

# **PE1982/G: Review funding arrangements for higher education to help ensure more funded places are available for Scottish Ballet Dancers at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland**

## **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland written submission, 22 October 2024**

Thank you for your letter of October 8<sup>th</sup> advising closure of the above Petition. I am grateful to the Committee for sharing the basis on which it agreed to close the petition and in that clarifying that Scottish Government does not direct how many funded places individual institutions make available for eligible students in specific subject (except controlled subjects); that the Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers are unable to intervene in internal institutional affairs and that it is for individual institutions themselves to decide which courses they offer and how many funded places are available for each course.

I am however concerned to note Members' 'unease' in relation to the issues raised by the Petition i.e. 'reviewing funding arrangements to help ensure more funded places are available for Scottish ballet dancers at RCS'. While noting there is no obligation to provide a formal response, I was keen to respond with further information which I trust is helpful reassurance to the Committee.

Firstly, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to a recent formal External Review of the Modern Ballet degree programme. This External Review was undertaken by a panel of experts, including industry professionals based in Scotland. In its formal report, the Panel wished to commend RCS's BA Modern Ballet programme in the following terms:

1. Good evidence of student progression and skill development across the years of study and integrated learning across the modules.
2. The support that is provided to students, particularly in relation to the submission of written work.
3. The commitment and diligence of the staff team and their obvious care for the student experience
4. The evidence of a community with a shared purpose
5. The constant learning and evolving of the pedagogical and artistic approaches.
6. The overall quality of the documentation.
7. The distinctiveness of the programme in its situation within the Conservatoire, the particular pedagogical and stylistic approach and the relationship with Scottish Ballet

8. The ambition to develop and strengthen pre-HE talent pipeline and development
9. The articulate and well engaged student and graduate cohort.

Secondly, in support of the goal of further developing and strengthening the pipeline of Scottish dancers making successful applications to study on the BA Modern Ballet programme, RCS is also undertaking a programme of activity including delivering targeted 'audition preparation' sessions and offering Spring and Summer Intensives in the Scottish school holidays. In addition, RCS is growing the numbers of participants on the programmes we deliver regionally at Dumfries House, East Ayrshire (supported by the King's Foundation), Dalkeith Palace in Midlothian, as well as within our Glasgow Pre-Juniors and Juniors programmes. These programmes, where possible, are also accompanied by significant fee reduction opportunities to facilitate wider access.

Thirdly, RCS is currently designing a Dance Artists programme for 25-26 entry in collaboration with Scottish colleges to broaden our stylistic range and this programme will further increase Scottish places.

Finally, I thought it helpful for the Committee to share the very recent success story of Antonia Cramb, a Scottish student on the RCS BA Modern Ballet programme. Antonia, from Crieff, recently won the extremely prestigious Genée gold medal at the Fonteyn International Ballet Competition 2024, the first Scot to do so. This week it has also been announced that Antonia will join the Scottish Ballet company.

Details of both here:

<https://www.royalacademyofdance.org/the-winners-of-the-margot-fonteyn-international-ballet-competition-2024/>

<https://scottishballet.co.uk/bio/antonia-cramb/>

I would conclude by reassuring the Committee that RCS takes its commitment to delivering training excellence for Scottish dancers very seriously indeed and continues to work institutionally as well as collaboratively with partners to widen and deepen the talent pipeline in Scotland.