus is having a devastating effect on artists throughout the country, and those at the outset of their careers even more so. Many of our students are facing unforeseen or exacerbated financial difficulties, with a sharp increase in requests for emergency grants which we predict will continue for some time as family incomes suffer. Investment in additional bursary funding and emergency financial support has ensured those most vulnerable are supported when it matters most.

This statement is also available on our website:

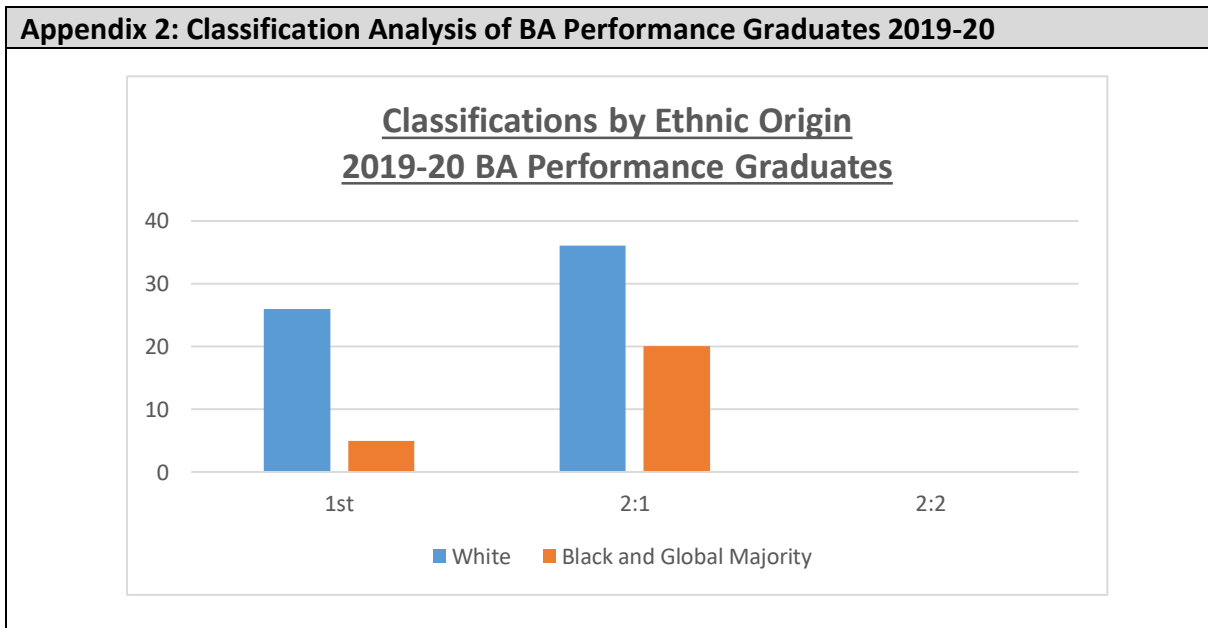
<https://www.mountview.org.uk/courses/life-at-mountview/access-diversity/>

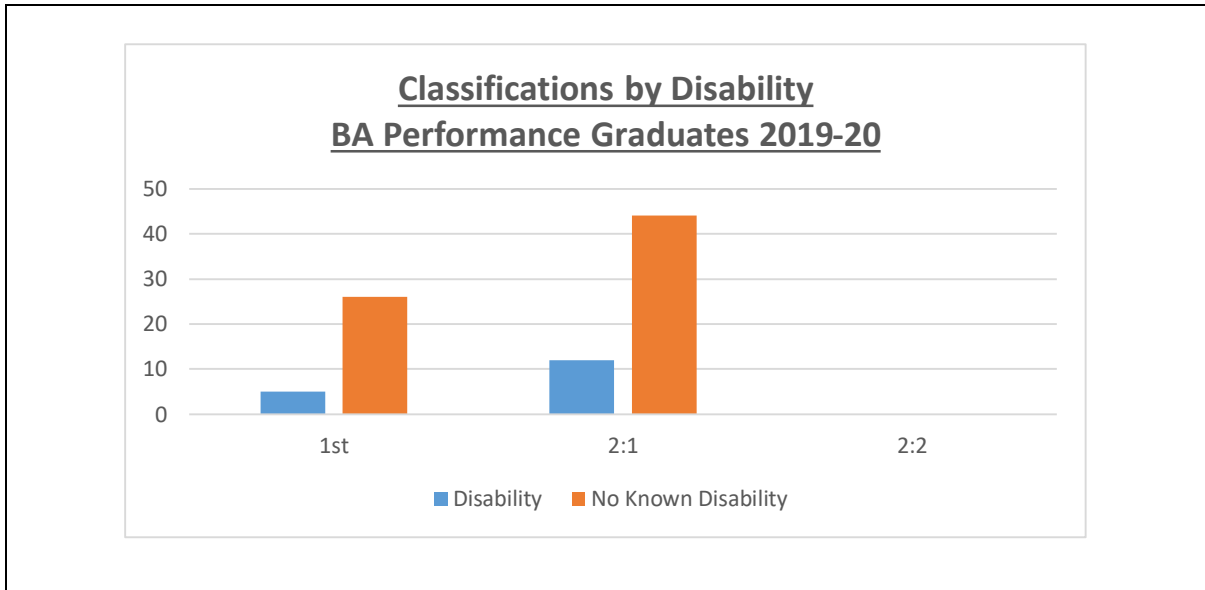
Appendix

Appendix 1: Ethnic Origin Breakdown for 2020-21



Appendix 2: Classification Analysis of BA Performance Graduates 2019-20





Appendix 3: Mountview's Strategic Aims & Priorities

VISION

**ENABLING, TRAINING and PROMOTING
 CREATIVE PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTION ARTISTS**

MISSION

❖ **World Class Training**

- Foundation preparation, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees
- Young people's programme of skills development with professional practitioners
 - Professional Practitioner Development

❖ **Exceptional Performance**

- Professional rehearsal space for world-class performance artists
- Year-Round Programme of Professional Performances and Rehearsal Residencies
 - Contemporary music, comedy, dance, theatre

❖ **Creative and Cultural Practice**

- Adult Programmes
- Artists Work Spaces
- Resident Companies

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- o Community Engagement

OUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Excellence	Access	Innovation	Transformation
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STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

World Class	Relevance	Connected	Resilient	Civic
Training and Skills-Development	Fit for Purpose	London	Organisational Effectiveness	Fostering a Cultural Neighbourhood
Facilities for Creative Artists	Commissioning & Developing new work	National	Diverse, Inclusive and Collaborative	Developing the Civic role of the institution
Industry Leadership	Fostering Contemporary Practice and Thought Leadership	International/ Global	Environmentally Responsive and Responsible	Developing Home-Grown Talent

INITIATIVES

PERFORMANCE		PRODUCTION		CREATIVE PRACTICE				COMMUNITY		STRATEGIC										
ACTING	MUSICAL THEATRE	ACTOR MUSICIAN	TECHNICAL THEATRE, TV, RADIO & BROADCAST	DESIGN REALISATION - SCENIC ARTS &	STAGE MANAGEMENT	DIRECTING	CREATIVE PRODUCING	MUSICAL DIRECTION	SITE SPECIFIC PRACTICE	COMMUNITY & EDUCATION	WHATS NE*T (YOUNG PEOPLE)	IN-RESIDENCE (ADULT)	CULTURAL NEIGHBOURHOOD	INTERNATIONAL	NEW WRITING	PRESS REALTIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS	FUNDRAISING	DIVERSITY, ACCESS AND INCLUSION	WELLBEING	ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY