

Most Oxford colleges elect organ scholars to take charge of, or assist with, the music of the college chapel. The scope of the responsibilities and the nature of the duties vary from college to college, but in most cases require competence as organist, choir trainer and (more modestly perhaps) administrator. In a number of colleges the organ scholar also acts as *animateur* of secular music. There is a modest emolument related in value to other awards, but in a number of colleges this is supplemented by additional payments for services rendered and by fees for special events. Many colleges also pay for organ tuition.

All organ scholars read for an honours degree, most often Music, and find that the combination of academic study and practical music makes a sound basis of experience for a later career, not necessarily in music (let alone simply church music).

The colleges may be grouped into several basic categories. First, Christ Church, Magdalen College, and New College maintain choirs of boys and men singing daily services: all three enjoy an international reputation; each is directed by a professional musician, and the organ scholar acts as an assistant tackling a demanding and stimulating repertory at the highest standards. The Queen's College and Merton College have mixed choirs (with 21 places for choral-award holders at Queen's and 16 at Merton), singing a more modest timetable of services than the three choral foundations just mentioned. At Queen's the choir is overseen by the Director of Music, assisted by

the organ scholars. At Merton the organ scholar works with the Director of Music and Assistant Director of Music. At St Peter's the Fellow in Music plays a significant role in the work of the choir. Worcester College maintains two choirs, one with boy trebles and one mixed, directed by the organ scholars, with oversight from the Chapel Music Consultant. The mixed choirs at Keble and Somerville are overseen by a Director of Chapel Music, and that at St John's by the Kendrew Music Student (a graduate post). In all these cases the organ scholars are active in the direction and administration of the choir. Finally, there is a group of colleges with mixed choirs (singing between one and three services each week) where the organ scholar has charge of chapel music. The opportunities and demands vary in this last group.

In all, fourteen colleges have mixed choirs which have the benefit of choral awards (Exeter, Keble, Lincoln, Merton, Oriel, Pembroke, Queen's, St Edmund Hall, St John's, St Peter's, Somerville, Trinity, University, and Worcester). Concerts (and in several cases also tours and recordings) form an important part of the activities of a number of the mixed choirs.

The organs vary a good deal in style and size. The choral foundations have fine instruments with mechanical actions: Christ Church (Rieger, 1979), Magdalen (Mander, 1986), and New College (Grant, Degens, and Bradbeer, 1969). At Queen's there is a notable organ by Frobenius (1965), and at St John's a new instrument by Aubertin. St Peter's has a recently restored Father Willis organ (1874). Other colleges with

organs with modern mechanical action include Brasenose (Collins, 1972), Exeter (Walker, 1994), Jesus (Drake, 1994), Merton (Walker, 1988), Pembroke (Létourneau, 1995), and St Edmund Hall (Wood, 1980).

Most colleges offer an organ scholarship bi-annually, so that a third-year organ scholar overlaps with a first-year organ scholar. A few offer a scholarship annually. The Queen's College always has two organ scholars in residence. The 2009 examination for organ scholarships takes place on 21-23 September. It is possible for a candidate to enter the comparable competition at Cambridge which is scheduled at the same time of year. A candidate taking the examination in the autumn may apply for scholarships available in either the following year or the year following that, or for both years. You should consult the University's undergraduate prospectus or visit

[www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/how_to_apply/organ_awa
rds.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/how_to_apply/organ_awards.html)

for details of vacancies and years on offer. The special application form for organ awards is available from the Oxford Colleges Admissions Office, Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JD. It includes detailed instructions on completion, on the choice of colleges, and on the nature of the examination. It should be submitted by **1 September**.

At the audition candidates are required to play an organ piece of their own choice, to play an organ piece at sight, to play from a four-part vocal score (SATB), to transpose a hymn tune (up or down not more than one tone), and to harmonize a melody. Some candidates will be required to conduct a short choir practice with boys or mixed voices as appropriate.

As well as the practical tests candidates will be examined academically. Those applying to read Music will be required to submit examples of recent essays and (if possible) harmony/counterpoint in advance, and will be interviewed. Those applying to read subjects other than Music will be directed by their college of first choice, but for most subjects they should expect to submit written work in advance and to undergo interviews and - possibly - written tests while in Oxford.

A successful candidate is required to complete a UCAS form. Formal admission is completed in December. An Organ Scholar is not normally required to take part in the November/December admissions exercise, but may be subject to A-level conditions or matriculation requirements. As a rule of thumb a candidate for any organ scholarship ought to have reached a standard roughly equivalent to Grade VIII in organ playing, and in the case of the choral foundations should be beyond this and approaching the standard of a diploma.

Do consult the organist or music tutor of any college in which you are interested to obtain more detailed information or advice. It is possible for you to visit colleges in the term

before the examination. Please consult the University's undergraduate prospectus regarding Open Days for organ and choral scholars and for Music. Take advice at school over the completion of the application form, and take particular care when completing the list of preferences. In selecting a piece for performance at the examination bear in mind that your practice time may be limited (half an hour) and that the organ on which you perform may not have more than two manuals.

Details of the 2009 Open Day on 2 May for prospective choral and organ scholars can be obtained from the University prospectus or by consulting the Music Faculty's web-site.

Faculty of Music
St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1DB
tel: 01865 286264 fax: 01865 276128
web-site: www.music.ox.ac.uk

Other leaflets of interest are:
Choral Awards; Organ & Choral Open Day;
Faculty of Music Open Day

ORGAN AWARDS

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES

