

The School of Music accepts the right of the Vice Chancellor to commission a review into its activities and viability, for all that it believes it would have been more helpful had the process been more transparent. It also disputes some points of fact and interpretation; nevertheless, it feels it would be more helpful to engage with the thrust of the Report.

The Report notes that the 2002 review described the School as being 'at the absolute margin of viability', but we would point out (with the support of the authors of that report) that it did so as a prelude to recommendations about further investment to make it not merely viable, but vibrant; it is the failure of the University to carry through these recommendations which has contributed, in large part, to the problems this new Report delineates. We would therefore ask that Senate recommends to Council the commissioning of another report on the 2002 model, with full participation by members of the School and outside experts. Nevertheless, we do not wish to see a repetition of what happened after 2002.

The failure of the University to carry through the 2002 report has led directly to a situation in which the School is effectively forced to demand that its staff prioritise some aspects of their academic practise to the detriment of others. We have massively improved our admissions and NSS position in the last two years, over-achieving on the former with a 2011 intake of 49, and achieving the third highest score nationally for student satisfaction with teaching in music in the latter. But, with an FTE staff of 6.85, we have had to juggle our resources and prioritise, which is why we needed more time to put together our submission for the interim REF audit, and why our grant application rate compares poorly with the last REF cycle; at current staffing levels, it is simply not feasible to maintain performance at desirable levels across all areas of academic practice. In that sense alone, we agree that we remain on the edge of viability. But does UEA really intend to lose a School which stands at twelfth in the last Guardian league table (eighth excluding conservatories), and which, as the report acknowledges, plays a vital part in its Enterprise and Engagement Activities? Does it really wish to lose the unique benefit in the public eye of its close relationship with the cultural legacy of Benjamin Britten, or the international reputation MUS has fostered in the field of electro-acoustic music from the institution of the discipline down to the present day?

The School's trajectory over the last two and a half years has in fact been upwards in the vital areas of teaching and admissions, which is where most of UEA's income will be coming from under the new regime. We have shown an ability to take in more AAB students than before, and to match the high quality educational experience available to students in competitor institutions while exceeding them in innovation and progressivity. Our newly-designed first year course has proved a potent attraction to high quality students, and we are in the process of aligning the rest of our units on the same model. Had we had the investment recommended in 2002, this success would have been achieved earlier, and we should by now have had a staffing ratio which would have allowed us to achieve similar results in the REF and with regard to grant applications and funding.

In calling for a transparent and independent review of the School's future, we would therefore equally warn of the danger of repeating the mistakes of 2002, when the positive recommendations of the earlier report failed to translate into financial support for their implementation. The School acknowledges that the lack of investment in response to the 2002 report has indeed left it too small to do all it is being asked to do. We would therefore strongly urge a clear a priori commitment to implement the recommendations of any new report.

The staff of the School of Music

4 November 2011