

Vikki Howells MS
 Minister for Further and Higher Education
 Welsh Government
 5th Floor
 Tŷ Hywel
 Cardiff Bay
 CF99 1SN

10th February 2026

Dear Minister,

Funding Routes for Specialist Musical Theatre and Dance Training

I am writing to raise an urgent matter concerning Welsh-domiciled students applying for specialist musical theatre and dance degrees delivered in England.

Recent changes in how course designation and funding eligibility operate in practice have created a material disadvantage for Welsh applicants. A significant number of specialist performing arts degrees — typically delivered by recognised colleges and validated by UK universities — no longer meet Student Finance Wales conditions under current interpretation. This appears to stem from requirements relating to provider registration and designation following the transition of responsibilities to Medr.

The consequence is that Welsh students who successfully secure highly competitive audition-based places are, in some cases, unable to access full tuition fee support. In other instances, they are offered only a reduced loan, creating substantial and unaffordable funding gaps. Students domiciled elsewhere in the UK do not face comparable barriers in accessing the same courses.

This situation creates structural inequity and risks excluding Welsh learners from established UK-wide professional training routes purely on the basis of domicile. Given that specialist conservatoire-style musical theatre and dance provision is largely concentrated outside Wales, students cannot simply transfer to a local equivalent. Missing a single audition cycle can have long-term career consequences in professions where entry is intensely competitive and time sensitive.

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As you will be aware under the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022, there is a clear statutory commitment to promote equality of opportunity and secure appropriate tertiary education provision for Welsh learners. The current designation landscape appears inconsistent with that objective and with longstanding Welsh Government commitments to widening access.

With students already in the current audition and offer cycle, there is an urgent need for clarity and for a fair and workable funding route — whether through revised designation guidance, transitional arrangements, or interim measures — to restore parity with students elsewhere in the UK.

I would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this issue further and explore potential solutions. Given the timing of the admissions cycle, an early meeting would be greatly appreciated.

I am copying this correspondence to the Chief Executive of Medr for information.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter, which affects not only individual learners but Wales's participation in national cultural and creative industries.

Yours sincerely,

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

Simon Curtis
National Official for Wales
scurtis@equity.org.uk

c.c. James Owen, Chief Executive - Medr