Instrumental Awards for Chamber Music Scheme (IAS)

Information and FAQs

The IAS enables students to participate in high-quality chamber music at the University. It is an intercollegiate scheme open to undergraduates and graduates at all Colleges.

Award holders comprise outstanding chamber musicians from across the University, and many follow in the footsteps of their predecessors to pursue professional careers as performers.

You apply to the scheme from 1 September and audition for places at the beginning of each academic year. The first round of solo repertoire is followed by a round of chamber music, before successful applicants are placed in groups. You can also be considered for a place in the flagship Cambridge University Orchestra through the same audition procedure.

From piano duos to string quartets and brass dectets, IAS ensembles play together over the course of a year (and often for the whole of award holders' time at Cambridge), and their members are encouraged to develop long-term performing relationships together as chamber musicians.

Ensembles are coached regularly by leading specialist chamber musicians, including Margaret Faultless, Martin Outram, John Myerscough (and other members of the Doric Quartet), Melanie Ragge and Andrew West. Award holders have also received coaching from the Amatis Trio and have participated in masterclasses with the Emerson Quartet and composer Nico Muhly.

Award holders also receive financial assistance of up to £140 towards individual instrumental lessons plus an award of £100 from their college.

Regular performances enable students to develop musically as individuals and as chamber groups. The scheme provides opportunities for performances throughout the year, with selected groups chosen to perform in showcase concerts and special projects.

*The Instrumental Awards Scheme is an intercollegiate scheme administered by the Centre for Music Performance.*

Who can apply?
The IAS is open to both new and current students at all colleges, and you can apply in any or all years during your time at Cambridge.

What standard do I need to be?
You should have achieved at least Distinction at Grade VIII of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), or other equivalent qualification, to apply for the scheme. Successful candidates are usually of Associated Board Diploma standard or equivalent. The standard for pianists is especially high as places are extremely competitive.
What instruments are eligible?
Players of the following instruments are eligible to apply***:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brass</th>
<th>Keyboard</th>
<th>Strings</th>
<th>Wind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French horn*</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>Cello</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trombone</td>
<td></td>
<td>Double bass**</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guitar**</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuba</td>
<td></td>
<td>Harp**</td>
<td>Oboe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Viola</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Violin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oboe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*French horn players will be considered for both wind and brass ensembles.
**Awards for these instruments are dependent on instrumental combinations in any given year. The managers reserve the right to offer associate membership. Associate members participate in one project and holders are entitled to half the benefits of a full award.
*** The scheme also considers applications from period instrument players, and if there are sufficient high-level players in any year, they may be able to offer awards to ensembles specialising in historically informed performance.

How do I apply?
You need to complete an application form. Having received your application, we will invite you to audition. **Applications for 2023–24 open at 9am on 1 September and close at 9am on 22 September.** If you would like to be reminded when the application form opens, please complete the expression of interest form on our website.

What happens at the audition?

ROUND 1: Solo

All instruments except piano
You will be invited to a solo audition where you perform set solo repertoire plus orchestral excerpts.

Piano only
Due to the large number of piano applicants, there is an additional round for pianists.

A: Video round
You will need to upload a video where you perform set solo repertoire.

B: In-person round
If your video audition is successful, you will be invited for an in-person audition playing with another instrumentalist.

ROUND 2: Chamber
If successful in the first-round auditions, you will be invited back to the second-round auditions. You will be placed in chamber groups with other candidates, playing the set pieces of chamber repertoire. The auditioners will coach your ensemble or ask you to rehearse together.