

**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 560 students each year 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 Foundation<sup>1</sup>. 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.

<sup>1</sup> <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 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. 68% of undergraduate performance students at Mountview are currently studying on Trinity Diplomas alongside their BA Performance training and 74% of these students are in receipt of Dance and Drama Award (DaDA) funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). For 2020-21, we currently have 187 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 Training<sup>2</sup> – 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 2020-21 was at least £80,000, which represents around 1.5% of total student fee income for the year.

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<sup>2</sup> <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, the average retention rate for all courses in 2020-21 was 98% and the retention rate for BA Performance was 99%. 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

Learning progression during this year is once again at a high level, evidenced in the final degree classifications for BA Performance students. Students arriving at the academy with little or no prior attainment all achieve well with 100% students receiving final awards.

In 2020-21, 40% of BA Performance graduates achieved a first class degree with the remaining 60% achieving an upper second degree. Global Majority students represented 34% of the BA Performance graduates in 2020-21. 31% of these graduates (9 graduates) achieved a first class degree and 66% of these graduates achieved an upper second.

In 2021, 96% of white undergraduate students achieved a first or a 2:1 (all except 3) and 97% of Global Majority students (all except 1) achieved a first or 2:1, therefore our undergraduate attainment gap was 1% (in the favour of Global Majority students). Global Majority students represented 31% of the undergraduate graduates in 2020-21. 29% of these graduates (9 graduates) achieved a first class degree and 68% of these graduates achieved an upper second.

38% of BA Performance graduates with a disability<sup>3</sup> in 2021 achieved a 1<sup>st</sup> and 53% achieved a 2:1. 98% of BA Performance students with a Specific Learning Disability 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 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.

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<sup>3</sup> Either a specific learning disability, a mental health condition, a disability, impairment or medical condition

## **Progression**

### **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.

At the end of the 2020-21 academic year, 89% of BA Performance students were signed with agents. This was broken down to 83% of BA Performance Acting students, 97% of BA Performance Musical Theatre students and 100% of BA Performance Actor Musicianship students. Furthermore, 95% of Global Majority students were signed with agents at the end of 2020-21 as well as 90% students who were in receipt of DaDA funding.

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. Mountview was one of the first Drama Schools in the sector to commit to partnering with the Diversity School Initiative and did so until they closed last year. In partnering with organisations such as the Diversity School and 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:

- Running regional auditions and taster workshops (when possible due to COVID guidelines)
- 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 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.

## **Anti-Racism**

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/about/equality-and-inclusion/>

Our action plan is dynamic and is a 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.

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 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. We are in the process of setting up a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee with Board level involvement and anti-racism will be a key pillar for reporting and creating initiatives.

## **Collaboration with Students**

Student Voice is at the heart of Mountview's quality review cycle and students are consulted with any changes to the curriculum or processes. Student Representatives are elected for each cohort every year and we hold termly Student Rep meetings to check in with these students. We also hold an annual Student Board meeting, where the Student Reps meet with several Board members to discuss the student experience at Mountview. We gather student feedback through the annual NSS survey and students are consulted through focus groups for course validations, revalidations and modifications. As well as Student Representatives for all of our courses, we also have elected students forming our Students' Union (<https://www.mountview.org.uk/courses/life-at-mountview/students-union/>).

Collaboration with students also forms part of our learning and teaching methodology. We actively team teach in order to model effective collaboration and to demonstrate the value of collaboration both in the learning space and in the institution.

## **Underrepresented Groups**

We are committed to tackling inequality in all its forms. We believe there is No Grey Area for sexual harassment and we believe that Black Lives Matter and that Trans Lives Matter.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy sets out our commitment to creating an environment where diversity is celebrated and equality of opportunity is embedded for all students and staff regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, belief or religion. Our aim is for our staff and student bodies to be truly representative of all areas of society.

We are resolute to both meet and exceed current obligations under legislation. By doing more than is required by law we will continue to build on Mountview's current reputation and practice as a diverse and truly inclusive arts training institution.

We have already taken a number of steps to embed these principles into our work, including establishing new salaried posts for people from historically under-represented communities and creating the Mountview Prize which celebrates trailblazers who inspire social change and whose lived experience is inspirational to others. We also recognise that there is more work to be done. These are live movements that rose from people's lived experiences and the work we must all do to tackle these inequalities is ongoing.

We are committed to ensuring all communities are welcome in our building, that we support them and we empower them to call out injustices. We are also committed to updating our communities about the work we are doing in respect to our commitment to take a proactive stand in the fight against racism, inequality and discrimination.

We audition or interview every applicant seeking entry, demonstrating our commitment to access and our Development team are actively working to increase our financial support for students to ensure that financial challenges do not prevent our students to complete their training. In a typical year, we also conduct regional and international auditions so that all potential applicants have the opportunity to audition, even if they cannot travel to London. Unfortunately, this was not possible during 2020 and 2021 due to the global pandemic, but we offered online first round auditions instead. Prospective Performance students that are not considered ready for training at undergraduate level are referred for consideration to the Mountview Foundation courses. On many occasions, students have been nurtured through this process and have subsequently secured a full-time training place.

Mountview has an inclusive approach to recruitment and this is represented across courses with a significant number of students who are neuro-diverse, non-binary and transgender, Black Afro-Caribbean, Asian and global majority students and students from rural or urban areas across the UK and internationally. In addition, the majority of our students come from state schools, and over half come from low social-economic households, measured by household income.

In addition, we work closely within our local community. However, during 2020-21, Mountview's in person Short Courses, Community and Outreach work was drastically reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While we were unable to offer in person activities, we continued to deliver and develop on-line training courses and opportunities. That being said, we did have another successful year with the Mountview Scouting Outreach initiative; working with a range of youth theatre partners offering free auditions for nominated participants:

- Partner Organisations: 48
- People Auditioned: 49
- People taken through to re-call: 11
- Offers Made on BA Courses: 3

Furthermore, we are currently developing a new digital resource called 'Mountview Online' where we plan to offer online video short courses for those who cannot afford to commit to a full time training. Other activities where we are delivering to increase under-represented groups include building on our social media strategy, working and partnering with external companies improving



our national outreach in schools and colleges and using our current students' word of mouth to promote Mountview and our training to prospective students.

Mountview is creating an environment where diversity is celebrated, and equality of opportunity is embedded for all students and staff. We have continued to be a part of the Diversity School Initiative, helping to get the message of accessible high quality drama training out to talent across all regions of the UK and around the world. This initiative is closing in the next academic year.

## **Widening Participation During the COVID-19 Pandemic (2020-21)**

This year again saw a consolidation of how we continue to provide high level training online or blended and the opportunities it can offer up for the future. Academic continuity and standards were maintained and we were commended by our External Examiners and UEA (our degree awarding body). Moving to online platforms and blended learning was a steep learning curve for us and we created a flexible learning environment, which also enabled students to be 'zoomed' into the studio if they were self-isolating. In 2020-21, when possible, we delivered our training in a blended format - 60% in the building and 40% from home.

Technology was a crucial part of our strategy for dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic, as it allowed for auditions, classes and rehearsals to take place online, when necessary, 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 carried out a full audit to ensure that all staff and students had access to the online teaching environment. We invested in access to online platforms such as Zoom and many other online teaching resources, such as Drama Online, EBSCO Information Services and JSTOR, to ensure no students were disadvantaged by limited access to Mountview's Library and other learning resources. In addition, Mountview loaned computer equipment to staff and students who needed it to enable them to continue working and training during this period.

Our results artistically and academically remained exceptionally high and during this period many students excelled beyond even their own expectations. We also increased our learning support for students to try and release them from the widespread levels of anxiety provoked by the pandemic and resulting lockdowns. Wellbeing was a key focus in enabling these changes to work and we worked together with our students to meet these needs. Fostering a sense of community and an environment of support during these times was essential, indeed any meaningful learning would not have taken place without it.

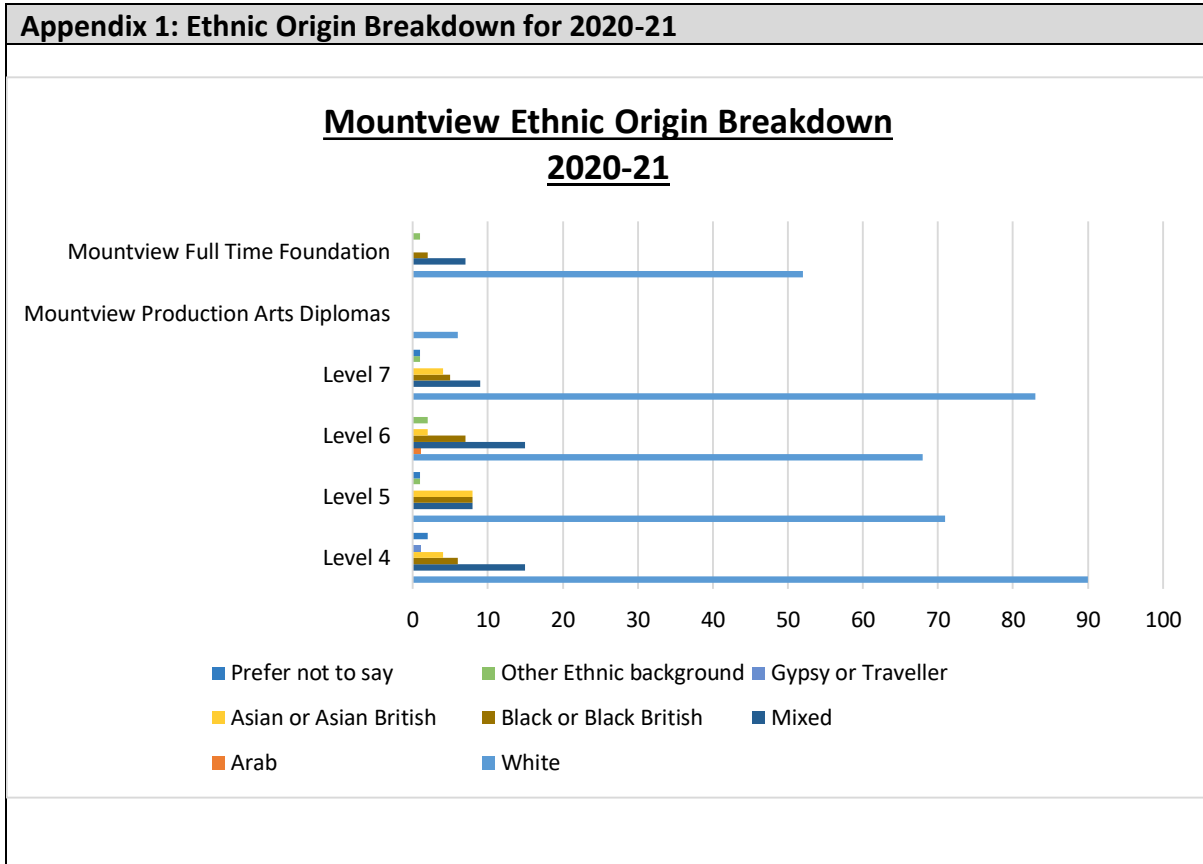
Coronavirus is having a devastating effect on artists throughout the country, and those at the outset of their careers even more so. Many of our students are facing unforeseen or exacerbated financial difficulties, with a sharp increase in requests for emergency grants which we predict will continue 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:

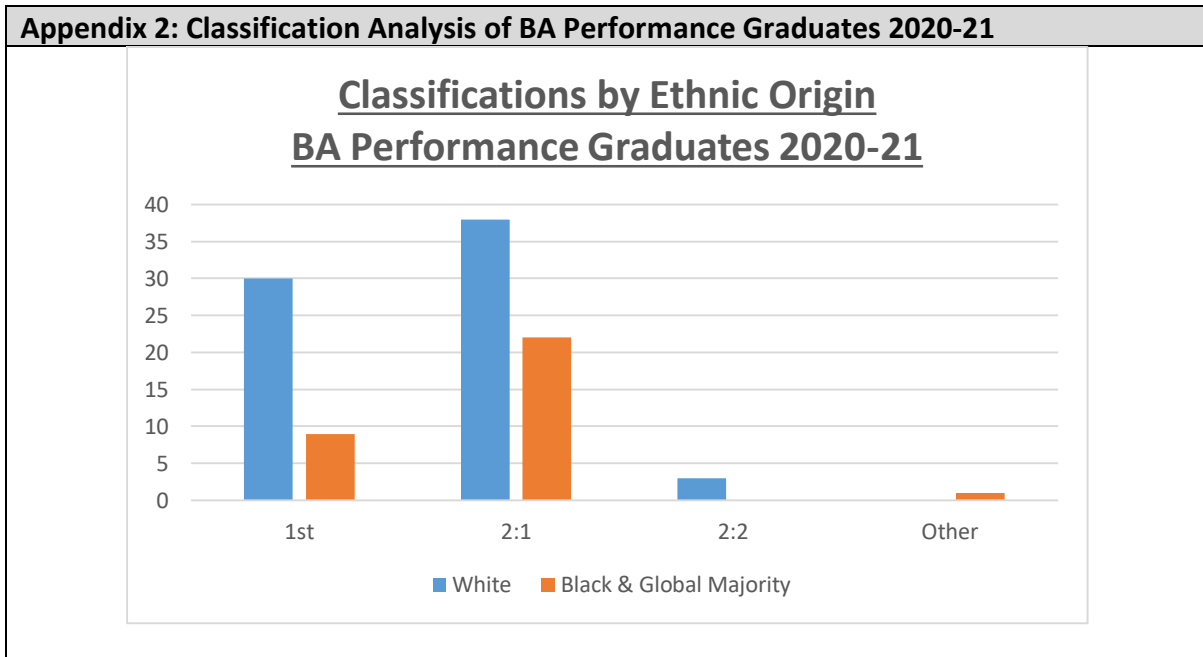
<https://www.mountview.org.uk/courses/life-at-mountview/access-diversity/>

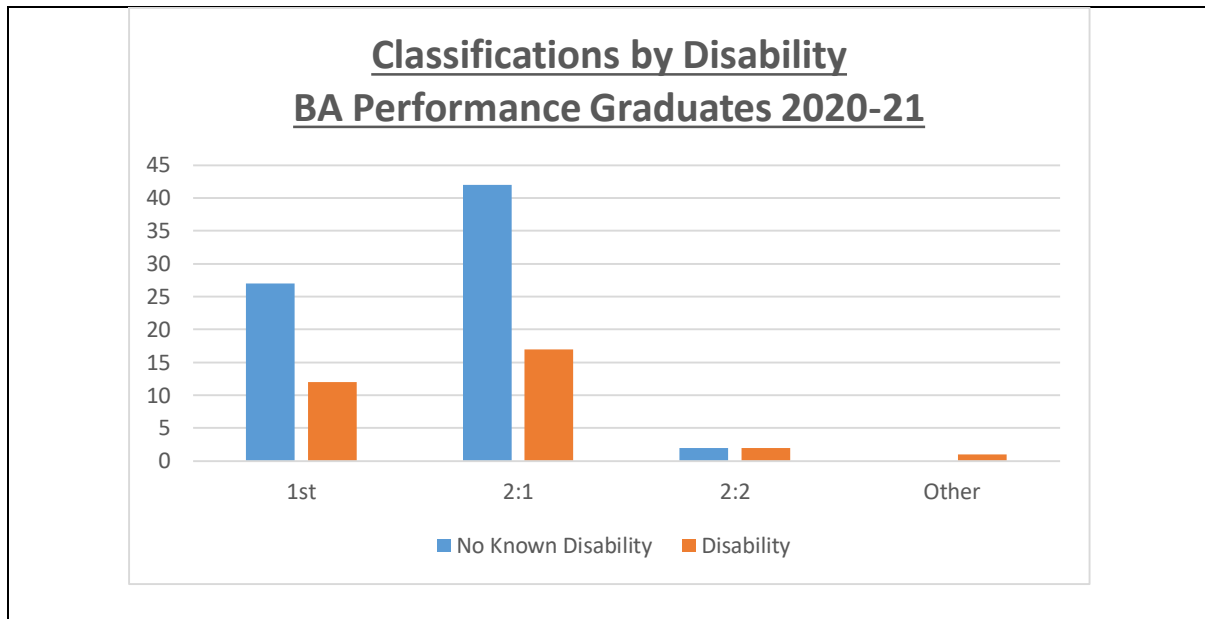
**Appendices**

**Appendix 1: Ethnic Origin Breakdown for 2020-21**



**Appendix 2: Classification Analysis of BA Performance Graduates 2020-21**





**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
- Community Engagement

# MOUNTVIEW

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OUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES																																									
Excellence			Access			Innovation			Transformation																																
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	