

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

## **Petitioner written submission, 24 September 2024**

*“Scots do not compete for places with either rUK or international students. Scots are viewed as an entirely separate category and audition only in a pool consisting of other Scottish applicants.”*

This can be interpreted that Scots are placed in an entirely separate category compared to other students from different origins.

This implies that Scots are a special category and are subject to a maximum quota considerably less than the overall number of students who will comprise the intake. What therefore then is the maximum quota number of Scottish Students allowed to be accepted onto the course?

Is this not evidence of the need for RCS to fill the course with as many high fee-paying students as possible while minimising the prospects of a Scottish student being accepted? Therefore, there are only 5 prospective places for Scottish domiciled students.

*“The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is pleased to note the increasing quality of Scottish applicants. We believe part of the reason for this is the development work undertaken by the conservatoire in partnership with Scottish Ballet. Over recent years, the focus on the development of the RCS Junior Conservatoire of Modern Ballet now allows us to offer weekly pre-vocational training in ballet for children from Primary 4 upwards in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Ayrshire...RCS has extremely limited bursary support available for individual students and is grateful to the Prince’s Foundation which supports the delivery of an access programme in Ayrshire.”*

Although we can be entirely grateful for all the good outreach work done by RCS and be sure that it will indeed lead to the future development of young dancers; it seems quite inappropriate at this point to be promoting its publicity material in this response. It is hardly relevant to the enquiry and acts only as a page filler.

*“As a result of the increasing quality of Scottish applicants, RCS has been able to make more offers to Scottish applicants”*

It is not somewhat remarkable that perhaps the increase coincides with the timing of the enquiry from the Committee?

*“Scottish applicants who have been declined at audition stage are declined because they have not yet reached the required standard. Declined Scottish applicants are*

*encouraged to re-audition and some have been successful at second application. Tailored, individual support is offered to these students.”*

This will, in any subjective medium, always be a caveat for any individual or organisation to accept or not accept a candidate. Of course, this must always be the case but given that candidates who we know auditioned for RCS, came from full-time ballet training in **Knightswood Secondary School**, a fully funded and highly respected institution and as such, the only one of its kind in the UK to offer residential training regardless of fiscal considerations and not any local neighbourhood evening class. 5 of its graduates were denied a place in RCS, yet be snapped up by **Central School of Ballet in London** in the **same** academic year?

Each student is then liable to full UK fees and London living costs which will handicap them financially quite likely for their entire career. These students continue to thrive as performers and if they had not, would have suffered the brutal heartbreak of being “let go” at each critical stage. Yet, they are all without exception on track for a professional career in 2025 and much to our shame, this has had nothing whatsoever to do with the only institution in Scotland which has the capacity to train them in their own country.

That, after all the sacrifices their respective families have made to help them arrive at this destination, we now have to put up with this irrelevant response from RCS which is purely self-congratulatory in tone.

I consider that Scottish Ballet dancers have for quite some time been achieving far higher than RCS is willing to admit and that their response to scrutiny is to create a smoke screen for this committee’s enquiry and allow increased numbers of non-Scottish dancers to the detriment of our own candidates.

*“The success of Scottish students who have graduated from the programme is wide-ranging, with graduates securing contracts with companies in the UK, Europe and beyond (including Scottish Ballet).”*

Of course. This is always the outcome of any high-level training environment. It will be the same for every institution. This is lifted from any prospectus as a filler to “pad-out” this response and again, is hardly relevant.

Annexe A

Please see the figures quoted. I am hopeful that there is some reasonable explanation for the discrepancy for “acceptances” in the figures received.

I have some figures received from RCS before submitting this petition. An extract is as follows.

**Number of Scottish students accepted onto each of the Professional Performance Degrees over the last 3 years, 2019-2022 in Drama Dance and Music (broken down by Sex).**

*Table 1: The number of entering students recorded as domiciled in Scotland broken down by programme, Sex and year of entry.*

Scotland Domiciled Entering Students	Year		
	2019	2020	2021
BA Modern Ballet	5	5	5
Female	0	0	5
Male	0	5	
Other			

Compared with the received figures which state:

4 accepted places in 2019 above indicates “0” which cannot be rounded to 5

5 accepted places in 2020 above indicates also “5” so full capacity.

5 (hesa) which is rounded up therefore must be less than or equal to 5 but is shown as “7”

“• All other numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5.” Therefore should be “10”

To conclude:

I have found this response continues to be deliberately vague and containing irrelevant material for the purpose of adding weight to their argument though in fact, it only undermines it. Also, I find the effort to clarify quite inadequate, especially considering the new figures offered do not always seem to tally with their own already vague HESA system.