

RPS INSTRUMENT PURCHASE GRANTS APPLICATION GUIDELINES 2026



The following guidelines are for principally for music colleges, but may be useful for applicants to read directly.

The Royal Philharmonic Society provides funding to music students – prioritising first year undergraduates – to help them to purchase instruments of a quality appropriate for their training at the following music colleges:

Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Leeds Conservatoire
Royal Academy of Music
Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
Royal College of Music

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Royal Northern College of Music
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
Trinity Laban

This year, we invite each college to put forward the names of **up to three** talented students whose progress, in the opinion of their Head of Faculty and their teacher, is being impeded by a poor instrument and who have limited financial resources available to them.

Applicants usually identify a particular instrument they would like, providing details of this when they apply. Wherever possible, we advise that candidates make time to see and test their desired instrument in person before applying to the RPS.

Who can apply for a grant?

Due to limited funding and the volume of applications we receive, grants are prioritised for existing first year undergraduates, set to enter their second year in Autumn 2026.

It is very rare for grants to be given to students at later stages of study and we can only consider such applications in truly exceptional cases fully explained by the college. Equally we can only consider applications for those set to enter their first undergraduate year in Autumn 2026 where need for a new instrument is urgent and the quality of the candidate's current instrument is already well known to the college, possibly by prior acquaintance through the college's junior department.

What can they apply for?

Please note, priority is given to students needing to purchase a **principal study instrument** (for string instruments, this includes bows). Given the demand for these, it is only in exceptional cases that we can consider supporting the purchase of an auxiliary or second study instrument.

This year we aim to give a total of £12,000 in grants. Individual grants are usually in the region of a few hundred pounds and rarely exceed £1,000. Students applying are asked to bear such figures in mind and only submit applications for instruments that they can afford with such a contribution from us and whatever other funds they can amass, and that are suitable to their needs at this stage in their development.

We regret applications for keyboard instruments cannot be considered.

What is required to apply?

We ask each college to take the lead in collating and submitting applications. We cannot accept applications directly from students. Due to limited funds available, each college should put forward no more than three students for consideration. It is entirely at the discretion of each college how they invite or select applications from students to submit, in accordance with relevant equal opportunities or inclusivity policies.

Application form

Each student applying should complete a copy of our application form sent to colleges. Please ensure you have the up-to-date 2026 form with this year's date at the top. Wherever possible, the form should be completed by the student themselves, not by parents, guardians, college staff or others, unless support in doing so is required for access reasons. They should type their answers into the form on a computer (not write answers by hand) and return their completed and saved file to the college ahead of the closing date.

Both the student and college should ensure the application form is completed fully before submitting it to us. We ask that students complete all sections of the application form, as the panel will not be able to assess applications which are incomplete or missing key information.

At the end of the application form, there is space for the college to include the two references (as detailed below). Once this section is complete, please save each application form as a separate word document and label as follows:

RPS IPG Applicant's forename and surname

Individual applications that are incomplete or not submitted in this way will not be accepted.

References

The college should gather references from the applicant's instrumental teacher and Head of Faculty. These should be individualised, and reference the student's ability and specific need for a new instrument. Referees should ideally endorse/comment on the particular instrument the student wishes to purchase and what benefit it will have. A general reference without this is unlikely to help the applicant's cause and will directly affect their chance of being selected.

Both references should be included in the application form with the name and role of each referee clearly stated. A signature for these is not required.

If for any reason, one or more of the references cannot be included in this way, please email us at admin@philharmonicsociety.uk to let us know, well in advance of our closing date of 11am on Friday 27 March 2026.

When is the closing date?

The college should send completed application forms containing the references as word documents (one completed document per applicant), with a list of each applicant's name and instrument in the body of the email, to Emily Porter, RPS Administrator, at admin@philharmonicsociety.uk no later than **11am on Friday 27 March 2026**.

Terms and Conditions

On receipt of all applications, we assemble a panel comprising select members of the RPS Board and Council and external experts to review them.

We aim to advise music colleges of the outcome by the end of May. We will do so to the college's designated contact who submitted the applications and notify them of next steps. Please note the Royal Philharmonic Society's decision is final. While the Society reserves the right to make additional enquiries about any of the applications it receives, it cannot enter into any other discussion or correspondence, nor give reasons for decisions made by the panel.

Our notification to music colleges will explain how students should then contact us directly to confirm that they accept the terms of the grant. At this stage we will advise them on how the grant may be issued, but in brief:

1. The grant recipient (or a parent/guardian) may pay the seller for their instrument in full then send the RPS a copy of the receipt as proof of the transaction. We will then directly reimburse the recipient (or parent/guardian) for the agreed amount.

2. Alternatively the grant recipient may pay the seller for their instrument, less the amount of their grant. The seller may then invoice the RPS for the balance. The invoice must clearly state the full purchase price of the instrument and confirm that the recipient has paid the remaining amount. The RPS will then pay the grant direct to the seller.

If the recipient is unable to pay by either of these methods, they must notify us well in advance of the purchase, so we may explore if other options are possible.

A grant may only be used for the purchase of the instrument stated in the application. If, for any reason, the student subsequently decides to purchase an alternative instrument, or if the price stated in the application changes, **approval must first be obtained by us**. Wherever possible, we advise that candidates make time to see and test their desired instrument in person before applying, but we acknowledge that this may not always be possible and we aim to be as flexible as we can in permitting them to use the grant to purchase an equivalent instrument where needs be.

Usually, we expect instruments to be purchased within six months of a grant being approved, and the RPS informed by the student as soon as the purchase is complete. The RPS reserves the right to withdraw a grant if the purchase has not been completed within this time, unless our prior approval has been obtained.

Students using an instrument bought with the assistance of a grant from the Royal Philharmonic Society are expected to acknowledge this in their biographies and any printed programme for the duration of their studies.

As we will proudly regard grant recipients as RPS beneficiaries, we may ask in return that recipients help us tell our Members and the wider public about how we are supporting them, most likely in the form of a blog or video accounting their story that we can share online.

The information provided in applications will only be used in accordance with our Privacy Policy as found on [our website](#).

About the Royal Philharmonic Society

The Royal Philharmonic Society – a registered charity – has been at the heart of music for over 200 years, creating opportunities for musicians to excel, and championing the vital role that music plays in all our lives.

Through our programme of grants, commissions, professional development and performance opportunities, we help many performers and composers overcome barriers to progress and fulfil their potential. Through the annual RPS Awards – described by *The Sunday Times* as ‘the biggest night in UK classical music’ – we celebrate musical accomplishments UK-wide and tell a vital story of what music-makers do for the benefit of others. Through RPS Membership and our new talks and events, we aim to cultivate greater pride and curiosity in classical music. Through all our endeavours, we are dedicated to proving classical music’s rightful and powerful place in society.

Any further queries?

You are welcome to contact Emily Porter, RPS Administrator, at admin@philharmonicsociety.uk or 020 7287 0019.