



Information pack

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About Church Music Skills

Church Music Skills is a pioneering education programme designed to help practising church musicians to develop the skills and understanding that they need for their role, and for those who want to equip themselves with new skills to lead music in worship.

The programme is based on distance learning, combining private study at home with practical experience in the student's own church. It is designed for use by students studying alone or with a teacher, and may be complemented by optional attendance at RSCM workshops, masterclasses and short residential courses. It is open to students from the UK and abroad.

Two pathways

Students enrolling in Church Music Skills opt to follow one of two pathways:

The **award scheme** leads to vocational-type qualifications at three levels

The **flexible study scheme** allows students to 'mix and match' units according to their own personal development goals

Principal aims

1. To provide a coherent programme of skills training for church musicians.
2. To enable students to fulfil their musical potential and become effective leaders and enablers of music in their local church.
3. To prepare students technically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually for the challenges of being a church musician.
4. To encourage students to reflect constructively on their own performances and develop an ability to solve musical problems that arise in rehearsal and performance.

Learning outcomes

On completion of the programme at level III students will have demonstrated the following:

1. Their effectiveness as a leader and enabler of music in their local church
2. The skills and understanding relevant to their role
3. An ability to evaluate and assess their own abilities, performance and understanding
4. An ability to take responsibility for their own learning

Award scheme

The Church Music Skills Award is designed to enable students to become effective leaders and enablers of music in their local church. The award affirms the student's abilities and demonstrates their competence to potential employers.

Students on the award scheme undertake a programme of study that leads to assessment and an award at one of three levels:

Level I	Foundation
Level II	Intermediate
Level III	Higher

The level of the award relates to the musical demands at each stage. Students may begin work at any level.

To complete the award, students submit a portfolio of written and practical work (the latter in the form of audio or audio-visual recordings of rehearsals and performances at their church). They have a choice of principal skill – organ, choir director, cantor or music group leader – for the practical work. The written work includes a series of supporting studies on subjects related to church music, for example choosing music for worship, Christian seasons and festivals, copyright legislation or managing volunteers. Students have a choice of practical and supporting studies units (see below for the full list of topics).

On completion of the award, students may go on to do further study; either proceeding to the next level, or enlarging their portfolio by taking a secondary skill (e.g. where an organist wants to undertake study as a choir director or vice versa).

Award scheme course plan

When you register you will select a principal skill (organ, choir director, cantor or music group leader). Upon registration you will receive a welcome pack and introductory units for your principal skill.



After completing the introductory units, you will select three practical units (at level I, II or III as appropriate) plus three supporting studies units from the list below. You will then receive learning materials and a list of assignments to complete for each unit.



You will work through the learning materials at your own pace and then send your work for assessment.



Once you have completed the necessary tasks to the satisfaction of the tutor you will receive an award that affirms your achievements at that level.



After completing your award you may wish to proceed to the next level or work on a secondary skill at the same level. You are also able to transfer to the flexible study scheme, which enables you to work on any additional units of your choice.

Flexible study scheme

Church Music Skills is also open to church musicians who would like to study in a more flexible way. Students who enrol on the flexible study scheme may undertake any combination of units to suit their needs. They may work at any of the three levels. If at a later stage they want to go on to undertake the Church Music Skills Award, they will be credited accordingly for any units they have already completed.

Flexible study scheme course plan

When you register you will select a principal skill (organ, choir director, cantor or music group leader). Upon registration you will receive a welcome pack and introductory units for your principal skill.



After completing the introductory units, you can select any number of units of study at any level. You will then receive learning materials and a list of assignments to complete for each unit.



You will work through the learning materials at your own pace and then send a portfolio of written and practical work for assessment.



You may continue to select further units of study and can at any point transfer to the award scheme, with all relevant prior learning credited accordingly.

Units of learning

Introductory units

All students begin by completing three introductory units for their principal skill. These are an introduction to the course and the assignments act as a guide to course tutors, who can advise students on which aspects of the course might be most appropriate and at what level they might begin the programme.

Students that go on to undertake units in other skill areas will receive the learning materials for the introductory units but will not need to complete the assignments and will not receive tutor feedback.

Practical Skill	Unit title & description	Unit no.
A. Organ	Introduction to the organ A brief guide to the instrument	A01
	Playing the organ Building a solid technical foundation	A02
	How to practise Making the most of your practice time	A03
B. Choir Director	Understanding the voice A guide to basic vocal technique	B01
	Conducting techniques Building a solid technical foundation	B02
	Running a rehearsal Making the most of your rehearsal time	B03
C. Cantor	Understanding the voice A guide to basic vocal technique	C01
	The role of the cantor Current practice combined with historical and liturgical perspectives	C02
	Teaching and animating Teaching and leading the congregation	C03
D. Music Group leader	Working with instruments A brief guide to common instruments	D01
	Directing an ensemble Conducting and other means of direction	D02
	Running a rehearsal Making the most of your rehearsal time	D03

Practical units

Students on the award scheme will select three units at the same level for their principal skill. Students on the flexible study scheme may select any combination of units.

The titles in grey are not yet available.

Practical Skill	Unit title and description	Level I	Level II	Level III
A. Organ	Hymns Accompanying traditional hymns	A11	A21	A31
	Songs and choruses Accompanying modern songs and choruses	A12	A22	A32
	Accompanying chant Accompanying simple and Anglican chants, with and without refrains		A23	A33
	Anthems & settings Accompanying anthems and liturgical settings	A14	A24	A34
	Solo repertoire Performing music for solo organ	A15	A25	A35
	Improvisation A guide to organ improvisation	A16	A26	A36
B. Choir director	Hymns and songs Rehearsing and conducting hymns, songs and choruses	B11	B21	B31
	Conducting chant Rehearsing and conducting plainsong, simple and Anglican chants	B12	B22	B32
	Anthems and settings Rehearsing and conducting anthems and liturgical settings	B13	B23	B33
	Working with young singers Rehearsing and performing with young singers	B14	B24	B34
	Arranging and composing for choir Writing music for voices	B15	B25	B35
C. Cantor	Hymns and songs Leading congregational music	C11	C21	C31
	Psalmody Psalm settings for cantor and congregation	C12	C22	C32
	Liturgical music Chants, prayer responses, acclamations and liturgical settings	C13	C23	C33
	Traditional music for Evensong, Eucharist & Compline	C14	C24	C34
	Arranging and composing for cantor & congregation	C15	C25	C35
D. Music Group leader	Hymns & songs Rehearsing and performing hymns, songs and choruses	D11	D21	D31
	Chants and short songs Rehearsing and performing chants and short songs	D12	D22	D32
	Working with young musicians Rehearsing and performing with young musicians	D13	D23	D33
	Arranging and composing for music group Writing music for instruments and voices	D14	D24	D34

Supporting Studies units

Students on the award scheme select three units for their supporting studies: this must include at least one unit from the *Worship and Ministry* section and one from the *Church Music in Practice* section. Students on the flexible study scheme may select any combination of units.

Module	Unit title and description	Unit no.
X. Worship and Ministry	Sunday worship: Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic services Understanding the pattern of Sunday worship and the place of music within it.	X01
	Pastoral services Understanding the forms of pastoral services (weddings, baptisms, funerals etc.) and the place of music within them.	X02
	Age-specific and freer forms of worship Understanding the principles of age-specific and freer forms of worship (e.g. family and youth services) and the place of music within them.	X03
	Using music in worship Understanding Christian worship and the place of music within it.	X04
	Seasons and festivals: shaping the year and the celebration Understanding the church's year and how music for worship can be used to reflect it.	X05
	Texts and music: the available repertory and its background Understanding the function and context of different musical genres used in worship	X06

Module	Unit title and description	Unit no.
Y. Church Music in Practice	Organizing your life Learning some basic tools to help you manage competing demands on your time so you can live a balanced life.	Y01
	Financing an activity Developing financial skill and handling an activity budget, all within a basic understanding of church finances.	Y02
	Understanding people Understanding human interaction and behavioural patterns. Applications include: working with small groups in a church including a choir, and understanding congregational behaviour.	Y03
	Working with volunteers Understanding how to select, support and affirm workers who give their time without charge and who are therefore not employed under contract.	Y04
	Knowing general law* Introducing some of the main areas of legislation that affect church work, and to direct you to more detailed advice.	Y05
	Using others' materials: copyright* Understanding copyright law with regard to words and music, sound and film.	Y06
	Making a presentation Making a simple presentation to a congregation or church decision-making body, with the emphasis on getting a clear message across.	Y07
	Telling the world Making contact with the local press and radio, and to write in an effective way to promote your church to those who are not members.	Y08
	Leading a team Understanding what factors distinguish a team from other groups, and providing principles and tools that will enable you to become an effective team leader in any context.	Y09
	Introducing change Understanding some basic principles of change management, to help you to both cope with change yourself and lead others through a change process.	Y10

* These units relate specifically to UK legislation. Students studying outside the UK who wish to undertake these units will need to conduct their own research to gain an understanding of local law.

Unit contents

Practical units

Learning materials for practical units include:

- Introduction to topic
- A series of 'lessons' on set repertoire
- A list of assignments

Assignments include:

- Preliminary assignment(s) on which tutor feedback is provided
- Final assignment(s)¹, which are assessed, marked and graded by a course tutor

Depending on the topic, the assignments for each practical unit may include:

- performances (submitted as an audio or audio-visual recording)
- rehearsals (submitted as an audio or audio-visual recording)
- compositions or arrangements (submitted as a written score)

Any assignment in which conducting, or other physical gesture, is to be assessed must be submitted as an audio-visual recording (i.e. DVD or video).

Supporting studies units

Learning materials for supporting studies units are divided into sections punctuated with exercises or questions for reflection.

Students undertake research or reflection then complete a final written assignment.

¹ Final assignments may include a quick study test. For this test students are given a piece of repertoire to learn and perform for assessment within 14 days.

Fee Schedule & Terms and Conditions

The table below indicates the current costs for the Church Music Skills programme.

	RSCM member	Non-member
Registration	£110	£135
Award scheme		
First level	£330	£390
Additional levels	£165	£200
Flexible study scheme		
Practical unit	£66	£80
Supporting studies unit	£50	£60

Terms and conditions

- All fees are stated and payable in pounds sterling.
- Students without internet access or email are required to pay a 10% supplement to cover the costs of printing and postage.
- Once learning materials have been sent to the student, payment is non-refundable.
- Following payment for registration, students on the award scheme may request to make subsequent payments in instalments. Please enquire for details.
- Following payment for registration, students on the flexible study scheme will pay per unit requested.
- If, on sight of the learning material, students decide they have selected the wrong unit, they may ask for an alternative unit but this will incur an administration charge of £35.
- If students fail to reach the required standard for a unit, there is a charge of £35 to retake the unit.
- Registration for the programme lasts for two years. After that time a further administration charge of £40 will apply if you wish to continue your scheme of study and have your work assessed or move on to another level.
- Limited bursary funds may be available for those with particular financial needs. Please contact the Education Administrator for further information.

- Any complaints about the programme or appeals about marking and/or assessments should be addressed to the Programme Director, Church Music Skills in the first instance. Appeals about marking must be raised within one month of receiving a tutor report for that unit.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who might find the programme useful?

Church Music Skills is suitable for any church musician wanting to develop their skills and understanding. This includes:

- young people interested in a career in church music
- adult beginners looking to develop new skills to help lead music for worship
- practising church musicians looking to develop their existing skills and understanding or learn new skills
- those wanting to attain a vocational qualification in church music
- church ministers wanting to develop musical skills and understanding

There is no age limit.

What are the technical requirements?

Some aspects of this programme will require access to the internet and some correspondence will take place by email. Students without these facilities are required to pay a 10% supplement to cover the costs of printing and postage.

Students will be required to submit recordings of their performances for evaluation. These may be on CD, MP3, DVD or video (choir directors will be required to submit DVD or video recordings so that their conducting skills can be assessed) and should be of sufficient quality to accurately represent the performance of the student. Those without these facilities may be able to undertake assessment during an RSCM training course, by prior arrangement.

Will I have a dedicated course tutor?

Students will not be assigned a single tutor for the duration of their course; rather, there is a pool of tutors who specialise in particular areas of study.

Students will not have direct access to tutors. The role of course tutors is to comment on assignments and provide feedback on assessments. All tutor feedback is provided in written form, either by email or post. All other

enquiries are dealt with by the RSCM Education Administrator, who may refer them to the Director of the Skills Programme.

How will I be assessed?

For any unit of study, assessment may include:

- Written work – in the form of essays, diagrams, diaries, commentaries etc.
- Practical work – audio or video/DVD recordings of performances or written scores of compositions/arrangements

Successful students will be awarded a pass, merit or distinction for each individual unit, upon completion of a level, and the overall award. The grade for the overall award will be calculated accordingly, with a weighting of 60% on the practical units and 40% on the supporting studies units.

When can I join?

Students can join at any time. Just complete an application form (available online) and return, with the registration fee, to the RSCM Education Administrator.

When will I be assessed?

Students can work at their own pace, and submit work for assessment when they are ready. On the last Friday of each month the RSCM Education Administrator distributes all recent student submissions to the course tutors, and they are marked within a month of that date.

The only exceptions to this rule are the quick study tests. Students can elect in which month they want to undertake these tests. The test papers are issued on the first Monday of that month and students are required to submit their assignment within 14 days of that date.

How long will it take?

As a rough guide, students should set aside at least ten hours for work on each unit of study, which will include reading and reflection, performance preparation, submission and evaluation. Students taking the full award will take, on average, around a year to complete one level.

At which level should I begin?

The level at which you work will be determined by your current level of musical skill and understanding. You will be given guidance on the level at which to begin after you have completed the introductory units.

Level I is for students who are relatively new to their principal skill. By the end of level I students will have demonstrated their ability to play, sing or direct selected items in church services.

Level II is for students who already have good basic technical and musical skills but perhaps have limited experience as a church musician (e.g. competent pianists wishing to transfer to the organ, would begin work at this level). By the end of level II, students will have demonstrated their ability to play, sing or direct the music at a standard church service to a high level.

Level III is for students who are already fairly skilled and who are looking for a musical challenge. By the end of level III, students will have demonstrated their ability to play, sing or direct music at church service with significant musical demands to a high level.

For further information

For further details, please see the RSCM website (www.rscm.com/skills), or contact the RSCM Education Administrator on +44 (0)1722 424843 or skills@rscm.com.



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