

## **Report on Music BA Admissions, 2020-21**

This year, activities encouraging applications were significantly disrupted as in all subjects by the pandemic. Nevertheless, Music participated in the University's 2020 virtual open days. In addition, the UNIQ outreach programme was held virtually with 14 state school participants, 6 of whom (4 women, 2 men) applied to Oxford and all of whom were offered a place. Of the 6, two were Band A, three Band B, and one unclassified.

The Music BA course received 138 total applications this year (89 female, 49 male) in the December gathered field, compared with 174 (97 female, 77 male) in 2019. This number included 6 Band A candidates and 23 Band B candidates. The reason for the drop in numbers is not known, but is of concern. Judging by the relative stability in the numbers of female candidates and the fact that the number of state school applicants has dropped from 83 to 56 from 2019 to 2020 (independent school numbers dropped from 57 to 52), it appears that male state school candidates in particular have made fewer applications. The Faculty is undertaking a review of Admissions and Outreach activities seeking to address this.

The entire Admissions process took place remotely this year, with various changes made. As a Faculty, we removed the option of administering keyboard tests to those without Grade 5 Piano. Instead of the usual in-person auditions, we asked candidates to submit a video recording of a performance instead. We retained the use of pre-interview consultation of text and music excerpts, and the Faculty panel interviews that normally take place on Thursday of 9<sup>th</sup> week. To allow communication to candidates, the third interviews were moved to Monday of 10<sup>th</sup> week. The Admissions Panel were positive about both the video auditions and the later third interviews, and we are considering making these changes permanent.

The Admissions Panel comprised representatives from all participating colleges. Every UCAS application was reviewed by the Admissions Coordinator against the subject's published selection criteria to advise on deselection. Contextual data and any special circumstances were taken into consideration as appropriate. Candidates were only deselected where they had not achieved or were not predicted to achieve the entry requirements, where there were no special considerations. Written work was marked centrally by a team of postgraduate students who were trained by the Chair of Faculty and Admissions Coordinator to ensure consistency. This did not form part of the selection for interview process but was considered by tutors as part of the decision-making process alongside personal statement, academic record, school reference, and performance at interview and audition. In Music, a few colleges receive the bulk of applications, therefore candidates are reallocated via an algorithm to undersubscribed colleges on the basis of the number of places they have available. This enables all candidates to have the best possible opportunity to be assessed fairly, and not to be disadvantaged by applying to an oversubscribed college.

84 female and 44 male candidates were invited for interview. Interviews were held remotely using Microsoft Teams and were either under the auspices of the relevant college or given by a Faculty panel (in the case of third/Open Offer interviews). Each candidate attended at least two interviews, one interview at each of their first- and second-choice colleges (the second-choice college also being allocated by algorithm). Interviews focused on interests

mentioned in personal statements, written work, compositions (where applicable) and usually included a prose and/or musical excerpt given to the student to examine for a period of time before the interview. Band A candidates were given three interviews. The intention here was to enable them another opportunity to show their knowledge and potential. Following completion of first and second interviews, college interviewers were required to rank all their interviewed candidates and grade them. The Faculty then held an Initial Selection meeting. This involved discussing every candidate with great care against the published selection criteria and initially determining those candidates on whom the interviewing colleges had reached a consensus (offer/not offer) and those still under consideration. Those candidates still under consideration who might be either taken by a college still considering or given an Open Offer place were given a third interview on Monday of Week 10. These interviews were coordinated centrally, with each interview panel made up of two interviewers (usually University postholders) from different colleges. The Final Selection Meeting considered the results of these interviews and involved further discussion and decision-making on candidates still under consideration, including Open Offers. The Open Offer scheme works by offering places which are underwritten by a specific college, but with the understanding that the offer holder's college will only be finally determined after A level result. Open offer holders may be allocated to a college in which a student offered a place there has not achieved their grades. 10 colleges participate in the scheme, but not always every year. This year there were 3 Open Offer places available, a reduction from normal after the unusual size of last year's cohort. When considering the allocation of Open Offer places, the Faculty took into account not only candidates' interview performances but also their strength on paper, with the intention of trying to ensure that these underwritten candidates who would be reallocated to colleges where first-choice candidates had failed to meet the offer requirements would not themselves fail to make their grades.

The Faculty made 71 offers (44 female, 27 male), including 3 open offers, making a 51% success rate. By school type, 56 applicants (41%) came from state schools and 52 (38%) from independent schools, with 30 providing no data (for example, overseas students). In terms of offers, 38 (54%) went to state school applicants, 27 (38%) to independent school applicants and 8 (9%) to those who provided no data. In terms of the new contextual data, 5 Band A candidates were made offers, and 19 candidates from Band B.

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