



STATEMENT FROM THE BOARD OF LAMDA

Monday 13 September 2021

It has been a challenging year for all drama schools and drama training because of the pandemic. We all have a duty to ensure that despite these challenges we help train our students in a way which is fit for our time. That is why equality, access and diversity matter so much; and why our anti-racism strategy is so essential.

In mid-July, the Board received complaints from a small number of former and current employees. We had a responsibility to investigate these complaints. The Board has now had the opportunity to consider the report of the internal investigation into these complaints, received on and after 16 July 2021. We have been keen to ensure that complainants were heard and their concerns explored appropriately in a process that protected confidentiality and respect for all involved.

While it has been a difficult period, we believe the internal investigation has been in the long-term interests of all staff and especially our students. There are lessons to be learnt. We are grateful to everyone who has spoken up and shared their experiences among both former and current members of staff. This includes those who made complaints and those who want to register support for Sarah Frankcom.

For the avoidance of doubt, it should be understood that this process of internal investigation began after Sarah Frankcom's resignation had been received. Sarah first indicated at the end of May 2021 her wish to leave LAMDA and discussions about the timing of her departure had been taking place. Sarah's final decision to step down was received by the Chair of the Board in mid July.

The Board remains firmly committed to change, the restructuring that took place in 2020, and our policy of anti-racism and LAMDA's anti-racism strategy, thereby providing world leading drama training in an inclusive, diverse and inspiring environment. Sarah's ambitions and work to develop these shared principles and objectives has been and remains fully supported by the Board. Furthermore, the investigation found almost universal support for the need for progressive change and restructure among former and current staff.

We share views expressed in the recent open letter which highlighted the need to ensure further progress in delivering equitable, anti-racist and accessible training, as Sarah has been committed to do during her leadership of LAMDA. Sarah's artistic and creative leadership, and impressive track record, is widely recognised and not least by the Board.

However, as the investigation has very clearly shown, there must be a distinction made between the support for change, and support for the way in which change has been implemented. There is a strong divergence of views among former and current staff about

how change has been implemented. These relate particularly to management style, internal communications of the restructuring, and implementation of LAMDA's anti-racism strategy, which have given rise to the complaints received. Not all of these related solely to Sarah's management.

In summary, the investigation found evidence of a serious breakdown of relations between the Director and some staff over implementation due to weaknesses in communication, leadership and change management. The way in which change was managed was not always clear or inclusive. However, and importantly, the internal inquiry found that the actions of the Director were neither malicious nor intended to cause distress and that events were made significantly worse as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Board will now ensure that lessons are learnt and action is taken to ensure ongoing change is implemented in a fair and inclusive way. Following a Board meeting on 10th September the following immediate actions have been approved:

- Establish urgently and as soon as practicable the Respect Working Group, to be made up of staff, students, alumni and Trustees; reporting to the Board and with an expressed remit to ensure LAMDA is a fair and safe working environment upholding the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion for all;
- Consideration of how the Board and staff should engage in a closer, more effective way; and ensuring there are channels of better communications for two-way dialogue;
- Review of the current formal grievance procedures to ensure they have the confidence and trust of staff, Trustees and students.

Following Sarah's decision to step down and her desire to leave this autumn, Interim Executive Director Jocelyn Prudence, will become Acting Director, while the search for the new Director is underway. Will Wollen, the Executive Dean of the Drama School, will continue to lead the faculty, training the actors, directors and technicians of the future. Sarah Frankcom will be available for consultation until the end of her notice period.

The Board gives its sincere thanks to Sarah for all her efforts during her tenure at LAMDA and wishes her well with her future projects.

The Board has published with this statement the Terms of Reference of the internal investigation and a statement from Sarah Frankcom.

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STATEMENT FROM SARAH FRANKCOM

“I was engaged by the Trustees of LAMDA to make change, progress work on diversity and bring an industry relevant approach to training. During the 18 months I have been Director I led a restructure as the organisation faced significant financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic.

“I have discharged my duties as Director in challenging circumstances to the best of my abilities whilst taking on the additional role and responsibilities of Director of Actor Training. I am stepping down because the situation of performing both roles has become untenable, both for the organisation and for my health.

“I am proud of what I have achieved and the care and due diligence that I afforded all students and staff during an unprecedented set of circumstances. I am human and whilst there are of course things that might have been handled better, I believe I have always worked in a transparent, collaborative and empathetic manner.

“I remain concerned that there is an underestimation of the real work and accountability required for any Institutions tackling inherent structural biases and inequities in order to genuinely embed inclusivity and anti-racism.

“I am proud to leave behind a more diverse staff team and student body than I found when I joined and an evolving, relevant training experience for actors and technicians for the 21st Century”.

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TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE BOARD INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

Background

1. Sarah Frankcom was appointed as “Principal” of LAMDA in 2019, taking up her role in November of that year. Shortly after taking up her post, the Board accepted her proposal for a revised leadership structure, with Sarah as “Director”, supported by Peter Holliday as “Executive Director.” Sarah joined LAMDA from an impressive career as Artistic Director and Chief Executive of The Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester.

2. LAMDA had already embarked on a significant period of change under Sarah’s predecessor – the School had separated from CDD and was seeking to move from having provision validated by Kent University to achieving degree awarding powers. Degree Awarding Powers were secured by LAMDA in April 2021.

3. Sarah Frankcom had a mandate to deliver the next phase of significant change, focused on continued efforts to increase diversity and ensuring that LAMDA graduates were suitably skilled for their future careers while also maintaining LAMDA’s global reputation and sustainability.

4. The pandemic created a huge additional leadership challenge across the higher education sector generally and for drama schools in particular, placing staff and students under stress and bringing unexpected financial pressures on the organisation. These financial pressures necessitated a reduction in staff numbers and changes to existing employment contract terms for cost-saving purposes. Redundancies and voluntary redundancies took place after a period of collective and individual consultation with the employees of LAMDA who were at risk of redundancy or who were to be asked to agree to new contract terms and their elected representatives.

5. LAMDA had already committed to improving diversity. The murder of George Floyd and subsequent questions asked by the student body at LAMDA further accelerated the pace of change around diversity and inclusion. This led to the creation of an institution-wide Anti-Racism Action Plan. The Board entirely supported the principles of this response. The Board still support the principles.

Sarah Frankcom’s resignation

6. Sarah Frankcom first contacted the Chair of the Board about her desire to leave LAMDA and disclosed the reasons she felt this was appropriate on 29th May 2021. These were her personal reasons and did not reference any suggestion of complaints. The Board will wish to note that this email sent to the Chair and subsequent discussions was seven weeks prior to any of the complaints being received.

7. Sarah Frankcom then continued discussions with the Nominations Committee of the Board throughout June and early July 2021. Her final decision to implement her resignation and thereby beginning discussions on stepping down as Director of LAMDA was received informally in a text on July 16th and in a formal email of resignation on July 19th. This formal

notice was discussed with the Nominations Committee and her proposals to the Nominations Committee for implementing her resignation were received in an email of 22nd July. Following this communication, Sarah Frankcom's decision to step down was then reported to the full Board at the Extraordinary meeting on 26th July.

8. Sarah's resignation was announced in a Press Release and Statement on 10th August 2021.

Complaints received and Internal Investigation process

9. LAMDA's Board received an initial set of email letters of complaint on 16 July 2021.

10. These comprised a covering letter plus supporting testimonies collated by a group of 7 former employees. Two separate additional complaint letters were then received (on 22nd and 23rd July 2021) from one former and one existing member of staff. Taken together, this combined set of documents comprised the original set of complaints that were considered by the Board on 26th July 2021.

11. In addition, 9 subsequent separate statements containing complaints were received in the period between 4th – 25th August 2021. The investigation did not go seeking additional contributions – these submissions were made by individuals who had become aware of the investigation process and who wanted to contribute their views. Of these, 8 were from former members of staff and 1 was from a current member of staff. These statements were made with a request of confidentiality.

12. The Board takes the wellbeing of LAMDA's staff and students extremely seriously and at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Board on 26th July 2021 it was decided that an internal investigation should be conducted into the specific matters raised in the complaints.

13. LAMDA has in place a formal grievance procedure and a separate anti-harassment and bullying policy that contains a reporting and investigation procedure. However, due to the circumstances present here, the complaints received – predominantly from former employees and sent directly to the Board – fell outside a strict interpretation of the scope of LAMDA's internal policies. The Board recognised that this was a unique set of circumstances, but regardless of this, the Board fully supports the principle that all complaints should be heard, regardless of whether they are made by current or former employees.

14. The internal investigation was led by one of LAMDA's Vice Chairs with support from another Trustee as well as the Clerk to the Board. Sarah Frankcom was fully supportive of the Board's view that the complaints should be investigated and cooperated fully with the process.

15. It was agreed that the internal investigation should focus on considering the original set of complaints that were received prior to the Extraordinary Board meeting on 26th July 2021.

16. However, as has been noted above, while investigating the original complaints, additional complaints from 9 other individuals were received over the period 4-25th August. In parallel, we have also received emails / letters of support for Sarah Frankcom. The investigation believed it would be fair to take all these representations into account.

17. Hence the investigation has considered the following inputs:

19 Interviews

- 7 interviews covering the 9 individuals involved in the original set of complaints (8 of these were former staff and 1 was a current staff member)
- 3 interviews with former staff members who made subsequent statements of complaint
- 2 interviews with LAMDA leadership – Sarah Frankcom (Director) and Peter Holliday (Executive Director)
- 5 interviews with current staff members – names recommended by Sarah Frankcom
- 2 interviews with former / departing members of senior management who contacted the investigation

The investigation also considered further email and document submissions

- 9 additional supporting complaints (8 from former members of staff and 1 from a current member of staff). 8 of these individuals provided written testimonies
- 9 individual emails received from current staff in support of Sarah Frankcom
- An open letter of support signed by 22 permanent members of LAMDA staff as well as freelance practitioners and wider industry professionals
- Further documents / emails were also reviewed where these were provided to support or clarify points made in interview discussions

Key issues

18. It was agreed that the report should focus on the original complaints raised as reviewed by the Board on 26th July 2021.

19. The complaints were grouped into three main areas in relation to:

- Management conduct, in particular, complaints made in relation to Sarah Frankcom's management style
- The way in which LAMDA's Anti-Racism strategy was implemented
- Failures in communication, particularly in relation to the restructuring and the management of Covid-safe working

20. Where specific topics were raised in the course of our investigation it was agreed that these should be addressed separately with the Board.

21. This report should not be confused with or taken as a disciplinary investigation or outcome. For any disciplinary action to be considered, a formal disciplinary process would be necessary to ensure the provision of natural justice and procedural fairness. Our investigation was not undertaken pursuant to LAMDA's disciplinary policy and or LAMDA's grievance policy.

22. The report's purpose was to hear and document the testimonies and to determine what can be learnt for the future success of LAMDA.

23. In our view, Sarah Frankcom's resignation has rendered unnecessary any consideration of whether a disciplinary process is appropriate.

24. For the avoidance of doubt therefore, the report should not be taken to constitute a conclusion on whether there is any culpability on the part of Sarah Frankcom in respect of the complaints raised. Its purpose is to capture the consistent threads running through these complaints and to present these to the Board and to consider what can be learnt.

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For media enquiries contact caroline.dowler@lamda.ac.uk

Notes to editors About LAMDA

LAMDA is a world class drama school and educational charity. We offer exceptional vocational training to actors, stage managers, technicians, directors and designers, regardless of their background or economic circumstances. In addition to six validated degree programmes, LAMDA offers a Foundation Diploma and a number of validated semester and summer short courses.

We are also an awarding organisation, offering world-renowned qualifications in communication and performance and inspiring the next generation of confident communicators through our examinations in drama, literature and poetry. We believe drama has the power to transform lives. We want more people to share in this experience through training, qualifications, work, productions and facilities.

In 2017, LAMDA moved into its new £28.2m centre for world-leading drama training. LAMDA's new home features ten large training and rehearsal studios, three theatres - the 200 seat Sainsbury Theatre, 120-seat the Carne Studio Theatre and the Linbury Studio, and a fully equipped digital and audio suite. In January 2018 LAMDA alumni Benedict Cumberbatch was appointed the Academy's President. LAMDA Alumni include Nikki Amuka-Bird, Richard Armitage, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Jeremy Irvine, Rory Kinnear, Rose Leslie, Paterson Joseph, David Oyelowo, Katherine Parkinson, Toby Stephens, David Suchet, Harriet Walter and Ruth Wilson.

About Sarah Frankcom

Sarah Frankcom was appointed as Director of LAMDA in February 2019 and took up her position in November 2019. After working as a drama teacher in the East End, Sarah Frankcom started working with new writers and in drama schools. She spent time at the National Theatre Studio, Oval House and the Red Room, and taught at the Poor School. She originally joined the Royal Exchange Theatre as Literary Manager in 1998, and in 2005 she established the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting – the UK's biggest prize of its kind.

In 2008 she was made Joint Artistic Director and in 2014 she took on the role of sole Artistic Director. Her productions for the Royal Exchange have included: the world premiere of Light Falls by Simon Stephens; a reimagined West Side Story with new choreography by Aletta Collins; Nico with Maxine Peake; the critically acclaimed Death of A Salesman with Don Warrington; Happy Days with Maxine Peake; and Our Town, for which she was awarded Best Director at the 2018 UK Theatre Awards.

Other director credits include: A Streetcar Named Desire, Hamlet (also an international feature film, screened in over 200 cinemas across the UK and over 30 countries worldwide), The Skriker (MIF15), The Masque of Anarchy (MIF13) (all four with Maxine Peake), All I Want Is One Night, Blindsided (by Simon Stephens), That Day We Sang, Black Roses, Three Birds, Orpheus Descending (a new version by David Eldridge), Beautiful Thing, A View From The Bridge, Winterlong (by Andrew Sheridan winner of the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting), Punk Rock (by Simon Stephens, winner of the MEN Award for Best Production), Blithe Spirit,

Three Sisters, On the Shore of the Wide World (by Simon Stephens, winner of the Olivier Award for Best Play) and Kes.

Her work has also been seen at the National Theatre, the Bush Theatre, the Lyric Hammersmith, the Soho Theatre and the Crucible, Sheffield.

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