

Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance

Meeting of online student representatives, 28 January 2019 at 18.00

Present: Adam Gac (Opera Studies, L4), Owen Davies (Opera Studies, L5) Tim Lloyd (Opera Studies, L6), Abbie Riddell (Theatre Studies L4). Gary Funck (Theatre Studies L5), Kate Aiken, (Theatre Studies L4/L5), Mike Lees (Theatre Studies, L6), Andrew Walker (Vice Principal). Angela Taylor (AT) Head of Quality was also in attendance to take notes of the meeting.

Apologies were received from Oliver Hope (TS), Alan Allsop (TS) and Ian Chowcat (OS). Ian Chowcat had sent comments in advance of the meeting.

Purpose of the meeting. Andrew Walker thanked the representatives for attending. He emphasised at the start that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues that applied generally to both online programmes, and that more specific programme-related issues were best addressed at programme level.

Notes of the previous meeting held on 30 October 2018 had been circulated in advance. It was noted that the spelling of Mike Lees name had been corrected. There were a number of matters arising:

Updating Learning Resources. Students reported that there continued to be a few broken links, although they were aware of the process for reporting these through module tutors and programme administration. This had been more of a difficulty with the older material on Theatre Studies, but was less of an issue with the introduction of the new curriculum. However some concerns were reported relating to Mahara disappearing from MyPage and the TS403 page link disappearing for a short period of time.

A matter of confidentiality was also raised relating to the uploading of video material online. It appeared that when doing so, it was possible to then see other students' materials. AW would raise these matters with the Online Curriculum Development Manager (ODCM). **ACTION: AW**

Disparity of workloads between modules on Theatre Studies. Whilst it was acknowledged that some work had been done to mitigate the problem on Theatre Studies – this was still seen as an issue. There was a sense that there was now less flexibility than before; and that the problem of workloads was particularly acute at the overlap point – switching from one module to another. It was noted that if this continued it should be raised at the Programme Committee. At level four, there was a concern that interim assessments every six weeks was more demanding than expected. Students had joined the programme on the basis of a workload of 10-12 study hours a week.

Student Rep Handbook. The student reps considered that most of the section on communicating with fellow students needed tailoring more particularly to the needs of online students. This prompted a discussion about the various ways in which online students could communicate with each other. It was noted that the use of chatrooms was not popular to date, although the ODCM was keen to encourage students to use TEAMS as a means of

communicating with one another. Opera Studies students would like to find means by which they could discuss recent performances which they had attended. However, it was noted that some students were happy not being part of a wider community and that it was important not to offer too many different means by which to communicate. The reps were also positive regarding Adobe Connect – which several students felt was working well at present. AW would revise the section of the handbook relating to communication with fellow students and circulate to the reps for comment. **ACTION: AW**

Other matters not arising from the minutes.

Students' Union. It was noted that a number of reps considered that the link between SU exec and online student reps needed to be strengthened. As the SU had created associate officer posts for each School, there might be scope for creating an associate officer post for the online programmes. AW would discuss this further with the SU. **ACTION: AW**

First Impressions Survey. AW introduced the draft survey questions, which had been circulated to reps in advance. He explained that a level four survey had been underway for a number of years for the FT UG programmes. However, because of the numbers of online students at level four, and the particular nature of the learners, a bespoke survey had been devised, based on that which had worked successfully at level five during 2017-18. Some reps suggested that it was not a good time to be launching the survey, although AW stressed that it corresponded to the timing of the FT UG programmes. It was noted that this would be the last time that the survey would be sent out to OS students should the suspension of the programme be agreed by Academic Board.

It was acknowledged that the question relating to offline support needed to be clarified, and that there should be a further question about ease of access to, and usefulness of, library and other subscription services. It was agreed that there was some merit in splitting the survey into two halves; one to be issued now concentrating on the application, admission and induction process, and one to be issued later towards the end of students' level four study period focussing on the study experience. Given the small numbers, it was broadly acknowledged that a qualitative approach should be adopted – but the survey's function needed to be clearer. It was agreed that further work on the survey(s) should be undertaken taking these suggestions into account. **ACTION: AW/AT**

IT support. There was a sense from the students that the IT support provided needed to be more bespoke and timely – with the possibility of phone conversations taking place as necessary. There was a frustration that if time was set aside by students to undertake study, then they would want any IT difficulties to be solved quickly to ensure that they could study within the time which they had allocated as study time. AW would discuss this with the OCDM. **ACTION: AW**

Programme(s) staffing. The students were very positive about the work that the OCDM was undertaking to support their learning. Concerns were expressed by students on both programmes regarding the staffing of the programmes beyond this academic year since it was known that the existing staffing arrangement was an interim one for a year. They wished to hear as early as possible what was planned for the future.

AW thanked the students for taking the time to attend the meeting and for their useful and constructive input.

The meeting concluded at 18.50