



Audition Guidelines 2027

How to apply

Apply using the online application form on the UYO website (www.uyo.org.uk/howtojoin)

A non-refundable audition registration fee of £25 is required before an audition can be scheduled. Payments can be made online through the UYO website.

We require you to upload a passport style (head and shoulders) photograph of yourself. Please do not use a photograph showing you at a distance or with others. **This image must be a png or jpg, not exceeding 1Mb in size.** If your photo is larger or in a different format your form may not be accepted. Please wait for the page to refresh and look for a green band to acknowledge receipt.

CRITERIA

Age

Applicants must be aged between 14 & 23 on 12th August 2027.

Standard

Applicants must be of a standard equivalent to at least ABRSM Grade 7.

Qualifications gained or previous membership of UYO do not guarantee success at audition - all candidates must re-apply for a place in the Orchestra and are assessed on their performance on the day.

Nationality

Auditions are open to young musicians who:

- Were born in Northern Ireland;
- Are ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland;
- Are studying in Northern Ireland on a substantive basis (defined as full-time education or a minimum of 12 hours per week of in-person tuition); or
- Have a parent or legal guardian born in Northern Ireland.

Full details are set out in the formal Admissions Policy – see Appendix 1 below

Places available for 2027

Places are allocated based on the numbers required for the 2027 repertoire as follows:

30 violins (16.14)	3 flutes (2 dbl picc)	5 horns (4 plus bumper)	Timps plus 4 perc (1 perc dbl celeste)
12 violas	3 oboes (1 dbl cor)	4 trumpets (2 dbl cornet)	
10 celli	3 clarinets (1 dbl bcl)	3 trombones (2 +bass tbn)	2 Harps
6 double basses	3 bassoons (1 dbl contra)	1 tuba	

The audition

Auditions will be live and in person only and on these dates:

- Friday 18th December 2026 (Strabane)
- Saturday 19th December 2026 (Belfast)
- Sunday 20th December 2026 (Belfast)

We will do our best to accommodate you on the day of your choice however due to the complexities of the audition schedule it may not always be possible.

What to play

Candidates will be required to play **two contrasting pieces** of their own choice and a selection of prepared orchestral excerpts.

The orchestral excerpts are available for download from the 'how to join' page of the UYO website.

Own choice pieces can be small sections taken from longer pieces and don't have to be the start of movements – select an appropriate part of the piece that will show the panel your capabilities.

Remember that we are looking for orchestral players, so select music that highlights your musicianship as well as your technical ability. Don't worry if the panel stop you before you finish your pieces. The pieces should be a combined **length of 6-8 minutes**.

You will be asked to prepare a selection of **orchestral extracts** in advance of your audition.

- Listen to the pieces that the extracts are taken from.
- Think about their orchestral context.
- Think about appropriate speeds, dynamics and phrasing.
- Be prepared to play them in different ways, as directed by the panel.

Auditions are strictly unaccompanied.

Leader

If you are applying for the leader position, please download and learn the violin excerpts as well as the leader one.

The panel will have a short chat with you about the role and responsibilities of leading an orchestra and this will count towards your overall score.

Woodwind

If you are applying for your main instrument plus piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet or contrabassoon you do not have to prepare a full piece on the doubling instrument – you are only required to prepare the excerpts.

Trumpet

This year there are 2 cornet parts in one of the pieces. If you wish to audition on trumpet **and** cornet, you do not need to prepare a full piece on cornet – you are only required to prepare the excerpts.

Percussion

Percussion candidates are asked to play two contrasting pieces – one on xylophone and one on either snare drums **or** timpani. Percussion candidates have the option to audition for the celeste part and should prepare the celeste excerpt in addition to the percussion excerpts.

The panel (all candidates)

The UYO strives to ensure panels are balanced, where possible, by gender and community background and that there are no known conflicts of interest between panel and candidate e.g. family or student/teacher connections.

Late Auditions

Occasionally we have vacancies for certain instruments at other times of the year. These will be advertised via our website and social media.

Results

We aim to release your results within four weeks of your audition.

Reserve list

A reserve list of those candidates who met the required standard will be created if the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available.

Feedback

Feedback is not offered automatically due to the number of candidates who audition however can be requested by emailing manager@uyo.org.uk

If you are not chosen this time, we hope you will continue practising and enjoying your music and apply again next year. It will not be possible to repeat your audition for this year if you are unsuccessful – you will only have one chance to audition.

The decision of the UYO audition panel members in the choice of players is final.

Fees

Cost for 2027 membership is £595. This represents less than 50% of the true cost per member and the remainder is subsidised by the Ulster Youth Orchestra.

Help with fees

Full bursaries are available for under 18s in receipt of free school meals thanks to the Leverhulme Trust.

There is also a limited bursary fund available for all other musicians who are in genuine financial need however we expect that you apply to your local council, school, college, local business or one of the many Trusts and Foundations that offer student bursaries before applying to the UYO Bursary Fund.

Email manager@uyo.org.uk for further details of both schemes.

Commitment

We expect participants to be available for **all rehearsal and concert dates** and commit to the orchestra and their fellow musicians.

Please put in writing any requests for time off campus to manager@uyo.org.uk. Generally, time off would be given for medical appointments and to receive GCSE/A level results only.

NB: Due to the disruption caused by absences, if you are not available for the full course **you will forfeit your role as section leader/leader of the orchestra** in favour of someone who is able to attend in full.

APPENDIX 1

ULSTER YOUTH ORCHESTRA — ADMISSIONS POLICY

1. Purpose

Ulster Youth Orchestra (UYO) exists to identify, nurture and develop outstanding young musicians in and from Northern Ireland, while delivering orchestral projects of the highest artistic quality.

This policy balances UYO's responsibility to young musicians in Northern Ireland and to public funders against the operational necessity of maintaining absolute artistic excellence, proper orchestral balance, and long-term programme viability.

2. Core Principles

- Northern Ireland Primacy: Young musicians with a substantive and ongoing connection to Northern Ireland are the primary beneficiary group.
- Artistic Excellence: Admission decisions are based strictly on musical merit, assessed through an independent audition process.
- Fairness and Transparency: Eligibility and selection criteria are fully transparent, consistently applied, and subject to regular audit.
- Artistic Viability: Limited administrative discretion may be exercised where necessary to safeguard orchestral balance and project delivery.

3. Eligibility to Apply

Applicants are eligible to apply if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Were born in Northern Ireland; or
- Are ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland; or
- Are studying in Northern Ireland on a substantive basis, defined as:
 - Full-time education; or
 - A minimum of 12 hours per week of in-person education or tuition in Northern Ireland during term time; or
- Are resident outside Northern Ireland and have a parent or legal guardian born in Northern Ireland.

Eligibility is assessed administratively based on information provided by applicants during the initial submission window. Audition panels have no role in determining or viewing eligibility status.

4. Auditions and Selection

- All eligible applicants are assessed against identical published musical criteria.
- Audition panels judge musical performance only and remain blind to the applicant's specific residency or eligibility pathway.
- Final seat offers are extended based on audition outcomes, immediate orchestral balance requirements, and the instrumentation needs of the specific project cycle.

5. Discretionary Audition and Membership

Where the number or standard of eligible applicants is insufficient in a particular instrument or leadership role, UYO reserves the right to exercise limited discretion to invite additional candidates from outside the core eligibility criteria to audition or offer conditional membership. This mechanism is applied only under demonstrable artistic need, is instrument-specific, is formally recorded, and will never displace Northern Ireland applicants as the primary beneficiary group of the orchestra.

6. Data Protection, Privacy, & Eligibility Verification

To remain fully compliant with UK GDPR and data privacy laws, UYO operates a strict data minimisation framework for verifying eligibility claims:

- Initial Stage: Applicants complete a standard self-declaration form at the point of application. No parental/guardian identity documents are collected at this stage.
- Verification Stage: Formal documentation (such as a parent's long-form birth certificate or passport showing town and country of birth) will only be requested if the applicant passes the musical audition and is actively being considered for a seat.
- Third-Party Consent: Applicants submitting documentation belonging to a parent or legal guardian must ensure the third party has explicitly consented to their data being processed for this validation check.
- Secure Destruction: All submitted verification documents are held securely and will be permanently deleted or destroyed within 30 days of the formal finalisation of the orchestra roster.

7. Oversight and Review

The use of administrative discretion is reviewed annually by the Board of Directors. This policy is reviewed periodically to ensure continuous alignment with UYO's mission, funding expectations from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and non-discriminatory best practices.

GDPR for application forms and bursary forms

We ensure all application and bursary forms received will be kept electronically and physically safe. Application forms from all candidates will be securely disposed of 12 months after the application deadline. Bursary forms will be securely disposed of 12 months after the completion of the funders' reports.

Disability Policy

The Ulster Youth Orchestra welcomes applications from disabled young musicians who satisfy the usual criteria for application to audition. A musician who wins a place in the orchestra will not be omitted because of that disability. The orchestra will use its best endeavours to ensure that a disabled member of the orchestra can take as full a part as possible in all its activities: not just participation in performances, but in social activities also.

Complaints Policy

A copy of our complaints policy is available upon request.

Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk

A copy of our Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy is available at this link:

<https://uyo.org.uk/aboutus/safeguarding-policy/>