



Royal Conservatoire *of* Scotland

Education and Culture Committee

Scotland's Educational and Cultural Future

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Introduction

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) adopts a politically neutral position on the independence referendum. Whatever the outcome, the Conservatoire will continue to promote Scotland's culture at home and abroad and offer students a learning experience based on 'excellence'.

The Conservatoire is designated a 'small specialist institution' within the Higher Education sector. This characterises the nature of the unique form of course provision and teaching within the conservatoire sector world-wide. RCS is one of a network of nine conservatoires across the United Kingdom and is the only one to offer degree level courses covering all three performing art forms – Music, Drama and Dance - along with Digital Film and TV, Technical and Production courses. It has to remain competitive as an international Conservatoire by attracting the best students and staff – primarily from Scotland – but also from the rest of the United Kingdom and internationally.

We endorse the general thrust of the response submitted to the Committee by Universities Scotland in terms of international and rest-of-UK student recruitment, student fees – in particular if the rest of the UK were treated as another EU country - and research funding. However, there are specific issues which impact on the Conservatoire as set out below.

Theme 1: Further and Higher Education

Given that most RCS students are 'performers', the visa restrictions on international students undertaking occasional paid employment in the arts sector seems unnecessarily restrictive. Similarly, the regulations relating to international students being able to remain within the UK after graduation to develop their careers, discriminates against most conservatoire graduates i.e. young performers (who tend to have portfolio careers initially) in terms of the level of income they are required to generate in year 1. Within the UK Conservatoire sector, student recruitment is

operated through the Conservatoires UK Admissions Service (CUKAS). This has proved beneficial to RCS and would be detrimental to recruitment processes should access to CUKAS be denied within the context of an independent Scotland.

Theme 2: Early Years, Childcare and Employability

Whilst most of this theme is outwith the operation of the Conservatoire, we are participating fully in the 'Widening Access' initiative supported by the Scottish Government and which will hopefully create more opportunities for young people to access a conservatoire experience. This in turn could open up possible new career pathways for those participating.

Theme3: Broadcasting and Culture

The Conservatoire currently has a Memorandum of Understanding with the BBC. This benefits our music students through partnership/mentoring activities with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and our Digital Film and TV students accessing studio facilities which the BBC use to produce programmes e.g. River City. In addition, BBC Radio 3 broadcasts performances from the Conservatoire.

Any post referendum changes involving the creation of the Scottish Broadcasting Service and which did not retain the equivalent of BBCSSO and seek to enhance BBC programme production further would be detrimental to the Conservatoire.

In terms of the wider cultural perspective, the Conservatoire will seek to promote the diversity of Scottish performing arts culture whatever the result of the referendum. In a globalising world the divergent rather than convergent will be important to external perceptions of Scottish cultural identity. The RCS works closely with national performing arts companies in Scotland and rest of UK. The Conservatoires UK network has been an important educational and cultural forum in which the RCS has played a leading role. The European League of Institutions of the Arts and the Association of European Conservatoires are other organisations in which the RCS has played a leading role, and is hosting their annual conferences in Glasgow in 2014 and 2015 respectively. In 2016 the International Society of Music Education is coming to the RCS for its biannual conference. These are important cultural education events coming to Scotland because of the rich cultural environment of Scotland, which must be sustained, now that such irresistible momentum has been built. In ground breaking artistic and cultural research the RCS has burgeoning links across Europe and Scandinavia. It is lead institution in documenting the EMAP (European Musical Archaeology Project). Further afield it has growing partnerships in India, Australia, North and South America. Intercultural dialogue brings deeper understanding but also trade. It will be important to maintain and grow these relationships further should Scotland decide in favour of independence.

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