A6 Careers Education, Information and Advice Policy

Careers education at The Purcell School is designed to support the stated aim of students to excel as a musician. As a specialist music school, it is understood that all students offered a place at the School have the ability and desire to progress on to study music at a graduate level, whether through a university of conservatoire course. The School understands that some students may choose a different career path and will ensure appropriate support and advice to enable them to progress in their chosen field.

We are committed to ensuring that:

- All students are treated without prejudice and have entitlement to careers education and guidance
- All students have equal access to accurate up to date and impartial information advice and guidance free from bias and stereotyping
- Individual personal aspirations are important and are treated with respect
- Careers education and guidance underpins the curriculum
- All students experience access to careers information
- All students have access to individual counselling
- Access to impartial careers advice and information

When a potential student auditions for a place at the School, at whatever age they are applying, consideration is given to whether or not they are suited to progress into graduate-level musical education, either at university or conservatoire. As part of the auditions process, a discussion is had between the School, the applicant, and the parents in which realistic aspirations for progressing beyond Sixth Form are discussed openly. The School is committed to providing a musical education to all students which will enable them to progress to top university and conservatoire courses and if this career is not appropriate for an applicant they may not be offered a place at the School.

The School recognises that goals and aspirations of students may change whilst they study here. Provision will be put in place to support any student who wishes to pursue an alternative career and to provide advice as to possible paths to achieving their goals. The School will also provide support as appropriate to those students whose careers as musicians may begin whilst studying.

1. Careers Guidance

1.1 Principles

Careers guidance at The Purcell School:

- Empowers students to plan for and manage their own future
- Responds to the needs of the individual learner
- Provides impartial comprehensive advice
- Actively promotes equality of opportunity and challenges stereotypes
- Raises aspirations
- Helps young people to progress
- Provides access to accurate and up to date information free from bias and stereotyping
- Includes links with Conservatoires within the United Kingdom
- Considers and student's interests to inform future planning and delivery

1.2 Management

The Head of Sixth Form is responsible for the appropriate delivery of careers guidance in the Sixth Form. The Director of Music is responsible for careers discussions during the audition process for entry to the school. Provision of careers guidance is supported by the Sixth Form tutor team, Director of Music and Heads of Department.

1.3 Resources

There is a well-stocked careers library within the Sixth Form Common Room which contains a wide array of University and Conservatoire prospectuses alongside publications such as the Good University Guide and books offering advice on pursuing specific courses and careers, entry to Oxbridge and passing entrance exams. Sixth Form students also have access to a dedicated internal website, managed by the Head of Sixth Form, with further specific guidance on careers and the application processes for higher education.

Students are also guided to external online resources such as the UCAS website and subject-specific websites to provide more information on specific pathways. Further careers funding is available by negotiation, and may include visits to careers and university fairs as appropriate for selected students.

1.4 Monitoring and Reviewing

The Head of Sixth Form will monitor and advise appropriate staff on the delivery of careers education through the tutorial and assembly systems. The careers element of the Sixth Form Development Programme is reviewed by the Head of Sixth Form annually, and will inform the annual review of this policy.

2. Higher Education Guidance

Through Higher Education guidance at the Purcell School, we endeavour to give advice and support to students in making choices about the range of courses and institutions available. This is achieved through personalised advice, taking into account the academic qualities and aspirations of each student, to ensure that a strong application is made via the UCAS systems: UCAS Universities and UCAS Conservatoires, and by the bespoke system employed by Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Support will also be given to students applying outside of these systems, to destinations around the globe.

2.1 Guidance to Year 11 Students

During the first half of the Spring Term, the Head of Sixth Form, in conjunction with Academic Heads of Department, produces an options booklet with information about the A-Level courses offered in the Sixth Form. During the latter part of the Spring Term, the Head of Sixth Form will invite all Year 11 students to a Sixth Form Information event and will provide them with the appropriate booklet and forms to take away and discuss with parents and return by an appropriate deadline. This form will also ask for an indication of likely paths of progression beyond Sixth Form in order to better support students in achieving their goals. Where appropriate, parents will also be invited to a discussion with the Head of Sixth Form about subject choices and future opportunities, which may be delivered in person or online.

2.2 General Guidance

Lower Sixth students are invited to a Higher Education event in the latter half of the Autumn Term of Year 12, during which presentations are made by the Head of Sixth Form, the Director of Music and, where appropriate and available, a guest speaker from a Conservatoire. These presentations and accompanying internal website provide an overview of the process of applying for Higher Education courses, including advice on how to begin researching courses and institutions, as well as information on the practicalities of making a UCAS application(s) and the UCAS processes for applying to University and/or to Conservatoire. Students are informed also of alternatives to Higher Education (e.g. apprenticeships). Students are empowered to choose which pathway to take. Where appropriate, parents will also be invited to a discussion with the Head of Sixth Form about the application process, which may be delivered in person or online.

The Head of Sixth Form will also organise a drop-down day in the Summer Term aimed at students in Year 11 and 12, although sessions will be open to other students as appropriate. Invitations will be made to various conservatoires and universities, as well as other organisations relevant to careers education, and talks will be open for students to sign up to in advance. Other opportunities for organisations to visit and speak with students will be organised throughout the school year and in recent years have included visits from senior staff at the Royal Academy and Royal College of Music, Berklee College of Music and the Reina Sofia School.

2.3 Applications

2.3.1 UCAS Conservatoires Applications

These are submitted online via the UCAS website. Specific daytime, Twilight and Prep sessions during the first four weeks of the Autumn Term of the Upper Sixth year, in advance of the October 1st deadline, are dedicated to supporting the students in completing their application forms. Students will also be invited to meet individually with the Head of Sixth Form to discuss any particular concerns or difficulties with application and students are encouraged to discuss applications with other members of staff where appropriate. Particular attention will be paid to the completion of the personal statements (see Appendix A) and students are encouraged to begin drafting over the Summer holiday between Lower and Upper Sixth and to send them to the Head of Sixth Form for review and feedback. Each student receives advice and support from their instrumental teacher, along with additional guidance from the Head of Sixth Form, Director of Music and Heads of Department (Music). Once the application is ready for submission, students are encouraged to seek review by the Head of Sixth Form who will check for any concerns or errors and provide additional support and guidance.

2.3.2 UCAS University Applications

These are submitted online via the UCAS website. Specific daytime, Twilight and Prep sessions during the Autumn Term of Year 13, alongside individual sessions with the Head of Sixth Form, are dedicated to supporting the students in completing their application forms, with particular attention paid to the completion of the personal statements (see Appendix A). Each student receives advice and support from their tutor, along with additional guidance from the Head of Sixth Form, Director of Music and Heads of Department (both Music and Academic). Discussions are held to help ensure that a student's predicted grades match the range of courses chosen and students applying to University are strongly advised to choose one 'insurance' course requiring lower grades than those predicted. Once the application is ready for submission, it is reviewed by the Head of Sixth Form who will return the application if there are any concerns or errors.

2.3.3 Non-UCAS Applications

For those applying to Guildhall School of Music and Drama there is a separate application process which follows the same idea as the UCAS Conservatoires application form. The Head of Sixth Form will provide support as detailed above for all Guildhall applications.

For those applying for Art Foundation courses, advice is provided by the staff in the Art Department, especially with regard to the written application and preparation of portfolios. References are prepared by the Head of Sixth Form.

References required for applications to non-UK universities and conservatoires are provided by the Head of Sixth Form, along with subsequent documentation such as examination results or transcripts. Students must inform the Head of Sixth Form of any alternative applications and request support for completion.

2.4 Oxbridge / Selective University Preparation

Students who indicate interest in applying to a selective university in response to the Higher Education event in the Autumn Term of the Lower Sixth will receive individual assistance with applications from the Summer Term of the Lower Sixth onwards. This will include advice on choices of course, university and college, guidance regarding work beyond the A-Level syllabus, advice about how to prepare for the challenging interview process and monitoring of the progress of applications. Prospective students are encouraged to attend Open Days at their chosen universities, where they can hear talks about all aspects of university life and about individual courses, and where they have the opportunity to visit colleges/departments. Help with preparation for interviews, admission tests and pre-submitted work is arranged by the Head of Sixth Form and provided with support from the relevant academic department and other staff as appropriate.

2.5 Interviews and Admission Tests

Support is given to all students who need to attend interviews (e.g. selective universities/Oxbridge, medics, nurses, teachers) and those who need to sit admission tests. Advice and resources will be provided for students preparing for the BMAT/UKCAT, LNAT, MAT, STEP and university specific entrance tests as appropriate. Students are responsible for checking for any admissions test requirements and liaising with the Head of Sixth Form and the Exams Officer as to the administration of the tests. As these tests usually take place during the Autumn half term of the Upper Sixth year, students who are not able to attend in school will be supported in finding a suitable centre near their home address.

2.6 English Language Requirements

To study in the United Kingdom it is usual that proof of English Language ability is required for study at University or Conservatoire. The Head of Sixth Form and the English as an Additional Language department will work together to ensure that all students requiring such evidence are able to provide it. For most courses this will be an IELTS examination result, although some may accept a GCSE or A-Level examination in English Language or Literature taken at a UK school. It is up to the students to check the requirements for their course and seek help if they feel that they do not have the appropriate qualification(s). Please see separate policy for further details.

2.7 Results Day and UCAS Clearing

The majority of students at The Purcell School will attain the required grades to be accepted onto their chosen Higher Education course. However, for the small number who need to use UCAS Clearing, advice and support is given on A-Level results day by the Head of Sixth Form and Vice-Principal as appropriate via telephone and email.

Policy author/reviewer:	***Policy date/review date:***	***Next review due:***
Ziggi Szafranski	September 2024	September 2025
Ziggi Szafranski	September 2025	September 2026
Ziggi Szafranski	August 2026	September 2027

Appendix A – Completing Your Personal Statement

The UCAS personal statement is your opportunity to tell the University or Conservatoire more about yourself, your achievements and your interests. You need to try, as far as possible, to make yourself stand out from the crowd, but there are some key "dos and don'ts" in achieving this. For a University application the person who reads your personal statement will be a subject specialist and will want to know why you have chosen their subject and why you would be a good addition to their faculty. For a Conservatoire application this person will usually be an instrumental or department specialist and will want to know why you have chosen to pursue a career as a musician.

Step One: Gathering Information

Writing about yourself is a hard and unnatural task. The best way to start is to make a list answering the following points:

- Why do you want to study your chosen subject/study at Conservatoire?
- What have you read/visited/experienced that has broadened your understanding of the subject area?
- What academic qualities do you possess?
- What musical qualities make you suitable for Conservatoire?
- How has the study of other A-Level subjects developed your academic skills?
- What work experience have you undertaken? (This needs to be detailed for certain courses)
- What other achievements/qualifications do you have?
- What activities have you undertaken (voluntary service, sport, music etc.)?
- Do you have any positions of responsibility in school (house prefect, senior prefect, Principal)?
- Do you have any positions of responsibility musically (orchestral section leader, soloist etc.)?
- If you are taking a Gap Year, how do you plan to spend it?
- Do you have any current career aspirations?

Step Two (Conservatoire Applications): The Music Sections

This is the most important section of your personal statement and should comprise 1/3 to 1/2 of your final submission. Whilst all UCAS Conservatoire and Guildhall applications entitle you to an audition, your personal statement will be used in conjunction with this to help finalise offers made, and may also impact on any scholarships offered. You should talk about your passion for music, any masterclasses or courses you have been on and any competitions of particular interest. You should not attempt to list everything you've done, instead pick out a selection of courses, masterclasses and competitions and talk about what you have personally gained from each of them. Talk about any other achievements you have, such as being a member of a national orchestra or other group performances and any competitive solo opportunities you have won at school.

Step Two (University Applications): The Academic Sections

This is the most important section of your personal statement and should comprise 1/3 to 1/2 of your final submission. You can be a wonderful musician with lots of interests, but if the university does not sense your passion and enthusiasm for the subject, then they will not make you an offer. Mention specific texts, trips or topics that have been of interest and comment on areas of the undergraduate course that interest you (but make sure all five universities offer this – don't limit yourself by saying you're interested in a module that one of your choices doesn't offer!)

Step Three: The Non-Academic Sections

This should not be just a list of achievements or activities that you have participated in. It should state these, but in the context of the skill you have developed as a result. For example, 'I am a Senior Prefect and a member of IMPULSE' should be rephrased with 'As a Senior Prefect and a member of the school's Outreach team, IMPULSE, I have developed leadership and teamwork skills through the recent tour to Norfolk in which I represented the school'. You should also focus on more recent activities, rather than things completed in Primary School since these will be of more relevance to your application.

Step Four: Proof-Reading

You should aim to show your completed draft to a number of people for checking. Before you do this, however, you need to have proof-read your personal statement and not just rely on spell-check since this does not often pick up very obvious and potentially embarrassing mistakes. There is no excuse for poor spelling or grammar and these applications will be quickly rejected. The Head of Sixth Form will be available from the end of the Summer Term and throughout the holiday period to read as many drafts of personal statements as a student feels is necessary. All students should show their personal statement to at least one member of the staff at the School before submitting their application.

Suggested Writing Structure (Conservatoire Applications)

1. Reason for choice of career as a musician with specific references to your experiences and interests
2. Broader musical skills and interests (including masterclasses, concerts, competitions etc.)
3. Academic activities and interest that would support your studies at Conservatoire
4. Concluding sentences that reinforce your passion and commitment to music

Suggested Writing Structure (Conservatoire Applications)

1. Reason for course choice with specific references to your experiences and interests (including work experience where relevant)
2. Broader academic skills and interests
3. Non-academic activities and interest
4. Concluding sentences that reinforce your passion and commitment to the chosen course

Final DOs and DON'Ts

✔ DO plan your statement before you begin to write

✔ DO expect to make several drafts before achieving the final version

✔ DO ask people for feedback (Head of Sixth Form is available from the Summer Holiday and beyond)

✔ DO ensure you use formal English

✔ DO be enthusiastic

✔ DO spend time on this – a good statement cannot be drafted in 20 minutes in front of the TV

- ✖ DON'T use fancy language that does not come naturally
- ✖ DON'T waffle about irrelevant things
- ✖ DON'T try to be funny, since the reviewer may not share the same sense of humour as you
- ✖ DON'T lie – it is an offence to do this on your UCAS form
- ✖ DON'T start every paragraph with 'I'
- ✖ DON'T download a statement from the internet – UCAS is using a sophisticated plagiarism software to detect this