

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1982](#): Review funding arrangements for higher education to help ensure more funded places are available for Scottish ballet dancers at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, lodged by Gary McKay

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petitioner is calling for a review of Scottish Government funding provided to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. They are concerned that there are not enough funded places for Scottish ballet students to pursue educational training programmes.

The petitioner highlights that secondary school students at the Dance School of Scotland have fully funded places for up to 6 years of dance education. When they leave school not all those with expertise in ballet will be able to secure a place at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Pursuing courses at other UK centres of ballet training can be expensive.

Higher education funding in Scotland

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are autonomous bodies, though they receive significant funding from the Scottish Government via the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and deliver agreed priorities in exchange for this funding. These priorities are set out annually in the [SFC's outcome agreements](#).

Each year, the Scottish Government via the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) provides funding for around 130,000 eligible Scottish domiciled students. Each university is allocated a number of full-time equivalent places and [can recruit up to 10% over this allocation](#).

The Scottish Government does not direct how many funded places individual universities make available for eligible students, with the exception of 'controlled subjects,' such as medicine and teaching. Universities are autonomous institutions and can decide how to allocate places among courses.

The Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers are unable to intervene in internal institutional matters. Institutions are allocated a finite amount of money; it is then for the institutions themselves to decide how to distribute these places between faculties. It is also for the universities to decide which

courses they offer; and how many of the total funded places will be available on each course.

In 2022-23, the SFC provided funding to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland for 675.4 full-time equivalent places, and in 2020-21 this included 30 places for Scottish domiciled students studying dance including ballet.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Founded in 1847 as a national academy of music, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland now offers specialised teaching across music, drama, dance, production, film and education. They also work in partnership with all five of the National Performing Companies to provide students with opportunities in their areas of expertise.

They offer both undergraduate and postgraduate courses in a variety of performing arts subjects, as well as a series of youth and community classes.

The process for applying for the BA Modern Ballet course includes meeting a series of academic requirements and undertaking an audition.

The Dance School of Scotland

The [Dance School of Scotland](#) is a secondary school that is incorporated into Knightswood Secondary School in the West End of Glasgow. The school is a Centre of Excellence for vocational dance and musical theatre training.

Pupils take part in the curriculum and complete specialist tuition classes offered during and after school hours. There is a residence for pupils who live too far from the school to travel in daily. The school is fully funded by the Scottish Government and as a result there are no tuition fees.

Entry to the dance course, which has a focus on ballet, is from S1-S5, and there is an [audition process](#) for entry.

Scottish Government policy

The Scottish Government have published their policy as it relates to culture in the document [A Culture Strategy for Scotland](#). While, it does not mention the Conservatoire directly, there is a part of the strategy that relates to it.

The strategy recognises the importance of the five National Performing Companies (including Scottish Ballet) and their role of providing formal education programmes to improve access to artistic and creative work. It states that:

“The five National Performing Companies work to improve access to artistic and creative work amongst communities across Scotland... They provide a full range of formal education programmes – at nursery, primary, secondary, further and higher education levels – and outreach programmes which give people across Scotland of all ages and socio-

economic groups the opportunity to experience and participate in the companies' work.”

Laura Haley
Researcher
[21/11/2022]

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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