

Oxford University Orchestra

Membership Policy

Last updated September 2024

Premise:

The Oxford University Orchestra (OUO):

- Is the flagship ensemble at the University of Oxford;
- selects its members from the very best the student body of the University has to offer;
- auditions its members through the centralised auditions held by the Oxford University Music Society (OUMS).
- collaborates exclusively with professional conductors and/or soloists, as per the constitution.

The Oxford University Sinfonietta (OUSinf):

- Is the flagship chamber orchestra at the University of Oxford;
- selects its members from the very best the student body of the University has to offer;
- shares its players with the Oxford University Orchestra;
- auditions its members through the centralised auditions held by the Oxford University Music Society (OUMS)
- is conducted by a student selected via an independent audition process;
- is managed by the same committee as the Oxford University Orchestra.

Therefore:

The OUO committee has drafted this policy to ensure that membership to the orchestra is inclusive, fair, and accessible, while enabling the orchestra to maintain the highest possible artistic standards.

1. All members of the Oxford University Orchestra (OUO) must audition through the centralised OUMS auditions. Special circumstances may be considered by agreement with the manager and the relevant fixer (e.g., missed audition, late application, exchange student, etc.) but the orchestra can only offer a place for that term or project (point 6 does not apply in this case).
2. The orchestra reserves the right to fix players for a specific production where seats have not been filled by successful applicants at OUMS auditions (e.g., harp/celeste, offstage brass, etc.) either from within the student body, alumni, or external (paid or unpaid) deps.
3. A 'permanent' place in OUO lasts until the end of the course a player was enrolled on at the point of audition. Players who graduate and start a new course at Oxford might be

asked to re-audition (see the 'Cases for Re-audition' section below). This can be waived at the manager's discretion.

4. The management of the orchestra also reserves the rights to renew a member's permanent place, hence without the player having to re-audition.
5. Audition panels in Michaelmas can offer places in OUO for a specific term, for the entire year, or a 'permanent' place (see point 1 for definition).
6. Players who audition in Hilary and Trinity can only be offered a place for the term or for the rest of the year. Players might be required to re-audition in Michaelmas to secure a permanent place in OUO.
7. The management of the orchestra can offer a member a permanent place following a temporary appointment for a term or year; hence, without the member having to re-audition.
8. The management of the orchestra may also revoke a member's permanent place if they have consistently breached the code of conduct (e.g., poor rehearsal attendance, punctuality, etc.).
9. Members on the OUO committee must have a permanent place in the orchestra and must not fall in the 'cases of re-audition' at any point during their tenure on committee (typically one year).
10. Although OUO takes the number of vacancies in any given section into account at auditions, we try to take players on the basis of standard. If a section is saturated (see table 'Oxford University Orchestra Size'), the senior player or principal of the section (see definition below)*, will decide, in consultation with the manager and on the basis of the standard of auditionees that year, one of the following options:
 - a) The entire section is invited to re-audition through the centralised OUMS process in Michaelmas, with the exception of the senior player who will be sitting on the panel.
 - b) The section is kept oversubscribed with rotations agreed upon by the section principal in consultation with the relevant fixer and the manager. The manager will advise what kind of rotations are most appropriate (whether between pieces in a given concert or across the 3 terms of the academic year).
 - c) The manager/senior player will work with the group to find some players alternative playing opportunities outside of OUO by mutual agreement.

Cases for Re-audition

The following scenarios outline cases where players might (or might not) be asked to re-audition:

- Students on a 3-year course with optional 4th year do **not** need to re-audition before their 4th year.
- Students on a 3-year course staying for an additional one-year Masters do **not** need to re-audition.
- If not graduating, all members must re-audition **after 4 years** in the orchestra.

- Players that have chosen not to play in OUO for over a year **must** re-audition.
- Members studying Medicine may retain their place for all 6 years, unless the section is saturated, then the point above (re-auditioning after 4 years) applies in this case.
- Players can retain their permanent place after a year abroad, unless the section is saturated. In such case, they might be asked to re-audition. Special circumstances can be agreed at the manager's discretion.
- Players can retain their permanent place following rustication, unless the section is saturated. In such case, they might be asked to re-audition. Special circumstances can be agreed at the manager's discretion.
- The successful OUO leader(s) and co-leader(s) will not need to re-audition if any of the above circumstances fall within their tenure. The leader auditions are considered 're-auditions'.

* The senior player (or section principal):

- is the strongest player in the section;
- is nominated to sit on audition panels;
- co-ordinates the distribution of parts within their section in consultation with the fixer;
- is selected by the OUO manager at the start of each academic year (or term) in consultation with each section.
- is responsible for making sure music (and/or auxiliary instruments) are circulated between the section in case of absences, and organising deps.

A player is appointed to be the senior player of their section on the basis of the following criteria:

- Strongest candidate at auditions;
- Most time in the orchestra (although standard is preferred).
- Orchestral experience (within and beyond OUO), although this should not be held against anyone if they have not had access to such opportunities;
- Has demonstrated leadership and responsibility within the section (e.g., has a very good attendance record).

2 players may share or co-opt the senior player role.

Oxford University Orchestra Size (per section)

The following table indicates maximum numbers per section. Once these numbers have been reached, the section is said to be saturated.

Section	Instrument	No. of Players	Notes
Woodwind	Flute	4	A 5th player may be accepted in case of exceptional circumstances.
	Oboe	4	
	Clarinet	4	
	Bassoon	3	A 4th player may be accepted in case of exceptional circumstances.
Brass	Horn	5	A 6th player may be accepted in case of exceptional circumstances.
	Trumpet	4	
	Trombone	4	
	Tuba	2	
Percussion		4	
Strings	Violins	20	
	Violas	8	
	Cellos	8	
	Double bass	4	A 5th or 6th player may be accepted in case of exceptional circumstances.