

Minister for Higher and Further Education
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

12/03/24

Dear Minister

Future of Fine Art Degree studies at UHI Moray

Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) is the member-led network which connects and champions Scotland's contemporary art community. Our 300 organisational and individual members work at the heart of communities from Shetland to the Scottish Borders and from the East Neuk of Fife to the Hebrides. They are a network of free at the point of access galleries, community organisations and venues together with individual artists and educators and the artist-led initiatives, workspaces, and production facilities that support artists to pursue their livelihoods.

We are writing to you on behalf of our membership to express our concerns about recent press reports which indicate that Moray School of Art is proposing to pause its BA Fine Art programme and that degree students there are now facing considerable uncertainty about their futures. We urge you to engage with UHI Moray and other local stakeholders to find a solution that preserves degree level art education in the North of Scotland.

Withdrawal of the degree course will have a significant impact not just on individual students, but on the wider community in Moray and the Highlands. The degree programme provides a significant pathway for those pursuing their studies in creative practice, but also supports creative sector jobs, an alumni network and graduate retention in Moray, Inverness and beyond. Withdrawal of degree level education will have a particular impact on those with caring responsibilities, family ties to the area, or facing economic barriers that would impact on their ability to move elsewhere to complete their studies.

We understand that as part of the proposal students partway through their studies will not receive a qualification, but instead be given 'credits' to help get into another university. We understand that may come too late for some students and the nearest place degree level study might be offered is in Perth where the course is a significantly different offer.

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Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) is a member led network committed to championing and supporting the contemporary art sector in Scotland. SCAN is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO): Charity Number SC043016



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We also understand that the partnership of Moray School of Art is integral to art education pathways, including access pathways, in Uist, Orkney and Shetland and seek reassurances that such relationships can continue.

Axing this degree course does seem at odds with the 2021 “growth deal” to invest £100m in the Moray economy that included the Elgin Culture Quarter, designed specifically to support both tourism and creative industries in the area, important sectors in Moray that have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic.

We understand the budget challenges across Scottish government spending and the particularly challenging environment for Scotland’s FE/HE sector at present, but seek your support as minister for a solution that will serve the people of Moray, the wider creative community in the North of Scotland area, and secure careers in the Creative Industries, which is identified as a key growth sector for Scotland.

Your faithfully



Moira Jeffrey
SCAN Director