

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2026

**ULSTER COLLEGE OF MUSIC
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Charity Number NIC101695

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ULSTER COLLEGE OF MUSIC

MEMBERS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS

Registered charity name Ulster College of Music

Charity number NIC101695

Principal office 13 Windsor Avenue
Belfast
County Antrim
BT9 6EE

THE TRUSTEES

The trustees who served the charity during the period 1st January 2025 to AGM 2026 were as follows:

Ms Angela Alonso, resigned at AGM March 2025

Dr Norman Cairns

Christine Christie, appointed at AGM 2025

Ms Kate Coyle, resigned 29/04/2025

Mr Ashley Fulton

Mrs Astrid King

Mrs Joy McCormick, co-opted September 2025

Mr Kevin McEnoy, resigned at AGM March 2025

Mr Sean McQuillan, appointed at AGM 2025, resigned September 2025

Mr Conor Maxwell, resigned November 2025

Mrs Moira Mullaly, appointed at AGM 2025

Mr David Rutherford

Ms Oksana Shelest, co-opted September 2025

Mr Sean Walsh

Dr Orly Watson, appointed at AGM 2025

Ms Nicola Wilson, resigned at AGM March 2025

Independent examiner

RBCA Limited

Chartered Accountants

Linenhall Exchange

26 Linenhall Street

Belfast

BT2 8BG

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Reference and administrative details are shown in the schedule of members of the management committee and professional advisers on page 1 of the financial statements.

AGM 2025

The AGM was held on 2nd April 2025. The committee elected at the AGM were:

Dr Norman Cairns	Mrs Astrid King	Mr David Rutherford
Ms Christine Christie	Mr Sean McQuillan	Mr Sean Walsh
Ms Kate Coyle	Mr Conor Maxwell	Dr Orly Watson
Mr Ashley Fulton	Mrs Moira Mullaly	

We were very sad to hear of the death of the Duchess of Kent on 4th September 2025. The Duchess agreed to become the patron of the Ulster College of Music in 1985. She had a music - teaching Diploma herself. Her photos can still be seen in the corridor and one of the teaching rooms from the time she came to Belfast and opened our present building at 13 Windsor Avenue. Our recorder tutor remembers the excitement well and the waiting and impatience of the group of gathered UCM students (including her Recorder players!).

We are very grateful for her support of our charity.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The college is a registered charity and legally constituted as a Trust. The college is managed on a day to day basis by an administrator, two assistant administrators and a bookkeeper, who are in turn responsible to The Management Committee. This committee is made up of tutors, parents, students and volunteers of the college.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Ulster College of Music meets the Public Benefit as follows:

Advancement of education

The college's objectives are to promote the advancement of education through the promotion, development, maintenance and study, teaching and practice of music and dramatic art in Northern Ireland.

Advancement of the Arts and Culture

The Ulster College of Music meets this purpose by engaging students in musical activities and performing concerts to the public.

It is well established that students of the arts - of all ages - learn to think creatively and to solve problems. Musical training helps develop brain areas involved in language and reasoning. Playing an instrument requires students to work with others, developing valuable team skills which can be carried over into all aspects of their lives. Since learning an instrument takes time and effort, our students learn patience and perseverance. Feedback from students and their parents tells us that playing music leads to higher concentration levels, improved coordination, reduced stress levels and better social and listening skills. Musical performance is an important tool that leads to improved self-expression which, once again, transfers into all aspects of life. The College Trustees and Tutors believe that playing an instrument, singing or acting promotes confidence, self-esteem, improved mental health and leads to greater contentment.

DONATIONS

We received another generous donation of £2500 from Alastair Nelson. We have put this aside for the conversion of the old garage into a soundproof studio.

Stefanie Bell donated £250 towards the garage conversion.

We are very grateful for these generous donations and hope to be able to finish the project during this, our 60th anniversary year.

The National Lottery Fund awarded us a grant of £4282.00 in October 2024 to run the Community Keyboard classes for two more years, which is now well into its second year and much appreciated by all the participants. We are very fortunate to have Jane Knowles in charge of this important work for the community.

In 2025 we were awarded another grant by the national Lottery Community Fund, this time for Sustainable Buildings. This grant of £35,659 will allow us to make our building more environmentally sustainable by fitting solar panels, extra insulation, more sustainable lighting, draught proofing and better heating controls. This will result in 3,221 reductions in carbon emissions and £2,199 cost savings over one year.

A former chairman of the trustees of the College, Brian Johnston kindly donated a lot of piano music to the College. Thank you very much.

We also received donations of oboe music from Ros Wilson, violin music from Claire Blake and violin and chamber music from Ottoline Maas. This music is very welcome, thank you.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

The College provides music and drama lessons to people of all ages from all nationalities, social and religious backgrounds. We welcome students from all the equal opportunities groups based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief, pregnancy and marital status. We provide individual lessons, group tuition, children's classes and GCSE and A-level music.

The Chamber Music Class is a truly inclusive group of musicians from primary school to pension age. Our Musical Fun Foundation Course starts with Mini Music for the youngest children and progresses to Musical Games for the school age children. Many adults enjoy taking up lessons for the first time to learn a new skill or take up an instrument once more which they had not played for a while.

We conduct lessons at times that suit people's busy lives - including afternoons, evenings and weekends.

We also offer community keyboard classes which are funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

This year one of our tutors started a new initiative giving our members, the local community as well as the wider public the opportunity to hear young aspiring musicians as well as established professionals in a series of chamber music recitals at the College. These recitals have proved popular and much appreciated.

Our Spring recital 12th April 2025 was well attended. We raised £4.05 towards expenses of £65.50

The End of Year recital was held at Fisherwick Presbyterian Church on 14th June 2025. The church was very beautiful with a great acoustic for our students to sound their best.

We raised £367.70 from ticket sales.

Expenses were £507.93; (£395 for church hire plus accompanist fee and refreshments)

The Chamber Music Group performed in Glenraig Camphill Community on 15th November 2025. The audience truly enjoyed the music. We received a donation of £300 to add to our refugee bursary fund.

The three Christmas recitals on 13th December 2025 were very well received.

Donations £62.00, Expenses £173.51

Our annual carol concert at the Kennedy Centre on 14th December 2025 was very enjoyable and raised £211.70. Thank you to the Chamber Music Group and their families as well as Patricia and Colin who helped with the collection box and jingle bells for making it such a successful event.

The College entered several students for the Hollywood Music Festival and our students won two silver medals and one gold plus the Sinfonietta cup.

Student Awards received: Gabriella Duffy, (Jenny Long's drama student) received Lamda Grade 8 (Gold Medal) in Acting with top distinction.

Gideon Kyle Abunda (Jane Knowles' piano student) was entered into the EPTA National Piano Competition 2026 Regional Heat and was Highly Commended.

Emma Welch (Jenny Long's drama student) received a silver medal in her grade 7 exam in acting.

Congratulations, Gabriella, Gideon and Emma!

EXAM RESULTS

The College enters students for ABRSM examinations, GCSE, AS and A level examinations and festivals throughout the year. The theory students have been entering for online exams individually, and feedback has been good.

Practical Exams Summary 2025

Board	Period	Total number of Candidates (UCM & other)	Results UCM	Results online
ABRSM Private Visit at UCM	April 2025	38	Pass 22 Merit 16	Pass 1
ABRSM Private Visit at UCM	June 2025	48	Fail 1 Pass 11 Merit 20 Distinction 16	
ABRSM Private Visit at UCM	December 2025	28	Fail 1 Pass 15 Merit 11 Absent 1	

GCSE and A level results 2025

SUBJECT	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	A*	A	B	C*	C	D	E	U
GCSE	6		2	2	2				
AS LEVEL	1					1			
A2 LEVEL	3	1			2				

Student Numbers 2026

Lesson Numbers								
Date	14/03/2019	07/02/2020	25/03/2021	10/02/2022	24/02/2023	26/02/2024	03/03/2025	03/03/2026
Piano	81	78	74	105	99	115	147	125
Voice	36	25	22	23	28	30	33	31
Woodwind	27	24	25	37	33	30	32	33
Brass	6	6	7	11	15	19	24	22
Guitar/Harp	36	32	28	40	40	49	46	46
Strings/Violin n Viola	64	56	48	48	52	71	59	61
Cello/Bass	16	21	19	20	20	21	27	28
Individual Theory	5	2	2	3	6	5	8	8
Drama	5	9	6	5	4	4	6	4
Musical Games Mini Music	9	13	5	8	11	10	11	9
Recorder	15	15	13	15	12	13	14	9
Suzuki Violin	15	21	23	17	13	0	0	0
Group Theory	15	26	21	10	11	12	15	11
GCSE/As/ A level	25	16	11	23	12	18	14	8
Aural	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Chamber Music	10	11	10	14	13	15	13	14
Traditional	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Percussion	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Choir		11	0	0	8	12	10	10
Sound Art Composition	-	-	-	6	0	0	0	0
Total	369	368	316	385	377	424	461	421
Number of Students	317	319	289	360	354	383	392	392

TUTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

We engage services of highly qualified and experienced tutors from all over the world and make this expertise available and affordable to as many people as possible. We are very pleased that the following tutors have joined us:

Nicholas Montgomery has returned to the College from April 2025, Therese McKinney started teaching in September 2025, Shonagh Lyons joined us in September 2025, Mafalda Galante started in October 2025 and Ryan Garnham started teaching in February 2026.

Sinead Kelly kindly covered several of our singing students from November 2025-February 2026' We are very grateful for her help and dedication.

We would like to thank the tutors who have left for their contribution to the College: Giselle Allen, who left in June 2025 after 6 ½ years!

Niamh Keeney who left in June 2025, Maebh Martin, who left in September 2025 and Ciara Thompson, who left in December 2025 after 7 years at the College!

We would like to thank our administrators, Patricia Pepper, Emily Knowles and Anna Hutchinson and our bookkeeper, Paul Megarity for their wonderful work. They cheerfully manage all the day to day tasks and any number of emergencies!

We are very fortunate to have an excellent cleaner, Monika Konik, who has been keeping the College beautifully clean for over a decade.

FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

The College's philosophy reflects that of its founder Daphne Bell MBE, Hon. FTCL LRAM LTCL - that music should be accessible to all and we work hard to achieve this. 4 bursaries are available to some families and students who may otherwise not be able to afford music lessons. One bursary is available for a refugee to allow them to restart their music education. We have been fortunate to get nearly continuous finding for the Community Keyboard Skills class for a few years. This allows free access to music to people from diverse backgrounds, including refugees.

The wellbeing of children and young people is of the greatest importance to all the tutors and staff as well as the trustees of the College and our designated child protection officer arranges Access NI checks and child protection training for tutors and staff. Our designated officer is Miss Sheila Kerr. All our tutors have attended child protection and fire safety training courses and we have designated fire wardens on every floor of the building.

MAINTENANCE

Chris McCoy was contracted to replace the roof, soffit /fascia boards and some of the guttering and down pipes. The cost was 43500

We are working on a conversion of the Garage and so far we have paid the architect £559.40 and the acoustic engineer £1080.00. Planning permission is still outstanding.

During the summer a group of volunteers tidied the garden, trimmed hedges, painted the lines and removed weeds from the carpark, cleaned the carpets together with our cleaner and repaired upholstery. We couldn't keep the building and garden fresh and clean without their help.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The College received a total income of £270,482 (2024:£257,331) for the year 2025 from which there was a deficit of £17,035 (2024: surplus £31,007).

Reserve as 31st December 2025 totalled £182,057 (2024:£199,092).

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

The college will continue to focus on enhancing the range of music tuition to be offered to students. As the building is often fully booked we are hoping to add an extra teaching room by converting the garage into a sound proof studio. Planning permission has been applied for.

We are very grateful for the opportunity given to us by the National Lottery Community fund to become a leader in sustainable building in our community. We have already installed solar panels and a battery and we have made progress on finding contractors to install extra insulation, better lighting, draught-proof doors and better heating controls with the help of a dedicated group of volunteers to co-ordinate all this.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with the United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

The law applicable to charities requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

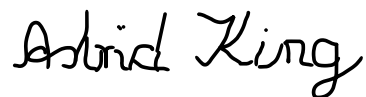
The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with

reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure

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that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008, and the provisions of the constitution. The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustee's annual report was approved on 16th March 2026 and signed on behalf of the trustees by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Astrid King". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mrs Astrid King, trustee