

NEW COLLEGE OXFORD
LAY CLERKS' TERMS & CONDITIONS

Revised January 2026

1. ROLE

New College Choir is made up of both Lay Clerks and Academical (student) Clerks, who provide the alto, tenor and bass sections. The choir sings a varied and challenging repertoire, and singing of professional standards is demanded from all members of the choir. Lay Clerks are expected to demonstrate a higher level of expertise and experience than the Academical Clerks, to whom they fulfil an important role as mentors. They are expected to provide a crucial measure of musical stability in a choir where a third of the students leave each year.

It is expected that Lay Clerks will supplement their income from the college with external work. This must be managed carefully, so as not to cause undue conflict with the clerk's commitment to the choir, but work supportive of a clerk's professional development is recognised as a legitimate reason for absence, provided it is agreed with the Organist with sufficient notice.

2. STATUTORY DUTIES

Lay Clerks are appointed by the Warden and Fellows of the college. The appointment is subject to a probationary period of two terms.

Lay Clerks are required to sing at a choral service in chapel on the days specified by the Organist below in the Table of Services during the eight weeks of the three university terms—Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity—beginning on the Friday immediately before Full Term and ending the Sunday immediately after Full Term. Dates of term can be found on the Oxford University website: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/dates-of-term>

In addition to the weekly schedule of services, Lay Clerks are also required to sing at extra services as defined in the *Schedule* (below), which are significant events in the college calendar, such as Carol Services and Gaudes.

The weekly pattern of services will be determined by the Organist, and is laid out below.

When necessary, Lay Clerks will be required to sing at Memorial Services for Warden or Fellows, and at the installation of a new Warden.

Rehearsals take place in chapel or the Song Room.

Services may be filmed and live-streamed on the college's YouTube channel, as determined by the Organist. The current pattern is as follows: Sunday Evensongs and extra services, such as Carol Services and Memorials.

Full notice will be given but the Organist retains the right to change the timetable and pattern of services when necessary.

Timetable

Monday	17.20	rehearsal	18.15	Evensong (ATB)
Tuesday	17.20	rehearsal	18.15	Evensong
Tuesday	20.30	rehearsal	21.00	Compline (twice per term)
(when Compline is sung, Evensong may be replaced by the shorter service of Vespers)				
<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>no duties, except for 'specials' such as BBC Radio 3 Choral Evensong</i>			
Thursday	17.20	rehearsal	18.15	Evensong

(alternate weeks: full choir service alternating with chorister-only service; either Vespers or Evensong.)

Friday	17.15	rehearsal	18.15	Evensong (unaccompanied)
Saturday	16.45	rehearsal	17.45	Evensong (or Sung Eucharist)
Sunday	16.45	rehearsal	17.45	Evensong

Services during half term will always be sung by the clerks alone (including Tuesday Vespers if it falls in this week), apart from the final weekend, which will be full choir.

Further rehearsal of all clerks of up to ten hours per year may be called at times determined by the Organist. Additional rehearsals beyond the 10-hour quota will be advertised in advance and paid at the rate as defined in the *Schedule*.

Additional rehearsal of solos or 'verses' may be arranged by mutual agreement, at the instigation of the Organist or the clerk(s) performing: these ordinarily take place just before a full rehearsal, and are considered part of the statutory duties of a lay clerk. They should not occupy more than 60 minutes per clerk per term; verses are distributed among all lay and academical clerks, and many are dealt with as part of the full choir rehearsal.

The description of duties is indicative of the expectations of a Lay Clerk, but is not definitive. There may be occasional additional duties that could be reasonably expected of a Lay Clerk; although account will be taken of a clerk's other commitments, a degree of flexibility is desirable. In the case of a commitment outside Oxford, transport will be provided, or a clerk's reasonable travel expenses reimbursed on production of proof of payment.

3. EXTRA COMMITMENTS

Tours and recordings

The choir generally makes one recording per year, often but not always in early July. Tours almost invariably take place during the vacations. Advance notice will be given as dates become available. There are ordinarily no choir commitments in August, but other months may be occupied with touring and other extra activities. Lay Clerks are expected to discuss with the Organist any commitments which would make them unavailable for tours, concerts and recordings, and to give him suitable advance notice of major professional engagements which would take them out of any choir commitment.

Fees

Fees are paid for concerts and recordings (and for extras, such as photo shoots, or additional rehearsals as defined below). The current rates are set out in the attached *Schedule*. On tours a *per diem* allowance (paid at rates recommended by the HMRC for the relevant country in which the tour takes place) is paid to each clerk, when meals are not provided by host institutions.

Solo fees

The choir sometimes performs large-scale works with ‘step-out’ soloists in concert. Extra fees will be paid to those whose solo workload requires significant extra preparation and demands a high standard of technical assurance. Since no two pieces demand the same combination of soloists, or make the same demands of singers, the Organist will propose remuneration on a case-by-case basis. Where appropriate, and as determined by the Organist, similar extra fees will be paid to clerks taking arias in a liturgical performance, e.g. Passions by Bach performed in the context of a chapel service.

Livestreaming fees

Lay Clerks will receive an additional payment for livestreamed services at the rate of 25% of the deputy fee (the equivalent of an agreed service fee). The number of services will be capped at 27 per year: one per week plus certain special services, such as All Souls. Livestreamed services will remain on YouTube for one week after being broadcast.

4. SALARY, FEES, DEPUTIES & ABSENCES

Salary & fees

The current annual salary is set out in the Addendum below; it increases in line with the College’s annual pay award to staff. The college is unable to provide accommodation – although application can be made to the Home Bursar to check if unused graduate rooms become available in the summer vacation. College accommodation of this sort is always provided on a temporary basis, at the standard graduate college rent.

The post is pensionable (further details may be obtained from the Bursary) and includes free Associate (Social) Membership of the College MCR with associated benefits (including subsidised meals). Additionally, lay clerks may dine at various times throughout the academic year at High Table on Sundays at the invitation of the Precentor and Organist.

Deputies and Absences

There is currently no fixed number of services which Lay Clerks may miss for other professional engagements. However, the terms of engagement expect that in general choir activities will take priority, and attendance is expected at major services (such as Carol Services) and concerts. The Organist must be consulted well in advance before absence can be agreed. If a Lay Clerk wishes to be absent for a commitment for which the other Lay Clerk of his voice part is already absent, he must seek the Organist’s permission, having first ascertained the availability of an accredited deputy. Once an absence has been agreed with the Organist, clerks should either write it on the board in the clerks’ vestry or give notice by email circulation to all choir colleagues.

Annual recurring services for which most requests for absence will not be approved are: Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day (Thursday in the sixth week of Eastertide), Corpus Christi (the Thursday following Trinity Sunday), and the Carol Services. In extraordinary circumstances an absence request may be approved, but never to enable a clerk to sing a service elsewhere.

Lay Clerks are responsible for booking their own deputies, from the choir’s accredited deputy list, after prior consultation with the Organist. All deputies on this list must have undergone full

employment checks and possess an Enhanced DBS Clearance: it is not permissible to book any singer not listed. Each Lay Clerk is responsible for the payment of any deputy, except in the case of illness; the college Bursary deducts any deputy fees from a clerk's monthly salary payment.

5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW

Lay Clerks are expected to take responsibility for their professional development, by arranging voice lessons, by seeking appropriate external work (in consultation with the Organist where absences from choir commitments is needed), and by taking all necessary precautions to maintain a good level of general and vocal health.

An annual assessment of Lay Clerks on permanent contracts, in which the Organist and an external observer will hear the clerk sing a solo piece, forms part of the review process. Informal meetings will also provide both Lay Clerk and Organist with an opportunity to discuss any issues relevant to the individual's performance in the choir. All discussion will be part of a two-way process intended to enhance the clerk's personal development within and contribution to the choir. The records of all assessments will be agreed and retained by both parties.

Singing lessons

As part of its commitment to Lay Clerks' professional development, the choir will pay for singing lessons up to the value of £720 per year, on receipt by the choir office of the singing teachers' invoices. Singing teachers should be approved by the Organist, and may be contacted directly by him, with the Lay Clerk's consent, to discuss any issues in regard to which their input would be valuable. The allowance is renewed on an annual basis, and does not accrue from year to year if unspent.

Terms of appointment

All clerks are required to hold an Enhanced DBS Clearance, organized and managed by the safeguarding manager at New College School, and paid for by the college. During their term of service, the college will also pay for the online annual updating service. Full employment checks must be completed in advance of taking up the post. Clerks must abide by the terms of the annually-updated Memo to Clerks.

The Organist welcomes feedback from all members of the choir, is keen to hear of any problems and will be happy to meet informally to discuss any relevant issues. Formal representations from the Lay Clerks to the College should be made via the Precentor, Professor David Parrott.

Any safeguarding concerns should be addressed to the Headmaster, Dr Matthew Jenkinson, and/or to the Organist.

NOTICE

The terms of notice are set out in the accompanying Statement of Main Terms of Employment which should be read with these Terms & Conditions, along with the Employee Handbook.