

# SCUDD

The Standing Conference of  
University Drama Departments

## Diversity in the Discipline Working Group

### **Chair's Report 2015-17**

Pedro de Senna

This report can be made available in alternative formats; please contact Pedro on [p.desenna@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:p.desenna@mdx.ac.uk) with your specific needs.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the SCUDD executive, and especially SCUDD chair Stephen Lacey for supporting and encouraging this initiative from the start. Thanks are also owed to my colleagues in the working group: Carina Bartleet, Claire Cochrane, Victor Ladron de Guevara and Amy Skinner, without whose determination and collegiality this research would not have materialised. To Royona Mitra, for her work in the group during her membership in 2015-16, and her continued backing of the group's activities and objectives: my gratitude and admiration. To all the respondents of our survey and departmental reps who helped implement and distribute it; and all those who contributed anonymously to the second phase our work: your insights (and occasionally your beautiful turns of phrase) form an important part of this report. To those who at SCUDD conferences and General Meetings have given us feedback, asked questions and challenged our language, premises, findings: you have reminded us of the difficulty, and importance, of this work. Finally, thanks go to all the SCUDD community – its member departments and mailing-list subscribers, in all their diversity.

## **Disclaimer**

While this chair's report was commissioned and supported by SCUDD, and stems from the activities of SCUDD's Diversity in the Discipline Working Group, it has been written independently. It is a working document, presented to SCUDD and wider community for their consideration. It follows the summary of key findings and recommendations agreed by the Working Group and approved by SCUDD's general meeting in November 2017; however, given the complex and sensitive nature of the material it deals with, this report cannot claim to represent the views of SCUDD as an organisation, or those of any of its member departments. Rather, it presents the research gathered over a period of three years, to the best of our ability.

**Pedro de Senna**

## Executive summary of key findings and recommendations

### Key findings

- SCUDD member departments are generally perceived to be open environments, ostensibly welcoming diversity.
- That said, in practice, member departments still are mono-cultural, both in the make-up of their staff (particularly with regard to class, ethnicity and disability) and in curricula (also gender and heteronormativity).
- 68% of student respondents identify as female, compared to 25% as male (7% identified as other or did not respond). A smaller majority (56%) of staff responding to the survey also identified as female – including at professorial level (53%).
- There is significant underrepresentation of Asian minority ethnic students and staff, compared to the general population.
- Approximately 45% the student body identified as having a religion, compared to under 30% of staff.
- Approximately 15% of our students self-reported as having mental health issues.
- Approximately 19% of our students are non-UK citizens; 58% of those (11% of the total) are EU citizens.
- Over 20% of respondents identify as LGBTQA+, compared to 2% of the overall UK population.
- Only 7.4% of staff reported a disability, compared to 17% of the UK working age population.

## Key recommendations

### For member departments

- Engage in concerted efforts to diversify the curriculum, not only through processes of review and revalidation, but also within modules whose validated documentation allows for that.
- Proactively seek to employ BAME and disabled practitioners and tutors as guest lecturers and masterclass providers as a first, temporary step towards mitigating for their relative absence in permanent positions.
- Outreach to Asian communities through engagement with schools and arts organisations.
- Open conversations about secularism and religion, ensuring a balance is struck between keeping the secularity of courses and respecting the individual religious rights of students, while providing appropriate levels of pastoral support.
- Make sure contextual data on class and socioeconomic background are taken into account during admissions.
- Engage staff and students in dialogue about equality and diversity, including around admissions processes, curricula and interpersonal relationships within cohorts.

### For SCUDD

- Create a forum to address mental health concerns, including a platform for sharing good practice.
- Campaign and lobby on the importance of international (and especially EU) students to the survival of our discipline.
- Make use of its platforms (social media, mailing list, website, conference) to champion disability in the performing arts, inviting campaigners, performers and colleagues to share good practice.
- Extend the research around the female/male imbalance at UG level and its relation to career progression, both in the academy and industry.
- Support, disseminate and if appropriate facilitate (through running seminars and/or workshops) diversity-enhancing initiatives undertaken in member departments.

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## Introduction

The present report reflects on the work undertaken since 2015 by the Diversity in the Discipline Working Group, established by the executive committee of the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD). The Working Group was set to explore ways in which we might map and address levels of diversity within member departments, looking – among other markers of self-identity – at gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, (dis)ability, and class.

The topic of Diversity in the performing arts and related industries has been a subject of much public debate in the past few years. From the attention drawn to race representation in the American Academy Awards from 2015 with the Twitter hashtag #OscarSoWhite; to discussions around the class background of British actors in the mainstream media (<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/may/08/working-class-actors-disappearing-britain-class-privilege-access-posh>); the controversy around the casting of non-disabled actors for disabled roles (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-ouch-30848101>); to the question of gender representation on stage, screen and decision-making positions – highlighted in the work of Tonic Theatre (<http://www.tonictheatre.co.uk/>), among others – and the more recent revelations of widespread sexual harassment in the theatre and film industries; all have contributed to bringing the topic of Diversity in the performing arts to the forefront of public consciousness. Organisations such as Act for Change (<http://www.act-for-change.com/>) have championed diversity and campaigned for greater representation, opportunities and access to live and recorded media for people of all backgrounds, and have developed a high profile in recent years.

In Higher Education (HE), questions of Diversity have also been gaining increasing attention, particularly in light of the recent and proposed reforms to the sector brought about since the Tory-led coalition government of 2010. Additionally, reforms to the secondary education system have also caused concern in terms of their knock-on effect on universities. The Sutton Trust's 2017 report on social mobility and access to Higher Education, focusing on admissions processes (<https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/admissions-in-context/>), is exemplary of the kind of work undertaken in addressing the issue of diversity in HE. Initiatives such as *Why is my Curriculum White?* (<https://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/why-is-my-curriculum-white/>), led by the National Union of Students, have highlighted the underrepresentation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) authors in syllabi across the United Kingdom. And in spite of recent progress, the number of women in senior roles in the HE sector continues to be disproportionately low (<https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2017/mar/08/why-universities-cant-see-woman-as-leaders>). The Equality Challenge Unit ([www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)) and its Athena Swan Charter ([www.athenaswan.org.uk](http://www.athenaswan.org.uk)) have undertaken valuable work in monitoring and promoting diversity among university staff and students.

As the subject association for theatre and drama in Higher Education, SCUDD is at the crossroads of these two important trends. We believe that diversity is not only desirable, but fundamental to our survival as a viable discipline in HE and to shaping the future of theatre and the performing arts in general. There is, in other words, an evolutionary imperative towards diversity, which we at SCUDD acknowledge and welcome.

The main body of this report consists of four parts. PART 1 offers a few brief comments on the key findings first published on the SCUDD website in December 2017 (<https://scudd.org.uk/activities-campaigns/diversity-in-the-discipline/>) and copied at the start of this document. PART 2 outlines the methodology, some of the difficulties encountered in the process, and the ways in which the Working Group addressed these difficulties in its work. PART 3 presents some of the quantitative and qualitative data acquired during the period of 2015-17, and sets the data against some background comparators, expanding on the findings presented in PART 1. Finally, PART 4 offers comments on the recommendations published alongside the key findings in 2017 (and also copied at the start of this report), and concludes by discussing some themes arising from the research and suggesting a series of actions for the Working Group and the SCUDD community in general. It is our hope that the contents of this report be part of an ongoing process of increasing diversity in our member departments; and that the information contained in this document be useful in moving forward the conversation, and generating action on this important topic. Indeed, should you have any questions or wish to comment on any aspect of this report and its contents, please contact Pedro de Senna on [p.desenna@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:p.desenna@mdx.ac.uk).

## **PART 1 – Comments on key findings**

In this section we reserve a few words for each of the key findings published on the SCUDD website in December 2017. They are based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. It should go without saying that this list of key findings is not definitive; the more one examines the data, the more findings it yields and the more questions it raises.

- 1.1. SCUDD member departments are generally perceived to be open environments, ostensibly welcoming diversity.
  - The overall perception of SCUDD departments with regards to diversity is a positive one: staff and students are generally perceived to be open to and welcoming of difference. SCUDD departments and its members, however, should be mindful of unconscious and structural biases that still very much affect us all; importantly, there is more we can do in terms of actively promoting diversity, rather than simply accepting it. Context is also fundamental, and an understanding that SCUDD departments do not operate in a social vacuum is key in determining attitudes and approaches to diversity – both within departments and in their relations with the communities they serve.
- 1.2. That said, in practice, member departments still are mono-cultural, both in the make-up of their staff (particularly with regard to class, ethnicity and disability) and in curricula (also gender and heteronormativity).
  - The mono-cultural make-up of our departments gives us pause for thought. Even if individuals in member departments are open and welcoming, collectively we present a mostly white, middle-class, non-disabled picture, the optics of which may well have an effect on applications – both to study and work in our departments. The lack of diversity in our curricula should be cause for concern: our curricula are even more homogenous than we (staff and students) are, with a disproportionate amount of our syllabi occupied by non-disabled, white, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender male theorists, playwrights and practitioners.
- 1.3. 68% of student respondents identify as female, compared to 25% as male (7% identified as other or did not respond). A smaller majority (56%) of staff responding to the survey also identified as female – including at professorial level (53%).
  - This finding is significant in two respects: first, the statistical anomaly of the female/male ratio among our students. This acquires extra significance when set against the above finding relating to our syllabi – for example the number of female roles and role-models available to the young women who join our



departments. Second, as explained below (section 3.1.c.), the proportional decline in the amount of women as one moves up the academic career ladder. With such a high proportion of female students, one might expect to see this mirrored in our staff profile. If the discipline is so attractive to women at undergraduate level, what are the factors impeding progression towards lectureships and professorships?

- 1.4. There is significant underrepresentation of Asian minority ethnic students and staff, compared to the general population.
  - According to the UK census (2011), the largest non-white ethnic group in the UK, at around 6.9%, identifies as 'Asian'. Among our survey respondents, this proportion drops by 66% to only 2.3%.<sup>1</sup> This represents a SCUDD/census correlation of 1:3. The equivalent correlation for those who identify as white is 1:1. Put another way, if a potential applicant identifies as Asian, s/he is three times less likely to study in our discipline than if s/he identifies as white.
- 1.5. Approximately 45% of the student body identified as having a religion, compared to under 30% of staff.
  - The disparity between staff and students is significant here; first, because it challenges the stereotype of ever-decreasing religiosity inter-generations. Second, because even so, it challenges the assumption that staff are almost entirely secular – over a quarter declared a religion. And third, because the significant difference between staff and students may impact the tone and tenor of conversations around religion (and its relation to performance and society) in various learning and teaching situations.
- 1.6. Approximately 15% of our students self-reported as having mental health issues.
  - This is a very large number, which reflects sector-wide preoccupations, and may be due to either: (i) the increasing level of awareness around mental health, especially among young people, leading to high reporting rates; (ii) actual growth in the numbers of students suffering from mental health issues; or (iii) a combination of (i) and (ii). Regardless, and assuming there still may be some underreporting in this sensitive topic, action must be taken to identify causes and support mechanisms to help those affected.

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<sup>1</sup> Census categories include Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and other Asian; our categories are East Asian, South Asian and South-East Asian. Whilst the language used is not identical, SCUDD categories encompass all of the census categories, so the comparison stands.

- 1.7. Approximately 19% of our students are non-UK citizens; 58% of those (11% of the total) are EU citizens.
- This is one of our strengths in terms of diversity: SCUDD member departments are quite international, though more can be done to diversify our cohorts' countries of origin. The high proportion of EU students can be perceived as a vulnerability in a post-Brexit environment; indeed, Brexit may well have a strong detrimental effect on the next recruitment cycle (September 2019 intake) and member departments ought to take notice. Transitional agreements between the UK and the EU might mitigate the problem, but at the time of writing this report, nothing is certain.
- 1.8. Over 20% of respondents identify as LGBTQA+, compared to 2% of the overall UK population.
- With approximately 1 in 5 respondents identifying as LGBTQA+, this identity group is by a long margin the most overrepresented in our departments, with a SCUDD/census correlation of 10:1. This strong presence is not, however, reflected in a similar degree of sexual diversity in our curricula, especially in relation to heteronormative narratives and tropes in plays studied, and the amount of space awarded to Queer theories and practices of performance in our syllabi.
- 1.9. Only 7.4% of staff reported a disability, compared to 17% of the UK working age population.
- It will come as no surprise that disability is underrepresented in SCUDD member departments. It is also noteworthy that the majority of disabilities reported are 'invisible' disabilities – either associated with mental health (such as bipolar disorder) or specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia), which means that disability is all but invisible among our staff.

## **PART 2 – Methodology**

### **2.1. Descriptive chronology**

In 2015, the newly formed Diversity in the Discipline Working Group at SCUDD gave itself the primary task of mapping the levels of diversity in SCUDD's 85 member departments in a census-like exercise, as a first step towards addressing any potential imbalances encountered. It seemed clear to us that, before we could offer any analysis, we ought to find out a little bit more about who we are. With that objective in mind, the group created a brief survey, which it circulated among staff and students of member departments.

The survey contained 12 questions, organised according to four different categories, namely:

1. Your institution and you (age of respondent, type of institutional affiliation, region, job title)
2. National, ethnic and religious identity
3. Gender and sexual identity
4. (Dis)ability and health

These questions yielded a wealth of quantitative data, which we examine here (section 3.1). This was followed by a 13<sup>th</sup>, free comment question (Q13) which offered a more qualitative approach. If respondents did not feel comfortable with answering a specific question, they were encouraged to leave it blank and move on to the next one. Some of this data was presented at the SCUDD autumn General Meeting in 2015, and at the SCUDD Conference 2016 at Middlesex University. On these occasions, the findings presented were discussed by colleagues attending, and this has been invaluable in moving our work forward.

In 2016, the data gathered was set against a number of key background comparators, including the overall UK population and data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), and these will be discussed in section 3.2 of this report.

In 2017, the working group directly contacted a number of individuals identified as having an interest or expertise on the topic of diversity, with a series of four discursive questions. Their answers inform much of the thinking contained in this report. The questions were as follows:

1. What do you think are the major challenges in terms of creating a diverse and inclusive environment within university drama departments?
2. What do you believe can or should be done to promote diversity and inclusivity in university drama departments? Do you know any examples of good practice?
3. In what ways, if any, do you think your career (at any or all stages) has been impacted by aspects of your self-identity?

4. Is there any information/ anecdote/ opinion you would like to share relating to the topic of diversity that you think might inform future conversations on the topic?

Based on the information surmised at these various stages, a set of key findings and a list of key recommendations were prepared and published in December 2017, following discussion at SCUDD's Autumn General Meeting, in which they underwent final revision. The sections below (PARTS 3 and 4) expand on those and list other significant findings which might warrant further investigation. At all stages of the work, the anonymity of respondents has been respected.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data; associated with discussions in the working group itself; and the focus provided by departmental representatives and conference attendees when preliminary findings were presented and discussed; all these give us confidence in the validity and value of the findings and recommendations presented in this report.

## **2.2. Methodological shortcomings and difficulties encountered**

Dealing with such complex issues as diversity, identity and representation, the working group encountered a number of difficulties in its work: some inherent to the methodology, others associated with the topic of diversity itself. Moreover, the scale of the undertaking, given SCUDD's membership of over 80 departments made the task particularly challenging. These challenges can be grouped in three categories – which are of course interrelated: the language used, sample representativeness, and survey design.

### **2.2.a. Language**

The first point to be made about language, and one which was highlighted in a number of responses to Q13 was the absence of a Welsh language version of the survey. The Working Group acknowledge that absence and regrets this omission, though response levels in Wales (see section 3.1.a. : TABLE 1, below) were comparatively high. There is no way of estimating how much that absence might have skewed participation in Wales.

More broadly, we were conscious of the difficulty in finding the appropriate, inclusive language to address all the aspects of diversity we wanted to address – words like 'minefield' and 'nightmare' were often used in the Working Group's internal communications. Writing the survey itself was educational. Our conversations, and subsequent responses to the survey, have highlighted that each and every category on the survey is contested and subject to problematisation. We were conscious of trying to challenge some of the received language on the topic, as found for example in equal opportunities monitoring forms. Indeed, the corporate language of diversity and inclusivity is often co-opted to mask real prejudice – something that was highlighted more than once by our experts. Still, the need to propose a language of our own had to be balanced against the need to be able to translate the information for comparison purposes with a ready-

made set of background data, such as UK Census categories, as discussed below (section 3.2.b.).

The language around gender identification and sexual orientation caused much debate, and our choice of using 'gender' rather than 'sex', for example, was the subject of some controversy. In this case, we believed that offering a female/male, or woman/man binary choice was rather limiting, so we left this as an open-response question asking respondents: "How would you describe your gender?". So our difficulties with language often affected the type of question we asked (see section 2.2.c.), and the resulting openness in answers set a challenge to compare our findings on this matter with the binary data of the Higher Education Statistics Agency, for instance.

With regard to disability, for example, we used the definition put forward in the Equality Act (2010), but that also had its limitations: anecdotal evidence (later corroborated by our own data, as seen below in section 3.1.d.) suggested that a number of people might suffer from health issues which have an impact on their working life, but are not considered a disability – for example, the many people dealing with mental health issues. We were concerned that these people might be under-represented, so we chose to add another question, asking respondents if they had "any long-term physical and/or mental health problems that have an impact on [their] working life, and which are not considered a 'disability'".

Determining the language around ethnicity and nationality was also the subject of much discussion during the survey design process (see section 2.2.c.). We wished, for example, to avoid the received inconsistency of referring to some ethnic groups by 'colour' (i.e. white, black) and others by geography (i.e. South Asian, East Asian). Of course every attempt to harmonise these parameters was problematic. We also wanted to avoid the ubiquitous catch-all "other" appended to certain categories, as that appellation in itself has the effect of 'othering' respondents, but the decision on what to include and what to exclude became an impossible one. Ultimately, we agreed we had to work with our own limitations and acknowledge the problems and imperfections of the process.

### **2.2.b. Representativeness**

The Working Group received 954 responses to the survey: 648 students (537 UG + 33 MA/MFA + 78 PhD/research), and 296 staff (265 academic + 31 tech/support). This corresponds to 3% of the total number of drama students nationally (including non-SCUDD organisations); a 5.3% representation of total PG students; and a 2.7% of UG students, based on HESA data; and 21% of SCUDD departmental academic staff, based on numbers raised by SCUDD<sup>2</sup>. The sample size of support and technical staff responding was not large enough to provide any statistically significant data on its own, and was generally subsumed under 'staff' for analysis purposes.

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Eve Wedderburn, who undertook research on our behalf, mining member departments' websites.

Whilst our overall sample is representative and not insignificant, any information gathered from it must be caveated with the issue of self-selectivity, which might skew the results somewhat. Participants in this type of survey are not, by nature, entirely random, and do not necessarily represent a proportional cross-section of the universe of possible respondents. Still, the findings afford precious insight into the state of diversity in SCUDD member departments.

One of the key problems faced was the matter of geographical representativeness of the sample we were able to gather through our survey. Implementation of the survey was uneven; as will be seen below (section 3.1.a.), participation had wide regional variations. The survey was disseminated via the SCUDD mailing list and requests were sent directly via email to SCUDD's 80+ departmental reps to circulate the survey among colleagues and students in their institutions. Beyond that, the Working Group did not have enough resources to follow up with individual departments. A question that remains open to the Working Group is how to increase participation in this type of exercise, to ensure a better geographical spread of responses. It is possible that new, regionally focused surveys may be necessary to account for the specificities of different parts of the United Kingdom. This of course needs to be squared with the need to avoid identifying individual institutions and departments, and by extension, potentially, individual respondents.

Likewise, engagement with the survey by associate/guest academics was very extremely limited, with only 14 respondents identifying as such. This is in sharp contrast to the high numbers of associate, guest, visiting, or hourly paid lecturers (or whatever the individual organisational nomenclature for casual workers may be) that the HE sector as a whole, and our discipline in particular, employs. We acknowledge that the phrasing of the original email sent to the SCUDD mailing list soliciting responses was also unhelpful, in that it requested that "if you are currently a member of staff (academic or support) [...] in a SCUDD affiliated department/institution, we would be grateful if you could take 5 minutes to respond to the following questionnaire" [emphasis in the original]. However, the message sent to departmental reps requesting their support in disseminating the survey explicitly stated that "we would be grateful if you could copy/paste and circulate these within your department, and encourage colleagues (both support and academic – including visiting lecturers) [...] to fill in the short online questionnaire". The lack of engagement by this cohort might reflect a feeling that they do not belong in any particular member department, or that indeed they belong in more than one. An important discussion of the use of non-permanent contracts within the SCUDD community (though not exclusively member departments), taking account of the perspectives of associate lectures, can be found here: <https://fightingcasualisation.org/>.

Another question of representativeness arising from our survey was that of how to account for technical and support staff. This posed a key difficulty in that hierarchical and organisational structures vary among institutions, with some having centralised services;

many don't place technical or support staff within a particular department; or conversely, departments may include professionals such as subject librarians and administrators, rendering the data gathered, in the way it was framed, of limited value. Still, the survey yielded 31 respondents identifying as "members of technical/support staff".

Finally, there was no practicable way of meaningfully acknowledging the variety in degree models: some member departments offer single honours degrees in our discipline; some offer combined awards; others still, offer both. Undergraduate students responding to the survey may therefore be undertaking degrees as diverse as a single BA (Hons) in Theatre Design, and a joint BA (Hons) in Classical & Archaeological Studies and Drama. Joint honours students might be 'located' in other, non-drama departments. It is impossible to ascertain how many students in such courses may not have engaged with the survey because of this.

### **2.2.c. Survey design**

Problems emerged in phrasing the questions, as seen above, but also in determining the type of questions. The Working Group had to balance open questions, allowing for people to self-identify, with multiple-choice questions that would generate data to be statistically amassed. Gender identity and sexual orientation, of course, fall within a spectrum, and posed particular challenges. Nationality was also complex: we could have a drop-down menu, listing United Nations member states, but that might exclude people who identify as Kashmiri, Palestinian, Kurdish... When we did in some questions decide for multiple choice (fearing such variety of self-identification as to make it impossible to gather meaningful statistics), strong debates were had about which categories to include. Question 6, on ethnicity was a particularly tricky one. By offering categories such as 'Black' or 'White', we seem to be subscribing to the notion of 'race' and not ethnic origin (in other words, we are implying that a great diversity of human groups can be grouped together by the colour of their skin). Having said that, we wanted to gather data that could be mapped against the UK Census, so it made sense that at least some categories overlapped. Moreover, ignoring the existence of 'race' as a construct within our cultural discourse might have the unintended consequence of erasing very real instances of racism.

An important omission in the survey design, and one which might have yielded interesting results, was the question to which 'university group' does the respondent's institution belong to. That might have allowed us to compare levels of diversity between, say, conservatoires, departments in Russell Group and Million+ universities. However, the inclusion of one such question would lead to easy identification of institutions, by cross-referencing group data with regional data. Moreover, some institutions belong to more than one recognised group, making the framing of the question and subsequent arrangement of answers too unwieldy.

Perhaps the most significant omission in the survey design was a question dealing with class or socio-economic background. This was a difficult decision, as the Working Group's remit

does include it. There were two reasons for its omission in the survey. The first was the fact that we could not agree on a question that would serve as a proxy for class: the postcode proxy used by UCAS might allow us to identify individuals, and seemed like too blunt an instrument; household income would be difficult to measure, when dealing with students' varying living arrangements; an open question such as "How would you define your class background?" felt too vague. Secondly, and associated with the first difficulty, came the fact that the British class system is very idiosyncratic; and we wanted to account for the significant number of international staff and students who do not emanate from within this system. Still, in hindsight, another commonly used proxy, "Are you the first person [or is yours the first generation] in your family to go to University?", might have yielded valuable information, given the correlation between class and educational background in the UK and elsewhere. Nonetheless, class was the single most raised issue in the final, open comments section (Q13), either simply criticising its omission from the survey, or raising interesting material points and anecdotes. In fact, class and socioeconomic background were raised by over 10% of the total number of Q13 respondents. The omission of a question on class was mitigated by the abundance of discursive comments on the topic, and by the contributions of our 'experts', many of whom highlighted the importance, and discussed aspects of, the issue in our discipline.

Throughout the survey design and implementation, the Working Group was very conscious of its limitations, as it is clear from the sections above. These limitations were not only reflected in our own internal discussions: some free comments in Q13 were indeed critical of the whole exercise. Criticism fell broadly under four categories:

- i. The exclusion of any question relating to class, as mentioned above;
- ii. The inclusion of some categories, which, according to some respondents, were irrelevant (sexual orientation in particular was raised a number of times);
- iii. The phrasing of questions or the type, range and even the ordering of multiple choice answers – particularly in relation to gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity – was seen as perpetuating certain structures and hierarchies;
- iv. Some considered the exercise as a whole pointless (or worse, that it reinforced certain labels), stating that "identity cannot be put in a box therefore you really have to rethink this survey".

We take the criticism on board, and would like to emphasise that this exercise was only a first step towards understanding the extent of our ignorance and considering potential remedies. In fact, a few respondents praised the very effort to gather data in such a complex field. And in spite of the acknowledged imperfections and difficulties, we received some praise in relation to the questionnaire itself: one respondent said that the "survey is quite



inclusive, especially in the way answers are user-based rather than externally delineated categories that one has then to fill. I felt comfortable filling the questionnaire.”

## PART 3 – Findings on the data acquired and background comparators

### 3.1. Data acquired

This section analyses the data contained in the survey itself<sup>3</sup>, with no reference to external comparators, which are dealt with in the next section (3.2.). Nonetheless, a number of key observations can be surmised, which affect Learning and Teaching strategies and may have implications in terms of representation in our curricula – the plays studied and the types of roles on offer in them, for example, or the theoretical models and frameworks investigated; and the language, practices and indeed people employed in the various ‘classroom’ arrangements our discipline makes use of.

#### 3.1.a. Your institution and you

The first part of the survey was aimed at mapping the representativeness of our survey vis-à-vis the geographical spread of institutions and the roles respondents have within these institutions; this allowed us to establish a series of groupings and comparisons, most notably between staff and students. These groupings were then used to inform analyses made of responses in other parts of the survey.

In the table below (TABLE 1), the number and distribution of respondents to the survey according to the regions of their institutions is shown.

| TABLE 1 – DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS PER REGION OF INSTITUTION |                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Region of institution                                           | Respondents       | Response % (to the nearest decimal) |
| East of England                                                 | 9                 | 1.0                                 |
| London                                                          | 198               | 21.1                                |
| East Midlands                                                   | 51                | 5.4                                 |
| West Midlands                                                   | 117               | 12.5                                |
| North East                                                      | 6                 | 0.6                                 |
| North West                                                      | 58                | 6.2                                 |
| South East                                                      | 135               | 14.4                                |
| South West                                                      | 148               | 15.8                                |
| Yorkshire and Humber                                            | 80                | 8.5                                 |
| Northern Ireland                                                | 9                 | 1.0                                 |
| Scotland                                                        | 21                | 2.2                                 |
| Wales                                                           | 107               | 11.4                                |
|                                                                 |                   |                                     |
|                                                                 | Answered Question | 939                                 |
|                                                                 | Skipped Question  | 15                                  |

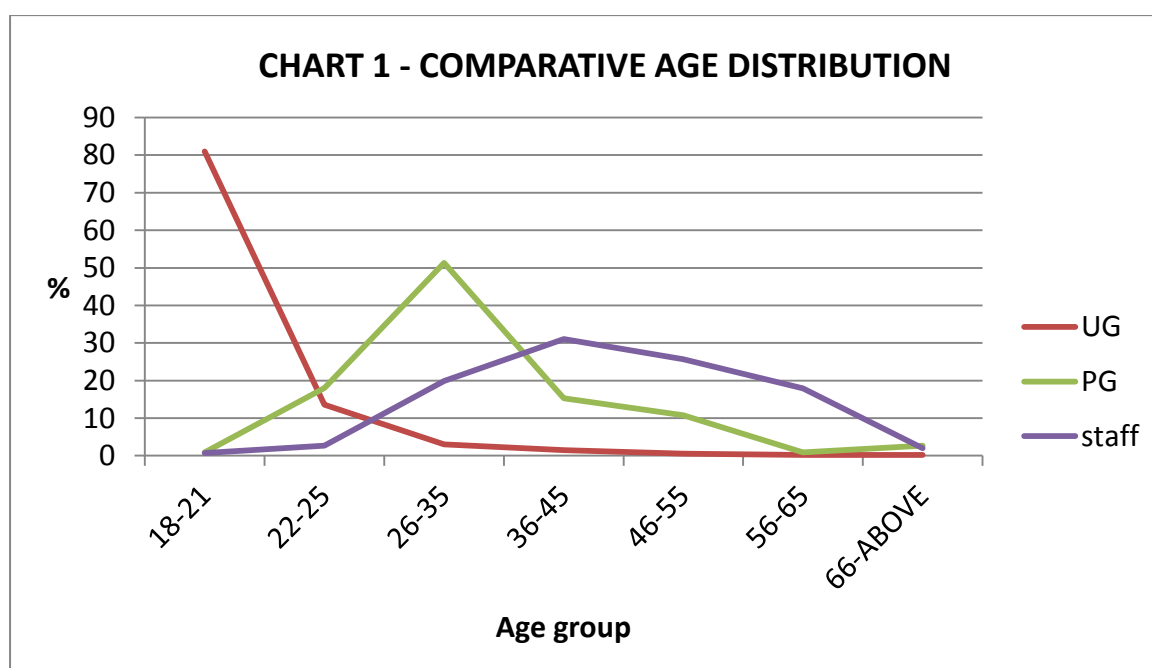
<sup>3</sup> This report cannot possibly present all the possible intersections of the data, only point out some statistically interesting findings; if you have any specific questions regarding the data, please email Pedro at [p.desenna@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:p.desenna@mdx.ac.uk).

As it is clear, response levels varied enormously between regions, with the East of England, the North East and Northern Ireland all recording (fractionally under) 1% of the total responses each.

The age of respondents, as might be expected, was distributed with a heavy bias towards the 18-21 year old group, to which over 80% of undergraduate student respondents (the largest cohort of respondents) belong. TABLE 2 illustrates the age group distribution of respondents, among undergraduate students, postgraduate students and staff.

| TABLE 2 – AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS <sup>4</sup> |            |                  |                  |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------|------------------|------------|
| Age group                                              | % of total | % of UG students | % of PG students | % of staff |
| 18-21                                                  | 46.06      | 81.0             | 0.9              | 0.7        |
| 22-25                                                  | 10.62      | 13.6             | 18.0             | 2.7        |
| 26-35                                                  | 13.99      | 3.0              | 51.4             | 19.9       |
| 36-45                                                  | 12.41      | 1.5              | 15.3             | 31.1       |
| 46-55                                                  | 9.78       | 0.6              | 10.8             | 25.7       |
| 56-65                                                  | 6.1        | 0.2              | 0.9              | 17.9       |
| 66-ABOVE                                               | 1.05       | 0.2              | 2.7              | 2.0        |

While over 90% of undergraduate students are aged under 25, the distribution among postgraduate students is less concentrated, though still with a majority (51.4%) bunched in one age bracket (26-35). Among staff there is a much wider age distribution, with three age groups at very near or more than 20%, and none above one third of the total respondents. CHART 1 compares the age distribution curves.

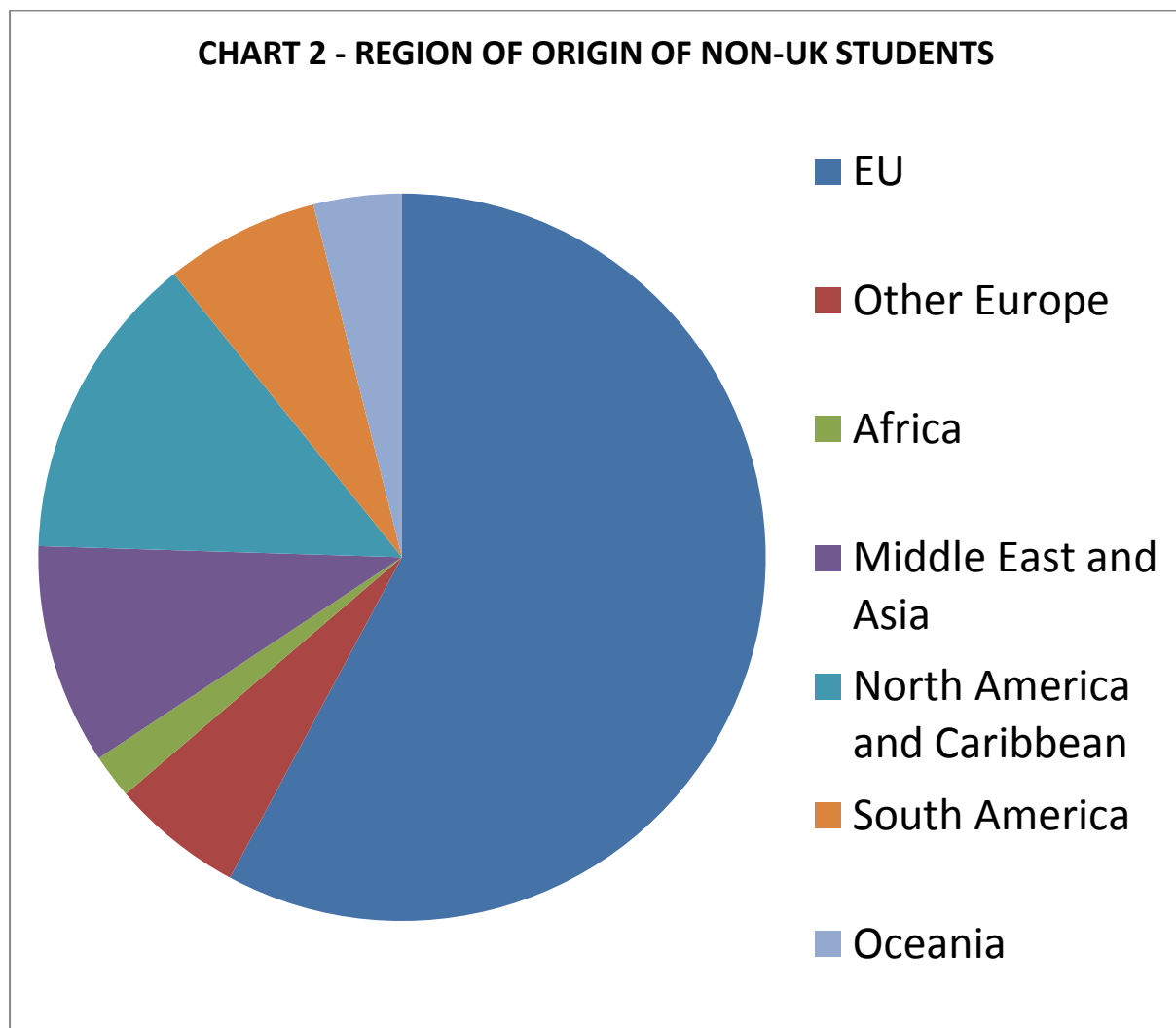


<sup>4</sup> Percentages in all tables have, when possible, been rounded to the nearest decimal. This means that not all totals may add up to 100.0%.

With only a small percentage of (even postgraduate) students aged above 46, the question of age discrimination has been flagged as an issue in the free-comment section of the questionnaire. Are SCUDD member departments doing enough to attract and retain mature students?

### 3.1.b. National, ethnic and religious identity

The data indicates that almost 1 in every 5 (approximately 19%) students in member departments are not UK nationals. Of those, 58% come from EU countries (so approximately 11% of the total). When the survey was implemented, the Brexit referendum had not yet taken place. The effects of its result cannot yet be ascertained, but its potential impact on our discipline must not be underestimated. The chart below (CHART 2) shows the global region distribution of non-UK nationals among our students:



Among staff, the percentage of non-UK nationals is approximately 18%, with the EU accounting for over half of those, at approximately 10%.

With regard to ethnic background, the data gathered in this section of the questionnaire made for some interesting reading, and at times surprising. While the survey results confirm the impression of a white monoculture among staff, with 91% reporting as 'white' (white European or white other), the anecdotal evidence pointing to a large discrepancy between staff and student cohorts (reiterated in a few Q13 answers) was not reflected in the survey. In fact, 88% of students also reported as 'white'.

When only London-based respondents are taken into account, the overall percentage of BAME respondents increases, as might be expected, but only to approximately 15%. Interestingly, 85% of London-based undergraduate students identify as 'white', with staff marginally more ethnically diverse at 82% 'white'.

There are a further three noteworthy observations regarding ethnicity within the survey results which, while not emerging from substantive statistical data, seem to corroborate anecdotal evidence, as well as Q13 and expert accounts.

Firstly, out of the 21 respondents from Scotland, none identified as BAME. While the sample size is small and must therefore be taken cautiously, it is significant that 100% of respondents, among staff and students, identified as 'white'.

Secondly, and whilst acknowledging the problems with interpreting data for this group (as pointed out in section 2.2.b. above), 100% of technical/support staff respondents also identified as 'white'. There is indeed a national drive towards increasing the participation of BAME people in technical and stage-management management jobs in the theatre, and Universities should be a part of that effort.

Finally, an underlying issue appears when associate/guest academics – another hard-to-reach group, with only 14 respondents – are taken into account: a substantial 36% reported as BAME. While the ethnic diversity in this group is to be welcomed, it points to a trend identified by our experts, one of casualization of minority ethnic labour; BAME academics become precarious 'permanent associates', making departments look diverse, and therefore disguising, while at the same time maintaining structural inequalities and enabling white complicity in institutional racism. At the other end of the career spectrum, out of the 19 professors who responded, 14 identified as 'white European', 3 identified as 'white other'; only 1 (approximately 5%) identified as other ethnic background, and 1 did not respond. BAME staff in permanent positions reported tokenistic and ghettoising attitudes towards them and their teaching and research.

With regard to religion, almost a third (30%) of members of staff declared as having a religion, a perhaps higher than expected percentage, given assumptions about the composition of member departments being overwhelmingly secular. Among students the percentage rises to 44%. This may have implications to our learning and teaching environment, and will be discussed below, in section 3.2.a.

### 3.1.c. Gender and sexual identity

Questions of gender and sexual identity elicited, as might be expected, strong reactions. As mentioned above (section 2.2.c), many respondents to Q13 questioned the very idea we should be gathering data on people's sexual orientation. Reservations about the question of sexual orientation notwithstanding, approximately 20% of respondents identified as LGBTQA+, revealing a high proportion of individuals with queer<sup>5</sup> identities in our member departments, and substantially higher than the national data indicates (see below, section 3.2.b.). Among professors, the number suffers a 20% drop, with 3 out of 19 respondents (approximately 16%) not identifying as heterosexual. This may be the result of barriers to the promotion of openly gay individuals to senior posts; or to generational attitudes to coming out, given the higher age profile of professors, over half of whom are aged above 56 years old.

Others queried our choice of the word 'gender' over 'sex' – a choice that was motivated by our interest in how our respondents present themselves in their interactions within member departments, rather than their anatomy. Many praised the open and non-binary phrasing of the question, which allowed for a variety of forms of self-identification. In fact, for this question we received 29 answers that were not simply either female/woman or male/man, with more than 15 types of answers including 'non-binary', 'genderfluid' and a number of respondents who chose to state 'cis-(male or female)', showing a growing awareness of trans issues.

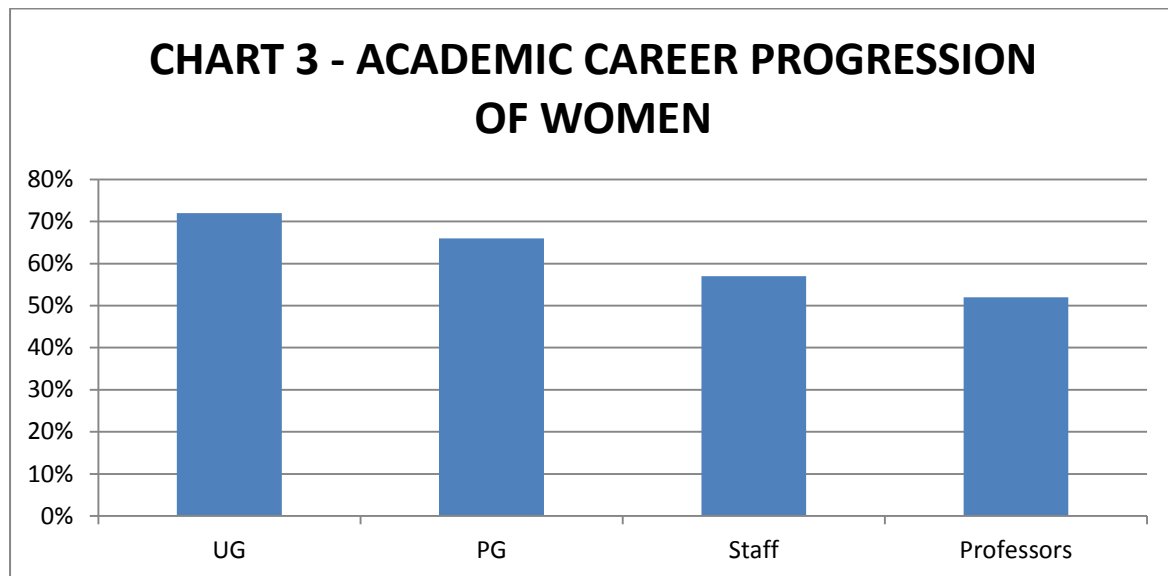
While the openness of the survey question allowed for a foregrounding of the understanding of gender as non-binary, we must acknowledge that we still live in a society that operates primarily in binary terms when it comes to gender, and eliding that fact would mask very real discrimination against women. We have therefore, for data analysis purposes, grouped our respondents in the quasi-binary male/female/other. One of the unsurprising findings in this category grouping was the high proportion of female undergraduates. Female UG students outweigh male students at a proportion of almost 3:1 (72% identified as female, 26% as male, and 3% as other or did not respond). This corroborates the anecdotal evidence, and begs the question of why does our discipline seem so much more attractive to women than to men.

Somewhat surprising is the high proportion of senior academic staff identifying as female. Out of respondents whose job titles are Dean, Head of Department, Course Leader, Reader and Professor, 55% stated their gender as female/woman. It is understood that some of these managerial positions come with no financial reward attached to it, so it may be the case that many women are taking on responsibilities without due career progression. Nonetheless, our survey indicates that even at the level of professor, there is a majority of women (52%) in our member departments. Overall, in academic staff the female to male

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<sup>5</sup> Used here as a shorthand for non-heteronormative identities.

ratio is 57% to 42% (1% identified as other/did not respond). Be that as it may, there is clearly a funnelling in terms of progression from UG to professorship, with a 28% proportional drop. The chart below (CHART 3) illustrates the decline in the proportion of women as we move along the stages of the academic career.<sup>6</sup>



One important topic emerged from our research, which, while not directly associated with gender, has implications that disproportionately affect women: the difficulty in reconciling the long, irregular working hours and patterns that academia in general, and our discipline in particular, often require (evening and weekend performances, long technical rehearsals etc.) with childcare responsibilities. The issue emerged in Q13 answers and was again mentioned in our expert responses. Departments need to be aware of the pressures certain expectations may exert upon staff and students who are also parents and caregivers. These can have a detrimental effect on student progression and retention, and on staff career development.

Finally, it would be impossible for this report to engage with gendered power structures in drama departments without mentioning the issue of sexual harassment. While this was not something that emerged directly from our research, SCUDD – being at the crossroads between the theatre industries and the HE sector – cannot, as a subject association, ignore the very serious conversations being had about the topic. To that end, a working party has been established, tasked with drawing up a code of practice to serve as a guide and offer a set of key principles for member departments to consider. The group is led by Geraldine Harris and Dan Rebellato, and the code of practice is due to be published in the Summer 2018.

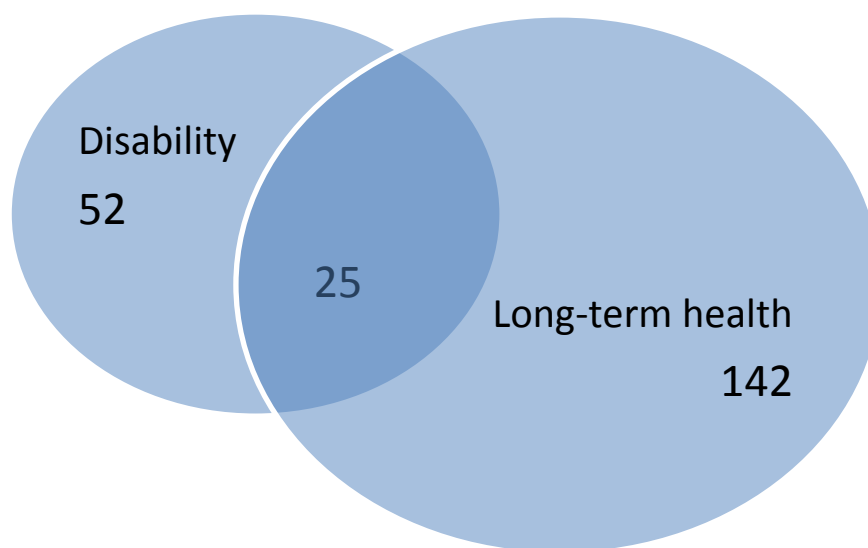
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<sup>6</sup> Here one must also account for the fact that women are generally more likely than men to dedicate their time to respond to such questionnaires. This may skew the data somewhat, and mask a larger drop in the number of women between UG students and professors. Nonetheless, one can only work with the data that is available.

### 3.1.d. (Dis)ability and health

In the section referring to disability and health, approximately 8.5% of respondents declared a disability, and almost 1 in 5 respondents (18%) declared having a “long-term physical and/or mental health problems that have an impact on [their] working life, and which are not considered a 'disability'” (Q12). There is some overlap between both categories, with approximately 1 in 3 disabled respondents also declaring a long-term health problem (DIAGRAM 1). When the data is combined, we have a total of 23% of respondents declaring either disability(ies), long-term health problem(s), or both. This is a worrying statistic: almost 1 in 4 of us is affected, and member departments ought to take notice.

**DIAGRAM 1 – DISABILITY AND LONG-TERM HEALTH PROBLEMS OVERLAP**



The inclusion of question 12 in the survey allowed us to gather data on mental health, a problem of growing concern in higher education in general. We found that approximately 13.7% of our students, and 7.4% of staff declared a mental health issue. The impact of these statistics has led to the creation of a Mental Health initiative, led by the SCUDD executive (<https://scudd.org.uk/activities-campaigns/mental-health-initiative/>), which aims to provide a forum for support and sharing of good practice among member departments. A large subset of those declaring disabilities declared their disability to be associated with mental health – bipolar disorder, anxiety, depression.

Of the specific disabilities declared, the most prevalent (23.4%) is dyslexia – with 18 out of 77 of those declaring a disability stating they live with the condition. This confirms the anecdotal evidence that arts subjects in HE tend to attract a large number of people with dyslexia. This of course has important implications in terms of resources and the type of support member departments may be able to offer to students and staff with dyslexia, bearing in mind the fact that much dyslexia goes undiagnosed. Put together with mental health, the picture that emerges is that a significant number of our respondents live with an ‘invisible’ disability. Again, this has implications for member departments in how might we



best support these students; but it also raises questions about how accessible our departments are perceived to be – or indeed are, as some of our buildings still lack basic features such as step-free access to learning and teaching spaces – and the effect this has on attracting physically disabled staff and students. In other words: disability is not visible enough in our bodies, in our syllabi and practices, which are still very much coloured by ableist attitudes.

### **3.2. Background comparators**

As we have seen above, the data gathered, combined with the insight afforded by Q13 and our experts, has yielded much information in and of its own. In addition to this, the working group has set some of the data acquired against four key background comparators: UK census data (2011); HESA data (2014-15); UCAS data (2014 applications cycle); and Labour Force Survey (actors) data (2015).<sup>7</sup> Our survey was conducted in 2015; this report accepts that the year-on-year variation in each of these categories over the past three years will not have produced significant distortions in the data.

A few words, however, need to be given to each of these comparators, as all incur problems and limitations. The UK Census 2011 offers a comprehensive set of background data, and it affords comparisons across a number of categories, allowing us to establish how representative our discipline is of the national demographic environment. As mentioned above (section 2.2.a.), we took note of the Census categorisation on the survey design for that specific purpose. It does not, however, allow for us to make like-for-like regional comparisons, as student populations are mobile and may be resident in one region while domiciled in another. It also does not account for the number and/or size of departments existing within each of the regions, which would distort background comparisons significantly. Additionally, while the Census data might allow us to draw comparisons with the overall UK population, we must take into account the fact that the student population, and as a consequence our survey respondents' average age, is considerably younger than the UK average; as a result, comparisons on, say, ethnic representativeness are also not entirely like-for-like.

HESA data allows for us to place our survey results in the context of the wider HE sector. It therefore has the advantage of more closely mirroring the age distribution in our survey than the Census data does. It of course still carries with it the biases accrued in overall access to higher education, so HESA data demographic distribution is not reflective of

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<sup>7</sup> Sources of this data: UK Census (2011) - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011> and <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>; HESA - <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students>; UCAS <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-reports-sex-area-background-and-ethnic-group>; LFS - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket>; additionally, some data relating to disability data comes from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-facts-and-figures/disability-facts-and-figures>

society as a whole. For instance, the percentage of international students in UK universities is higher than that of immigrants in the overall population.

UCAS data take into account all applications made under code W4 (Drama) of the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS), which includes non-SCUDD departments; moreover, this does not reflect certain combined award structures or offerings in member departments. Nonetheless, it has afforded us an interesting finding regarding gender bias in UG admissions processes, as we will see below (section 3.2.b.)

Finally, the Labour Force Survey (actors) was brought in as a particular industry comparator. The working group understands and acknowledges that most SCUDD member department graduates will not be working as actors – indeed the variety of possible career destinations, both within and out of the performing arts industries, is one of the reasons our discipline should remain attractive to applicants. That said, experience suggests that many (if not most) candidates to our courses, at the point of entry, hold acting as a desired career path. Moreover, the visibility afforded by campaigns highlighting inequalities regarding gender, ethnicity, class and disability in the acting community means that our data can be part of this important conversation.

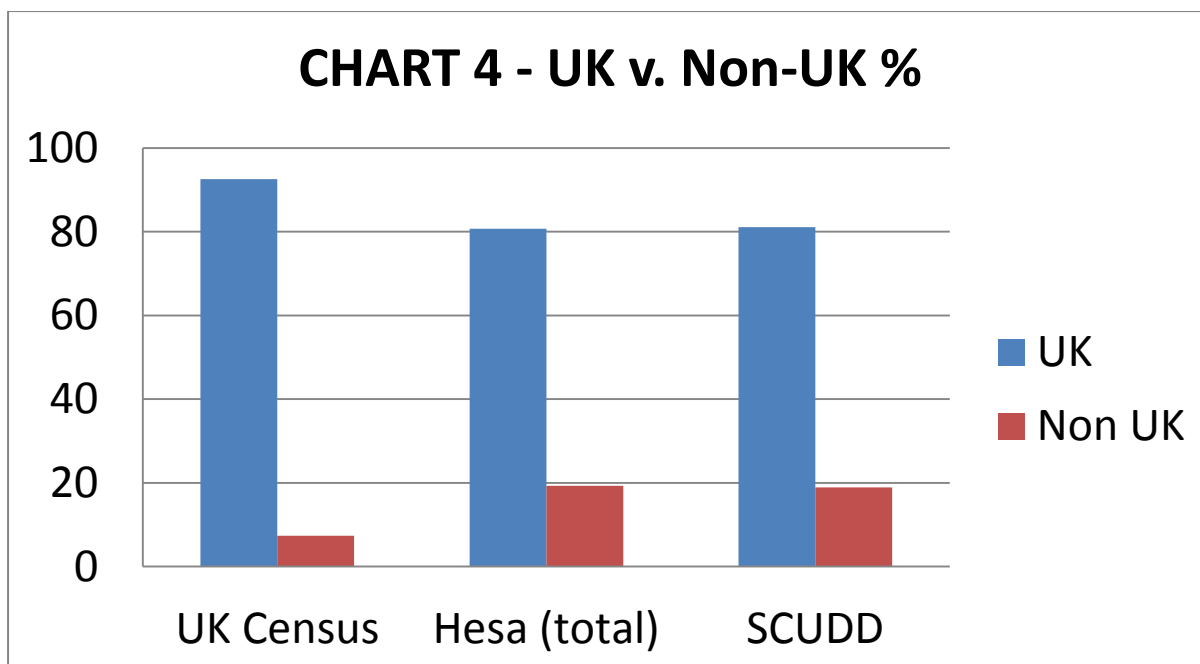
In this section we will consider the three broad categories of our survey: national, ethnic and religious identity; gender and sexual identity; and disability and health.<sup>8</sup> Under each category, we will offer a few findings emerging from our analysis and relating to key comparators. Again, presenting the result of every combination possible would make this report too unwieldy so many intersections have been omitted. Every effort has been made, however, to ensure that the data presented here is representative, accurate, and useful in moving the debate forward and instigating action.

### **3.2.a. National, ethnic and religious identity**

The data in this section yielded a number of revealing results when set against our comparators. First, regarding nationality, the proportion of non-UK students participating in our courses is broadly in line with the HE sector overall, around the 19% mark; this number is considerably higher than the number of non-UK nationals registered in the 2011 census (around 7%). CHART 4 (below) illustrates this well.

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<sup>8</sup> The data acquired from the first part of the survey, 'Your Institution and you' does not lend itself to the type of comparison presented here. However, data from that section is used to inflect some of the other category comparisons – allowing us, for example to separately analyse BAME representation among students and staff.



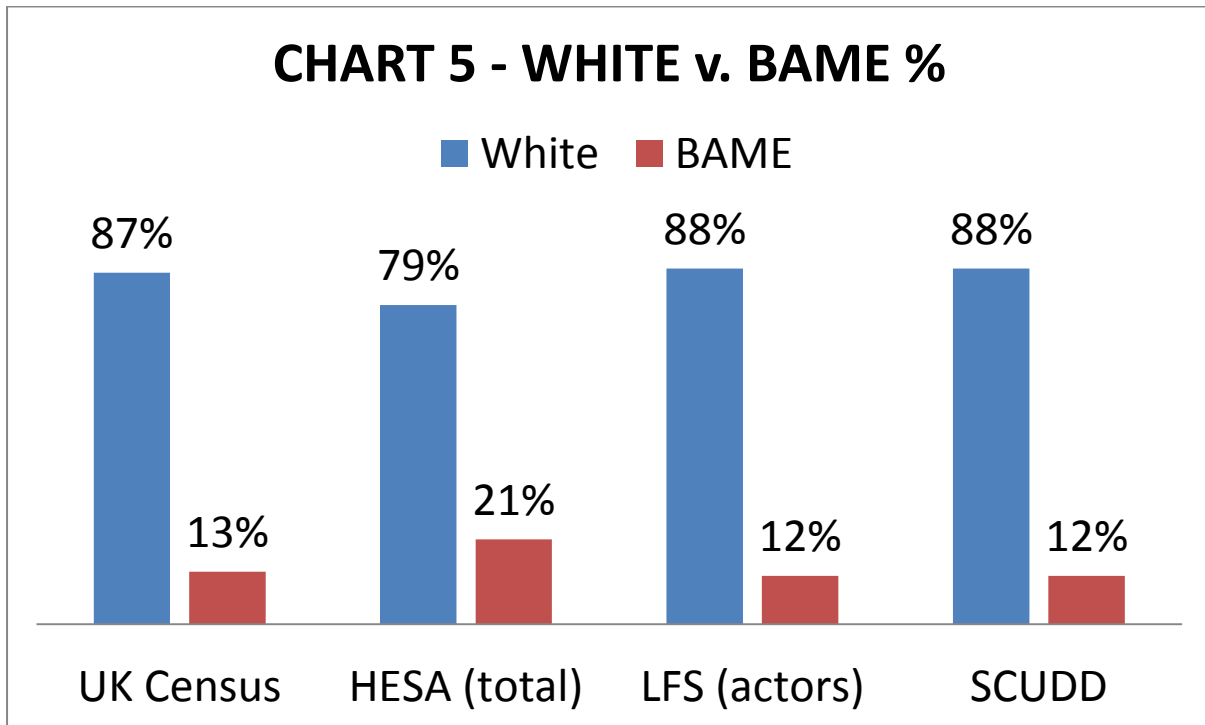
There is, however a large difference in the provenance of these students. CHART 2 (above) has showed the distribution of non-UK nationals according to their origins, showing a majority of non-UK students in our departments come from the EU. This is not the case for the overall HE sector, however, where the largest group (50%) of non-UK students come from the Middle-East and East Asia, with the EU accounting for the origin of only 28% of those (approximately 5.4% of the total). This means that, while withdrawing from the EU may have important consequences for the HE sector as a whole, SCUDD departments will be particularly adversely affected; in fact, more than twice the sector average. TABLE 3 (below) sets out the percentage of individuals from EU countries in the UK population as a whole, total HE students, and students in SCUDD member departments.

| TABLE 3 – PROPORTION OF EU CITIZENS |                 |               |             |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
|                                     | Non-UK origin % | Of which EU % | EU origin % |
| UK Census                           | 7.4             | 49            | 3.6         |
| HESA (total)                        | 19.3            | 28            | 5.4         |
| SCUDD                               | 18.9            | 58            | 10.9        |

As seen in section 2.1.b., the ethnic makeup of member departments is rather homogenous, with approximately 9 out of 10 respondents declaring themselves ‘white European’ or ‘white other’ – both among staff and students. If we set the data for our student cohorts alongside some of our comparators (CHART 5, below), we see that the proportion of BAME declared SCUDD students (12%) approximates the percentage in the overall population (13%)<sup>9</sup>. However, SCUDD departments lag behind the HE sector total,

<sup>9</sup> We must bear in mind the problem already pointed out at the start of section 2.2. with regard to using overall census data for these comparisons. The under 25 population of the UK is more ethnically diverse than

where almost twice as many students (21%) identify as BAME. There seems to be a correlation between this discrepancy and the high proportion of EU students in SCUDD departments, as opposed to the higher overall HESA figures for Asian, Middle Eastern and African students – though this may not be the only factor accounting for it. SCUDD numbers are in line with industry numbers for actors.

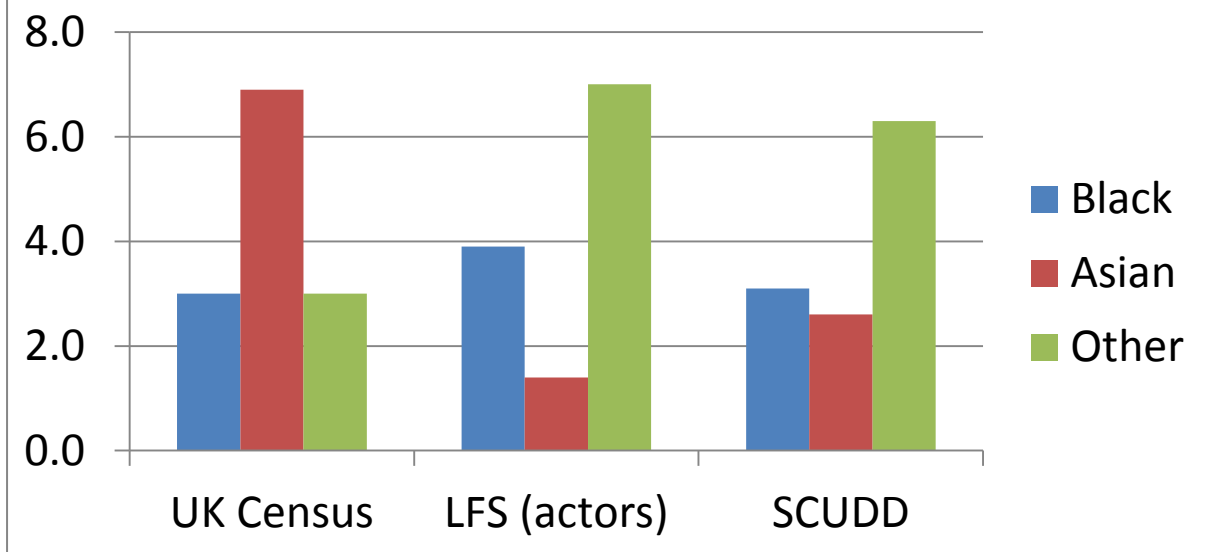


When the data is looked at in a more granular level, however, the picture that emerges is more problematic. If we break down the ethnic distribution of BAME respondents into the broad categories of ‘black’, ‘Asian’ and ‘other’ (which includes people self-describing as ‘mixed/multiple ethnic backgrounds’), we see significant underrepresentation of Asian respondents in our departments, compared to the overall population. This problem is reflected (and indeed exacerbated) in the LFS data. CHART 6 (below) illustrates this clearly.

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the national average, so while our student cohorts proportionally reflect the UK in terms of BAME representation, they do not necessarily reflect their age group.

### CHART 6 - BAME % DISTRIBUTION



Finally, with regard to religion, respondents to this question in our survey are more than twice as likely to declare ‘no religion’ than the general population<sup>10</sup>. Census data suggests that just over 1 in 4 residents in England and Wales (25.1%) are not religious; among our respondents, the figure is 60.5%. Among the 39.5% who declared to have a religion, approximately two-thirds (66%) identified as Christian. This corresponds to 26.1% of the total. In the general population the number of people identifying as Christian is 59.3%. Proportionally, the most underrepresented religious group are Muslims, who account for only 1.1% of our respondents, compared to almost 4.8% of the population. TABLE 4 (below) compares the percentages of individuals identifying with particular religions within the overall population and among respondents to our survey, as well as the drop or increase ratio in their representation. The table is ordered from the most underrepresented to the most overrepresented religious group.

| Religion  | Census % | SCUDD % | Census / SCUDD ratio |
|-----------|----------|---------|----------------------|
| Muslim    | 4.8      | 1.1     | 4.4 : 1              |
| Hindu     | 1.5      | 0.4     | 3.8 : 1              |
| Christian | 59.3     | 26.1    | 2.3 : 1              |
| Sikh      | 0.8      | 0.4     | 2 : 1                |
| Jewish    | 0.5      | 0.7     | 1 : 1.4              |
| Buddhist  | 0.4      | 1.2     | 1 : 3                |

<sup>10</sup> Data on religion in the census is only available for England and Wales. Considering the low response rate our survey has received in Scotland and Northern Ireland, their absence is not overly significant for comparison purposes.

Our survey also offered the option ‘Spiritual’, not contained in the census, and which received a significant 5.6% response rate. Other religions account for 4% of our respondents and 0.4% of census respondents.

It is clear that our discipline is significantly more secular than the general population. And while secularity and ethnicity are of course not the same, there is a correlation between the two, with BAME respondents more likely to declare a religion (60% of BAME respondents to the question declared a religion). The drive to increase ethnic diversity in our departments will have implications with regard to religion and current self-perceptions of the secular identity and nature of our discipline.

### **3.2.b. Gender and sexual identity**

As mentioned above (section 3.1.c.), over half (52%) of the professors who responded to our survey identified as women. This compares favourably with overall HESA data, according to which women only account for just shy of one quarter (24.6%) of the UK professoriat.

A highly significant result regarding gender in the survey, as seen above (section 3.1.c.) is the high proportion (72.3%) of respondents among our undergraduate students identifying as female. Set against the background of the general population, there is significant bias<sup>11</sup>. As the chart below (CHART 7) illustrates, HESA data shows us that there is already some female/male bias among the general HE student population – women account for 56.7% of the HE student population. Our discipline, however, is particularly affected by this. UCAS data<sup>12</sup> suggests that 67% of applicants to our discipline identify as female; interestingly, this bias is reinforced in admissions processes, with female UCAS ‘accepts’ rising to 71%. Unfortunately we have no data on offers made, but it may be worth investigating further if indeed there is something in admissions processes reinforcing that bias.

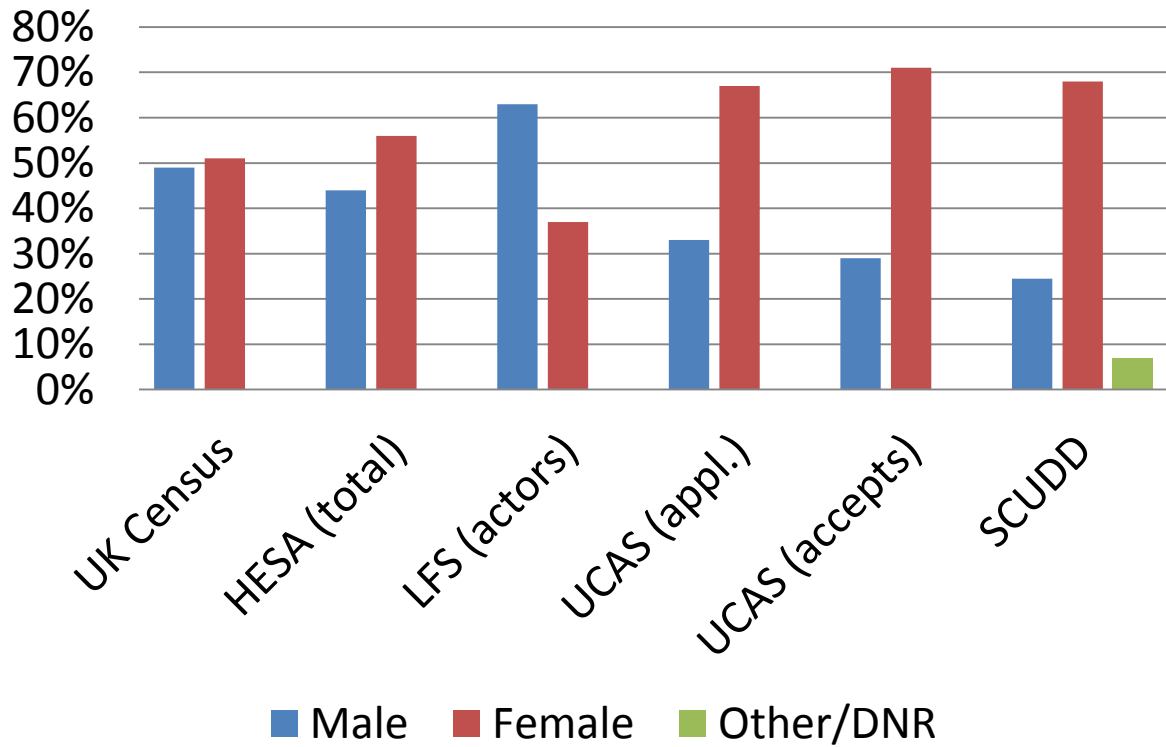
Finally, according to the Labour Force Survey, the gender bias in the acting profession is practically reversed: 63% identify as male, 37% as female. This is problematic in itself, but the problem is exacerbated when set next to the proportion of female students in our discipline. We again acknowledge that most of our graduates will not be working as actors, and that graduate destinations are indeed varied. Still, and as mentioned before, experience suggests that many applicants to our courses consider acting as one of their preferred destinations after studying in our departments; to pretend otherwise would be disingenuous. It is therefore ethically incumbent upon us to find appropriate ways to deal with this discrepancy – lest we be perceived as mis-selling our courses, particularly in an environment where students accrue large debts in order to study in Higher Education.

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<sup>11</sup> The word ‘bias’ is used here in the statistical sense, not as an indicator of any prejudice or favouritism.

<sup>12</sup> Includes non-SCUDD organisations.

### CHART 7 - GENDER DISTRIBUTION



The most statistically significant set of data emerging from this section of the survey, however, was the very high proportion of respondents identifying as LGBTQA+, when compared to the general population. Approximately 1 in 5 respondents to our survey answered something other than ‘heterosexual’ to the question “How would you describe your sexual orientation?” (Q10). Data from the UK census suggests that the proportion of heterosexual people in the UK is 98%. Anecdotal evidence has always suggested that theatre environments are more sexually diverse and welcoming of sexual difference than average, and the data gathered in our survey confirms this in relation to SCUDD member departments to a ratio of 10:1 (one is 10 times more likely to identify as LGBTQA+ in our departments than in the general population).

No further background comparisons can be made, as neither UCAS, HESA nor the LFS collect data on sexual orientation. As seen above (section 2.2.c) collecting data on sexual orientation and identity is contentious, with some respondents querying the inclusion of that question in our survey as either intrusive, irrelevant, or both. Yet this kind of information is important if we are to fully understand the workings of institutional discrimination. The erasure of sexual identity prevents meaningful statistics from being produced that might highlight a number of structural biases.

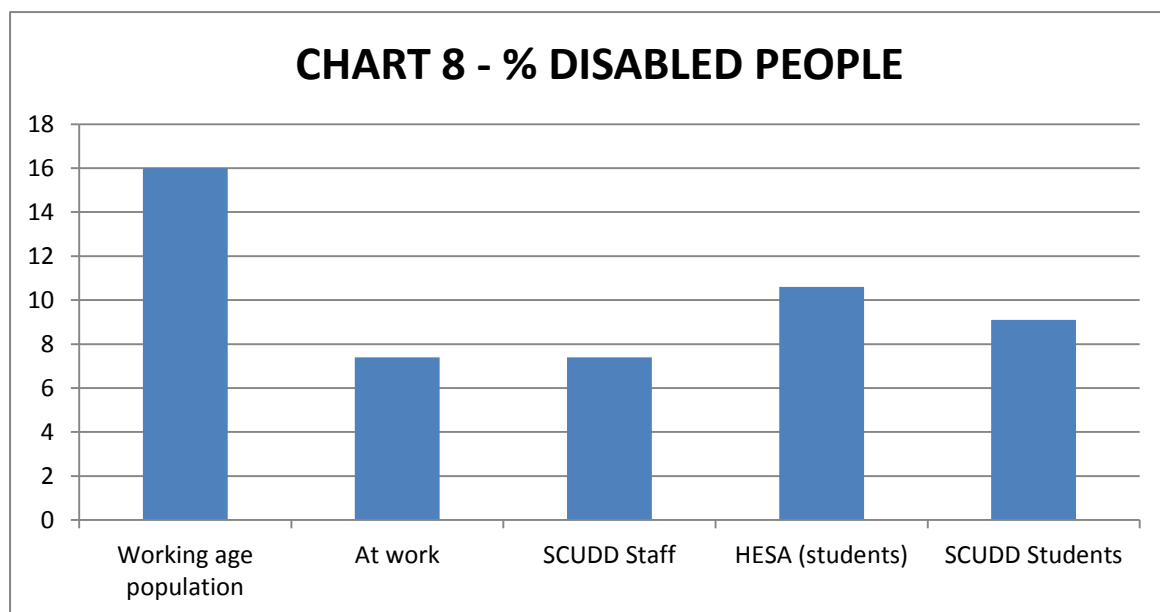
### 3.2.c. (Dis)ability and health

Disability is an important part of the conversation about diversity in our departments, given that so much of our work centres around the body. It is significant, that, as mentioned above (section 3.1.d.), a large proportion of our respondents carry invisible disabilities, either associated with mental health or dyslexia and dyspraxia. People with physical and mobility impairments perceive our discipline as excluding and inaccessible. Following the social model of disability, this means that collectively we are disabling people with these types of impairments.

According to the UK census, 17.9% of the UK population are disabled. This compares to only 8.5% of our survey respondents. However, comparing our disability data to the overall population is problematic, since a large proportion of disabled people are over the state pension age. Nonetheless, when set against the UK working age population (ages 16-64), our survey results still paint a disappointing picture: 16% of the general working age population are disabled.

When it comes to staff in our departments, the percentage of disabled respondents to our survey drops further to 7.4%. While this number is indeed disappointing, it is aligned with the number of disabled people in actual work, given that only 46.3% of the disabled working age population are in employment<sup>13</sup>. SCUDD member departments should not be content with simply aligning with this data. We can, and should do better.

Among our student respondents, 9.1% declared a disability. This again compares unfavourably to our background comparator, with HESA reporting that 10.6% of all HE students are disabled. CHART 8 sets side by side the percentages of working-age disabled people, staff survey respondents, HESA totals, and student respondents.



<sup>13</sup> This is compared to 76.4% of working-age non-disabled people, an attainment gap of over 30%.



It is clear that there still is much ground to be covered in order for member departments to achieve satisfactory levels of diversity in this identity characteristic.

The next, final part of this report takes note of the findings above and, whilst acknowledging our methodological shortcomings, offers a set of recommendations for action.

## **PART 4 – Recommendations and emerging themes**

### **4.1. Key recommendations: brief comments**

The recommendations below are organised so that some are addressed to member departments, and some to SCUDD as a subject association. There is of course a third set of addressees: individuals within departments. We, who work and study in our discipline, must be the drivers of cultural change, through conversations and localised actions. The list of recommendations is to be seen as non-exhaustive; rather, a starting point from which we all might continue to work towards increasing diversity in our field.

#### For member departments

4.1.a. Engage in concerted efforts to diversify the curriculum, not only through processes of review and revalidation, but also within modules whose validated documentation allows for that.

- This recommendation can be acted upon with almost immediate effect. Many module narratives are written in such a way that suggests, but does not enforce specific content. Module leaders/convenors and teaching teams, with the support of their departments, can broaden the scope of reading lists and materials taught, to make syllabi more diverse and representative. This will require, in some cases, a change of mind-set for staff. As review and revalidation cycles complete, new module documentation can be written in ways that embed diversity of content in the curriculum – without the need to create special interest/niche modules. That said, care must be taken to avoid, for instance, white colleagues ‘colonising’ epistemological territories demarcated by, and which might otherwise be occupied by, people of colour.

4.1.b. Proactively seek to employ BAME and disabled practitioners and tutors as guest lecturers and masterclass providers as a first, temporary step towards mitigating their relative absence in permanent positions.

- The ultimate goal is, of course, to increase the number of BAME and disabled permanent members of staff – both academic and support/technical. This is especially important in light of recommendation 4.1.a., as expounded above. However, in an HE environment of uncertainty and sector contraction, we acknowledge that departments may not hold much sway with their institutions in terms of the opening of new positions. Still, visibility matters, and often there is more flexibility in the hiring of HPL/ guest lecturers/ masterclass tutors; and from the students’ point of view, the presence of BAME and disabled members of staff as role models can be empowering. When permanent positions do open, departments ought to consider taking positive action as afforded by law.

- 4.1.c. Outreach to Asian communities through engagement with schools and arts organisations.
- This measure may require support from marketing and outreach departments in institutions, but member departments can be proactive in at least three ways: (i) by requesting that marketing target these particular groups in communications regarding open days and other recruitment events; (ii) devising and engaging in research and applied theatre projects alongside arts organisations with similar target audiences; (iii) by individual members of staff engaging their own network of contacts with schools and arts organisations, in order to establish informal channels of communication, leading for example to staff visiting schools to talk about studying our discipline in HE.
- 4.1.d. Open conversations about secularism and religion, ensuring a balance is struck between keeping the secularity of courses and respecting the individual religious rights of students, while providing appropriate levels of pastoral support.
- Departments ought to have frank discussions about how to address the rising number of students professing a religion, including the question of how to speak about religion in teaching, learning and assessment situations without causing offense (either to religious people or to non-religious ones). Anecdotal evidence suggests that students have, for example, used devising processes to create proselytising pieces – not in and of itself a problem; others refused to play a gay character, on religious grounds – more problematic in our view. Conversations must be had about how to ensure these students feel at ease to profess their faiths, while at the same time challenging potentially conservative and bigoted positions.
- 4.1.e. Make sure contextual data on class and socioeconomic background are taken into account during admissions.
- While admissions policies are often set centrally by universities, departments – particularly in our discipline, where interviews are not uncommon – can do much to affect processes and outcomes. Taking contextual data into account during admissions in order to boost working-class participation in our courses can be an important step towards reducing member departments’ class homogeneity. It is crucial, moreover, that support mechanisms are put in place to provide for ‘contextual’ applicants and students’ potential extra needs throughout their academic careers.
- 4.1.f. Engage staff and students in dialogue about equality and diversity, including around admissions processes, curricula and interpersonal relationships within cohorts.

- This is perhaps the least specific and, at the same time, most important of our recommendations. Dialogue: questions of identity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, should not be eschewed in the name of some misconceived notion of propriety. It is fit and proper that we discuss these matters openly and respectfully, acknowledging intersectionality, and the various positionings individuals or groups might take vis-à-vis one another. It is only by engaging openly and frankly in these difficult and nuanced conversations that we will, as a discipline, move forward in relation to diversity.

#### For SCUDD

- 4.1.g. Create a forum to address mental health concerns, including a platform for sharing good practice.
- As a subject association, SCUDD are well positioned to foment cross-institutional dialogue. Within its 80+ departmental membership there is a wide range of expertise and practices that can and indeed should be shared. The creation of an online forum space where testimonies, practices, documents and case-studies can be shared and discussed would provide a valuable resource to departments and individuals. Care must be taken, however, that such a forum does not become a 'collective therapy' space, where individuals seek mutual support.
- 4.1.h. Campaign and lobby on the importance of international (and especially EU) students to the survival of our discipline.
- The potential reduction in the numbers of EU students resulting from Brexit poses an existential threat to member departments. Moreover, in a climate of retrenching nationalisms, SCUDD must lend its voice in the promotion of openness and internationalism. The UK is still considered a primary destination for drama research and education, thanks in no small part to the international make-up of our drama departments. SCUDD may well need to become more vocal in its campaigning, aligning itself with other organisations under larger groupings and lobbying government to ensure British universities remain as welcoming to international students and staff as possible.
- 4.1.i. Make use of its platforms (social media, mailing list, website, conference) to champion disability in the performing arts, inviting campaigners, performers and colleagues to share good practice.
- SCUDD's social media accounts and communication platforms are currently underused. There is much scope for furthering their reach and, in so doing, transform them into spaces that actively promote the participation of people with disabilities in the performing arts. Additionally, speakers and delegates with disabilities should be actively encouraged to attend the SCUDD annual

conference; to that end, SCUDD might wish to consider, as a matter of course, reserving part of its conference budget to making conferences accessible (for instance, by providing Sign Language interpreting).

- 4.1.j. Extend the research around the female/male imbalance at UG level and its relation to career progression, both in the academy and industry.
- It is clear that the gender imbalance identified in member departments requires further examination. What are the causes of such strong bias at UG level? It is also clear that this question is indissociably connected to the issue of career progression. SCUDD should consider commissioning further research, potentially in partnership with other organisations, on the roles taken by women in industry both on- and off-stage, as well as mapping progression routes into senior academic roles. Where and why do the bottlenecks occur?
- 4.1.k. Support, disseminate and if appropriate facilitate (through running seminars and/or workshops) diversity-enhancing initiatives undertaken in member departments.
- SCUDD's strength lies in the number and diversity of its member departments, many of which are undertaking their own initiatives – either through institutional policies or departmental activity – to increase levels of diversity in their environments. SCUDD should operate as a catalyst to these initiatives' impact, making sure they are disseminated. Moreover, given that questions of diversity have been rising on the wider HE and creative industries agendas, SCUDD can liaise with other subject associations to promote wider sharing of good practice.

## **4.2. Emerging themes and suggestions for action**

This report has presented findings of the Diversity in the Discipline Working Group in its activities so far. This section addresses some of the themes emerging from the research, as a means of helping to frame the ongoing conversation. A few gaps and areas for further exploration are identified, as well as possible next steps for the Working Group to take.

### **4.2.a. Roles and role-models**

It is clear that the existence of appropriate roles and role-models plays an important part in the recruitment, retention and progression of students and staff. If, say, BAME students do not see BAME lecturers, they are less likely to imagine themselves aspiring to these positions. If there is a lack of disabled people in leadership positions, it becomes harder for disabled junior members of staff to be appropriately mentored and supported in their research bids and promotion efforts. If young, working-class people don't see themselves represented on stage, they will believe the theatre is not for them. Providing access to a range of primary materials that explore and critique dominant identity categories and their

representation is therefore important not only in teaching and learning situations, but in recruitment and outreach activities, too.

Care must be taken, however, to avoid the ghettoising and tokenistic tendencies sometimes associated with identity politics and white supremacy, or imposing a ‘burden of representation’ on colleagues from certain groups. Being an Asian man, for instance, should not automatically cast you as the specialist in postcolonial performance. Having said that, it is clear that exploring aspects of one’s own experience and self-identity in teaching and research can be a source of empowerment to both staff and students.

#### **4.2.b. Social geographies**

Access to such role-models may be uneven, however. One theme emerging from the research is the issue of geographical disparities in our departments: smaller departments in rural or more remote areas often have difficulty in accessing a diverse range of performances and primary materials for students to see and study. How can syllabi be diversified in these cases, without turning courses into literary studies? The lack of access to materials creates a vicious cycle, in that non-hegemonic ways of working are not modelled and therefore not aspired to or reproduced.

It is possible that new, regionally focused research may be necessary to account for the specificities of different parts of the United Kingdom, and to make up for the relative lack of data yielded by our survey in some regions. This of course needs to be balanced by the need to avoid identifying individual institutions and departments, and by extension, potentially, individual students.

Additionally, students in departments outside major urban areas – in parts of the country with less diverse and potentially more conservative world-views – suffer disproportionately in terms of prejudices encountered outside (and, sadly, often inside) their universities; this causes crises of identity that affect behaviours and interactions within departments. In some communities, casual homophobia and racism are not uncommon. Anecdotal evidence suggests that LGBTQA+ and BAME students may suffer additional mental health problems owing to the hostile environments they experience in and out of university. Placing the actual harms caused by marginalisation at the centre of the discussion may lead member departments to more actively consider how they might have a positive influence on their wider social environment.

#### **4.2.c. Prejudice and discrimination**

The language of diversity and inclusion should not obfuscate the realities of prejudice and discrimination. As mentioned above (section 2.2.a.) diversity is a term often used to whitewash racist, classist, homophobic and ableist attitudes. This is not just about unconscious bias, but about actual power and power structures. Our daily interactions are peppered with micro-aggressions, which have a cumulative, debilitating effect on people.

We should all be mindful of the language we use, and the behaviours we are habituated into. How do we teach, and what? How do we interact with junior colleagues? Is it possible, for instance, that male professors might actively seek ways to denaturalise their position of privilege – for example, by turning down invitations to speak at events and conferences, and recommending a woman who might take his place?

Increasing diversity does not merely entail providing more access of individuals from certain identity categories into hegemonic structures and discourses; more fundamentally, it means challenging those discourses, making space in our curricula and in our minds for other ways of seeing, thinking, making and teaching performance. To use a well-known analogy, it is not about inviting more people to dine with you; it is about changing the menu so that more people want to come to your buffet.

Practical courses are still designed exclusively with able-bodied students in mind; camp gay men still encounter obstructive behaviour from heterosexual male colleagues; female members of staff are still expected to underperform because of presupposed childcare responsibilities; working-class ways of being in and seeing the world are still treated with derision by those in relative privilege.

#### **4.2.d. Precarity and poverty**

One of the hallmarks of privilege is a nonchalant attitude to precarity. In an environment of fee-charging universities, poverty and fear of debt is starting to inhibit applications to courses in our subject area, especially owing to a perception of the performing arts as an area with precarious employment prospects. This could signal a scenario where the arts are perceived as the ‘playground of the wealthy’. Class is an issue that has already been highlighted in the industry; in HE we need to balance the need to train students to work within potentially conservative modes of practice, with the need to educate them towards challenging these modes. Employability and employment are not the same, and here SCUDD member departments are well positioned to tell a positive story about the many desirable attributes that our graduates bring into the labour market, both within and outside the world of theatre and performance.

Among academics, casualisation is an important issue. In our discipline, many colleagues do indeed choose to remain in casual contracts, in order to maintain a degree of flexibility in their professional practice. Still poverty and precarity amongst early career colleagues is an issue that we should try to face and acknowledge. Working in a situation of job insecurity can be demoralising and further contribute to mental health problems. Mid-career colleagues in permanent posts have a responsibility to support and encourage colleagues on casual contracts by, for instance, suggesting joint research projects; or offering flexibility in their own work-patterns to match and/or complement their precarious colleagues’ often busier schedules.

#### 4.2.e. Suggestions for action

The bullet-point list that follows is taken directly from various contributions offered during this research project, and especially from suggestions and examples of good practice brought to our attention by our group of 'experts'. They are not recommendations, but a list of ideas, which individuals, member departments and SCUDD may wish to pursue. They are presented below in no particular order.

- Working with teachers and secondary schools is the only possible way to mitigate the damage inflicted by EBACCs and tuition fees.
- Good practice to be shared especially with Universities and departments of similar scale – what works for a team of 12 academics supported by 5 technicians may not apply in a team of 3.
- Produce a series of podcasts interviewing inspiring people of minority backgrounds, who could open up discussion/ideas.
- Investigate initiatives that STEM subjects have used to attract and nurture female students/staff and learn from these in terms of starting to actively widen the appeal of drama.
- Make a concerted effort to articulate the value of the subject and to recruit more male undergraduate students.
- Give students who are struggling due to issues with their identity etc. a clear pathway for accessing support.
- Involve students in research into the composition of their curricula and reading lists.
- Bring in theatre practitioners from diverse backgrounds to present work to students – work which may or may not refer specifically to the community from which they come.
- Set up a system of national (and international) mentoring and exchange to share cultural practices across departments.
- Theatre should be able to constantly explode our views of what diversity 'looks like'. To do this it needs to be creative, inventive, provocative, irreverent.
- Encourage mainstream engagement with disability and other identity-based scholarship.
- Start thinking in an intelligent way about how to get the most from our lives and energies as we (all) age.
- Further research on the demographic composition of technicians.

In view of all of the above, the Working Group should discuss how to perform a series of new tasks, assigning specific roles and jobs to its membership, so that words can turn to action. It is time.



## **APPENDIX – Survey questions**

### Welcome

The executive of the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD) has established a working group to explore ways in which we might map and address levels of diversity within member Departments, looking at gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, health and (dis)ability. With that objective in mind we would be grateful if you could fill the following questionnaire, to help us create as complete a picture as possible. The questionnaire consists of 13 questions, and should take 5 minutes to fill; the answers will remain anonymous. If you do not feel comfortable with answering a specific question, just leave it blank and move on to the next one. Thank you for your participation.

### Your institution and you

#### **1. What region is your institution located in?**

- East of England
- London
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- North East
- North West
- South East
- South West
- Yorkshire and Humber
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales

#### **2. What was your age on March 15th, 2015?**

- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66 and above

#### **3. Are you:**

- an Undergraduate student?
- a MA/MFA student?
- a PhD/research student?
- a member of academic staff?
- a member of technical/support staff?

If you are a member of staff, what is your job title?

[ ]

**4. What is your work/study regime?**

- Full time
- Part time
- Associate/guest

National, ethnic and religious identity

**5. How would you describe your national identity?**

[ ]

**6. Your ethnicity is not your nationality, place of birth or citizenship but refers to broad ethnic groups. Based on this definition, how would you describe your ethnicity?**

- White European
- White other
- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black other
- South Asian
- South-east Asian
- East Asian
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
- Other ethnic background

If other, please specify:

[ ]

**7. What is your religion?**

- No religion
- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Spiritual
- Any other religion or belief

If other, please specify:

[ ]

Gender and sexual identity

**8. How would you describe your gender?**

[ ]

**9. Is your gender the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?**

( ) Yes

( ) No

**10. How would you describe your sexual orientation?**

( ) Bisexual

( ) Gay man

( ) Heterosexual

( ) Lesbian

( ) Other

If other, please specify:

[ ]

(Dis)ability and health

**11. The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as anyone who has or has had a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Taking this definition into consideration, would you describe yourself as disabled?**

( ) Yes

( ) No

If yes, what is the nature of your disability?

[ ]

**12. Do you have any long-term physical and/or mental health problems that have an impact on your working life, and which are not considered a 'disability'?**

( ) Yes

( ) No

If yes, what is the nature of the problem(s)?

[ ]

And finally

**13. Your comments about issues of identity and diversity are most welcome.**

[ ]  
[ ]

Thank you once again for helping us in this important exercise. Preliminary results will be presented in November at the SCUDD general meeting, and published soon thereafter on the SCUDD website.

We strive to make our survey and the language we use as inclusive as possible. If you have any questions or comments regarding the content or wording of our questionnaire, please contact Pedro de Senna, working group convenor on [p.desenna@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:p.desenna@mdx.ac.uk).