

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee

13th February 2026

Dear Delyth,

I am writing to draw the Committee's attention to an emerging issue that may have implications for access to specialist creative higher education pathways for Welsh-domiciled students.

We have recently become aware of concerns regarding eligibility for Student Finance Wales support in relation to certain conservatoire-style degree programmes delivered outside Wales. These include disciplines such as musical theatre, dance and circus arts, where training is delivered by independent specialist institutions and validated by recognised UK universities.

It appears that current interpretation of course designation requirements may limit eligibility where the delivery provider is not directly registered with the Office for Students. In at least one case involving specialist circus training delivered in partnership with a university in England, Welsh applicants have been advised that funding support may not be available for future entry cohorts. Similar queries have arisen in relation to musical theatre and dance provision.

We are continuing to seek clarification as to whether this reflects a broader designation interpretation or a provider-specific circumstance. However, early indications suggest that Welsh learners may be placed at a disadvantage compared to students domiciled elsewhere in the UK. I attach correspondence with the Minister for Further and Higher Education Vicki Howells for your information.

Access to specialist professional training forms part of the long-term workforce pipeline into these sectors. In disciplines such as circus arts and conservatoire-style musical theatre, there is currently limited equivalent degree-level provision available within Wales. Access to nationally auditioned UK training routes is therefore an important pathway for Welsh artists seeking professional careers.

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If funding eligibility constraints narrow access to those routes, there may be implications for workforce sustainability, sector diversity and Wales's participation in national and international creative industries.

This correspondence is intended to raise awareness rather than to present a concluded position. Given the Committee's role in scrutinising policy and holding the Welsh Government to account, members may wish to consider whether further clarification from the relevant Minister or from Medr would be helpful in understanding the policy position and its potential impact on the creative sector.

I would be happy to provide further information should that be useful to the Committee's work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SJCurtis', written in a cursive style.

Simon Curtis
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