

CONTRIBUTION TO THE PUBLIC GOOD

BALLET WEST

Ichrachan House
Taynuilt
Argyll
PA35 1HP

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Overview

Ballet West's activities are not restricted to higher education but cover a wide range of activities that encompass dance training from pre-school to graduate level and are linked to the public good. All these activities support each other and fulfil the charity's objects, as stated in the articles of association, of -

- The advancement of education and training in dance and choreography, with an emphasis on ballet
- The advancement of Arts and Culture by the production and promotion of dance performances, with an emphasis on ballet
- Providing opportunities and facilities for development of life skills: improvement of health and fitness; wellbeing; confidence and self-esteem, through performing arts with an emphasis on young people
- To do all such other things as are incidental to the attainment of the objects of the Company

The charitable organisation started in 1991 as a local dance school, offering dance classes to schoolchildren and adults in the rural communities of the West of Scotland. This activity continues to date, and we have passed the point where the children of our original dancers are now attending classes. These classes provide a vital opportunity for people in our communities to engage in physical and artistic activity, with all the social and health benefits that come from these activities.

Developments from these early beginnings include public performances by local dancers, expansion of activity to include other communities around Argyll and Lochaber, residential summer schools, associates programmes in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, which encourage participation in dance by young people in these cities.

There has also been a recent development of a Lower School which offers a full-time dance experience to students under the age of 16 offered in parallel with statutory schools.

The Higher Education element of our work has developed alongside the continued development of the Outreach work of Ballet West given above. The public benefits of this work include -

- Improved facilities at Ballet West which are also used by outreach classes. This includes physical resources such as studios and the teaching staff brought in to deliver HE, but who contribute to enriching the outreach offer.
- Public performances by students to enrich the cultural landscape of the local community and of Scotland.
- Increased opportunity for young dancers, particularly Scots, to receive professional training in a rural location, away from urban locations, particularly London.
- The economic benefit to the small community of Taynult in bringing in around 100 staff and students to live and study in the area.

The objects of the charity as a whole inform the strategic aims of the Higher Education elements of Ballet West activity which are included in the Operations Manual for HE delivery¹.

Strategic Aims (QC chapter B3, B4, B7, B8, B10)

Aim 1: Create Excellence in learning & teaching

Ballet West strives for excellence in the student experience, particularly with respect to learning and preparation for a life as a professional performer.

This requires educational resources which are fit for purpose, safe and accessible to all, both physically and by providing training in the skills to use them. It also requires an environment in which all resources and individuals will be treated with respect and allowed to flourish creatively.

Students will continue to be encouraged to participate in national and international competitions and programmes of professional study and examinations.

In order to deliver excellent learning outcomes, staff must also strive for excellence in their own professional development and Ballet West will support staff who wish to perform, train and teach or act as external examiners in other organisations. Staff will be encouraged to develop a plan their own professional goals.

Aim 2: Deliver learning that is relevant, flexible & adaptable to the needs of employers & students

Courses at Ballet West are vocational and practically based, aiming to produce the graduates that the entertainment industry needs. Ballet West will continue to engage with industry professionals as teachers, choreographers, musicians to

¹ https://balletwest.ac.uk/files/1715/4452/3073/Operations_manual_v2.7.pdf

ensure that students are working with professionals who understand the current trends and practises in the contemporary performance world and the needs of employers in the industry.

Aim 3: Make a contribution to the economic & cultural development of the region

Ballet West plans to increase the number of students engaged in training and thereby increase the economic development of Taynuilt, Argyll and the West of Scotland. Recruitment will increase from both within Scotland and from the rest of the UK and internationally.

Ballet West will continue to engage with the local and national cultural community by performing in Scotland and abroad.

Aim 4: Widen access to dance training nationally

Many existing and former students from Scotland have expressed the opinion that they welcomed the opportunity to receive high quality training in Scotland and could avoid moving to London to pursue their training. This form of geographical immobility by choice is catered for by our programmes. Ballet West plans to offer training in Scotland for Scottish students who do not wish to leave their home to pursue a career.

Aim 5: Maintain good Governance, leadership and management and ensure financial sustainability

In common with pedagogical excellence, Ballet West aims to maintain the same emphasis on excellence in its governance and management. Ballet West management and governance team will work fully in co-operation with other bodies to enable the delivery of Higher Education.

Teaching and other staff are encouraged to produce their own professional development plan in order to keep abreast of developments in Higher Education management.

It is a specific goal for staff to become members, at an appropriate level of the Higher Education Academy.

Aim 3 relates to public good in a wider context in relation to our local and national community as described above.

Aims 1,2 & 4 relate to various aspects of Ballet West activity that aim to encourage participation in HE and in the employability of graduates. Specifically, these are -

Encouraging Participation

- The Lower School, associates classes and summer schools as taster experiences for HE. Bursaries are available for students on low income.
- Encouraging a greater involvement of Scottish students. This is challenging due to

the Scottish Government's attitude to support for students at private providers.

- Provision of Bursaries for students on low incomes. For the Academic year 2018-19, £30,000 (3.5% of student income) has been invested in bursaries. Ballet West also raises money from charitable trusts to distribute to students to assist with fees.

Increasing Employability

- Embedding professional practice in courses, specifically the annual ballet tour, which gives students the experience of performing as part of a company in genuine performance contexts in a variety of venues with live audiences.
- Encouraging students to participate in external vocational examinations, notably those provided by the Royal Academy of Dance, which strengthen classical technique and increase employability.
- Encouraging students to participate in national and international competitions, to network with peers and experience competitive environments. These also give students useful additions to CVs and allow them to be seen by industry professionals and prospective employers.

The strategic aims are monitored as part of the QAA quality management system (see appendix 1).

Appendix 1 STRATEGIC PLAN - HIGHER EDUCATION	TARGETS (actuals)					notes see below
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	
Aim 1: Create Excellence in learning and teaching						
Ballet West strives for excellence in the student experience, particularly with respect to learning and preparation for a life as professional performers. Students will continue to be encouraged to participate in national and international competitions and programmes of professional study and examinations. Ballet West will support staff who wish to perform, train and teach in other organisations. Staff will be encouraged to develop a plan their own professional goals.						
Measure 1: number of successful graduations	19 (21)	22 (15)	23 (13)	25 (25)	27 (23)	1
Measure 2: % of graduates securing employment or entry to masters degree within 1 year of graduation	70%	75%	80%	85%		2
Measure 3: number of students in national and international competitions	9 (4)	12 (8)	15	15 (17)	15 (13)	3
Measure 4: number of days for staff development - per staff member	5 (5)	7 (10)	10 (10)	10 (10)	10	
Aim 2: Deliver learning that is relevant, flexible and adaptable to the needs of employers and individuals						
Ballet West will continue to engage with industry professionals as teachers, choreographers, musicians to ensure that students are working with professionals who understand the current trends and practises in the contemporary performance world and the needs of employers in the industry.						
Measure 1 - number of guest industry professionals engaging with students	5 (12)	8 (12)	12 (12)	15 (12)	15 (12)	4
Measure 2 - number of days training delivered by guest industry professionals	15 (40)	24 (39)	36 (150 est)	40 (209)	200	
Aim 3: Make a contribution to the economic and cultural development of the region						
Ballet West plans to increase the number of students engaged in training at the school and thereby increase the economic development of Taynuilt, Argyll and the West of Scotland. Recruitment will increase from both within Scotland and from the rest of the UK and internationally. Ballet West will continue to engage with the local and national cultural community by performing in Scotland and abroad.						
Measure 1 - number of students enrolled	70 (71)	75 (67)	75 (78)	80 (89)	83 (83)	5
Measure 2 - number of performances given in UK	20 (20)	22 (13)	25 (16)	20 (14)	14 (11)	
Measure 3 - number of international tours		1 (0)				

Measure 4 - Total audience			5000 (5108)	5250 (5508)	5500 (3914)	
Aim 4: Widen access to dance training nationally Ballet West plans to offer training in Scotland for Scottish students who do not wish to leave their home to pursue a career.						
Measure 1 - % of Scottish students enrolled	25% (23%)	30% (21%)	30% (18%)	20% (20%)	20% (11%)	6
Aim 5: Maintain good Governance, leadership and management and ensure financial sustainability Ballet West aims to maintain the emphasis on excellence in its governance and management, with staff encouraged to produce their own professional development plan in order to keep abreast of developments in Higher Education management. It is a specific goal for staff to become members, at an appropriate level of the Higher Education Academy.						
Measure 1 - staff development events relating to academic management (per staff member)	3 (3)	5 (5)	7			7
Measure 2 - number of staff members as associates and fellows of HEA	4 (4)	5 (2)	5 (2)	5 (2)	5 (2)	

Notes:

1. Graduate Numbers - These are mostly are targeted, the low point of 2015-16 is due to a low intake in 2012 caused by an uncertainty in course designation prior to the introduction of the Northumbria degree. Recent years have seen a stability in student enrolment and each cohort is now around 30-35 students.
2. Graduate destinations have not been recorded in a systematic way, although we do stay in touch with many graduates. Subscription to HESA from the 2016-17 academic year will means that this data will be regularly collected through DELHE.
3. Ballet West continues to engages with national and international competitions and have had some notable successes. For example, two students reached the ballet final of the BBC Young Dancer of the Year competition in 2017.
4. The trend in recent years has been to have guest artists visiting for longer periods. This allows students to get used to a style of teaching and really benefit from what the teacher has to offer. As Ballet West uses a significant number of freelance staff, committed to long periods at the school, the term “guest teacher” requires definition. For the purpose of this measure we are not including those who have a specific role in managing or routinely delivering course work. “Guest teachers” are those who enhance the delivery of the course work, without being an absolute requirement. The courses could be delivered satisfactorily without guest involvement, but the student experience would be diminished. The number of days is a “head count” figure.

5. The trend with performances has also been to deliver fewer performances in larger venues. This is driven by the size of the company increasing with student number and outgrowing small venues. It is also due to the company having a better profile and being able to attract good audience numbers to venues such as the Edinburgh International Conference Centre and the SEC in Glasgow. Larger venues also give that students a greater opportunity to experience the life of a professional dancer. It therefore seems appropriate to measure this aim in audience numbers, in addition to number of performances.
6. Scottish student numbers remain below target. One significant issue is the lack of student finance available to Scottish students at Scottish alternative providers. The recent developments in the UK government are encouraging, but the Scottish Parliament are not as supportive of Scots as they should be. We will actively engage in lobbying the Scottish government to try and get a fairer deal for our students.
7. Staff development remains an issue that we need to develop. The sharing days and other collaborative discussions with partners delivering the NU BA(Hons) Dance course were useful in developing staff skills in HE management. It is anticipated that with the assistance of the Quality Manager and Academic reviewer at the OU and other OU partnership activities, in addition to other organisations, such as the HEA and IHE, that staff will continue to develop their skills.