

Professor Jane Norman
Vice-Chancellor's Office
University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

17th March 2026

Dear Professor Norman, Members of the University Council and Executive Board,

Alumni Response to Proposed Music Course Closures

As former Music students of the University, we are writing to reiterate the sadness and concern around the proposed closure of undergraduate Music courses at Nottingham. Our collective careers show how the Music Department has been a cornerstone for the cultural economy over many years, enabling us to have a positive impact extensively across the UK music sector and beyond. We hope that our voices, along with the letters from multiple national and international music organisations, will support you in making the right long-term decision.

Endangering the national talent pipeline

Industry Impact: The UK music industry is a multi-billion-pound sector that relies on a steady flow of highly trained professionals. Many alumni have publicly stated how the University of Nottingham Music Department was instrumental to their careers in music, including high-profile musicians, and those who have forged careers in education, academia, composition, industry, publishing and leading arts organisations across the country.

Supply Line for the Music Education Workforce: the department is a pioneer among Russell Group universities by embedding music education modules in its courses, and holding partnerships with Nottingham Music Service and local schools. A disproportionate number of graduates have gone on to be music teachers and a significant proportion have remained in the East Midlands, sustaining the musical ecosystem in some of the UK's most socio-economically deprived areas. A third of Nottingham Music Hub staff are also graduates from the Music Department. This provides a long-term solution to the national music teacher shortage, ensuring the UK's £8 billion music industry has a diverse intake of future talent.

Irreversibility: The Department is a core part of the music education ecosystem in the East Midlands. If closed, its specialist facilities, infrastructure, and unique community - an ecosystem

which has taken many years to build - will be extremely difficult to reinstate. This would create a permanent "cold spot" for higher music education in the East Midlands. And the University would be held responsible for undermining the regional music education system for years to come.

Loss of World-Leading Research & Reputation

Academic Excellence: The department is a long-standing centre for world-leading research, ranking 2nd in the University in the most recent national research assessment. In the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF), 100% of its research was recognized internationally, with 90% classed as world-leading or internationally excellent. For many of us, the primary reason that we chose to study music at Nottingham was for its excellent reputation in teaching and research.

Top-Tier Efficiency: In the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF), the Music Department ranked 7th among Russell Group universities for research outputs. This places it ahead of many much larger departments, demonstrating that its small size produces an outsized return on the University's investment.

External Grant Acquisition: The Department consistently secures substantial external funding from bodies such as the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the European Research Council. As well as funding music research, these grants provide the University with "overhead" income that supports broader institutional infrastructure. For example, the Department has just secured a £1.2 million AHRC infrastructure grant to upgrade research spaces and technology supporting immersive and interdisciplinary music research. The investment will strengthen regional partnerships, advance technologies such as AI, augmented and virtual reality, and help develop new audiences and future generations of musicians.

Reputational and Financial Value: Closing a department that performs at this level contradicts the University's mission to be a leading research-intensive institution. By cutting music, the University is not just closing a course; it is resigning its position as a world-leading research authority and sacrificing the significant external funding and prestige that these high-performing academics bring to Nottingham, directly impacting the University's global rankings.

Erosion of Local & Regional Culture

Community Engagement: The department is deeply embedded in Nottingham's cultural life through partnerships with schools, music hubs, churches, local arts organisations, venues, charities, and professional ensembles like the BBC Concert Orchestra. Much of the department's community impact is research-led, rated as having "outstanding" or "very considerable" impact in the REF 2021.

Regional Cultural Leadership: The department acts as the primary anchor for the Regional Music Stakeholders' Group, a network connecting over 30 local arts organisations and charities.

Its removal would dismantle the central leadership that coordinates musical life across the East Midlands.

Student Experience and Attraction: The vibrant extra-curricular musical life on campus is an important part of the student experience at the University. The strength of this offer is also a key attraction for many who choose Nottingham to study other subjects. As former music students, who have run and participated in the ensembles and other musical activities across many decades, we know that the musical life on campus cannot be sustained to the high standard expected from a university of Nottingham's standing, without the staff, students and resources of the Music Department.

Inadequate Alternatives: The University's proposal to replace degree courses with extracurricular "music clubs" is an insufficient substitute that cannot support a professional-grade cultural ecosystem.

Contradiction with National Policy

Policy Misalignment: The proposal comes just as the UK government is moving to revitalize arts education, e.g. by scrapping the EBacc to encourage more students to study a broader range of subjects, like music, as outlined in the DfE Curriculum Review (Nov. 2025). The launch of the National Centre for Arts and Music Education in 2026 also represents a major shift in government strategy to ensure the UK music industry remains a global leader, signalling a "renaissance" in arts funding and infrastructure. This is part of the Government's 2025 Industrial Strategy, which has identified the creative industries as one of eight sectors at the heart of the UK's growth story in the next 10 years.

Educational Gap: Enrollments for GCSE music have already been increasing over the last two years. In 2025, entries rose by 6.1% to over 38,000, following an 8.7% rise in 2024. Closing higher education routes at this time creates a "broken pipeline" where students encouraged to study music in school will have nowhere to pursue it at an advanced level regionally. The University's withdrawal from this space would not only be a local loss, but a retreat from a high-growth area of national importance.

Long-Term Economic and Social Value

Beyond the music industry: While the University cites "low demand" and financial viability, as alumni we know that music education fosters essential transferable skills like creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration that are vital for the future workforce and highlight the broader economic ROI of the course. Students should have the opportunity to study the subjects that they are most passionate about, and for the love of learning.

Legacy: The Music Department has educated thousands of professionals since 1881. Ending this 145-year legacy for short-term cost-savings will remove the foundation on which the University's long-standing cultural reputation is built.

Having experienced the positive impact of the music degrees first-hand, we hope that the University will carefully consider the damage that the current proposal would cause, and work constructively with the Department to retain music as an academic discipline.

Yours sincerely,

Signatories				
Hayley	Absalom	2005	Senior Marketing Manager	Transgressive Records
Lara	Agland	2017	Producer	
Dr Mark	Audus	1982 (BA) 2008 (PhD)	Website Editor; Independent Musicologist	Europadisc Ltd
Dr Peter	Auker	2021	Musicologist, Pianist, Author, Examiner (Trinity College London)	
Dr Maxwell	Ayamba BEM	2025	CEO	Sheffield Environmental Movement (SEM)
Melanie	Baker	1994		
Andrew	Baker	1991	Freelance Music Publisher	Morthanveld Publishing Ltd
Dr Alice	Barron	2007	Violinist & Lecturer in Music	Freelance incl. Shakespeare's Globe / University of Oxford
Peter	Beardsworth	2011	Musician	Self-employed
The Revd Jonathan	Bell	2006		Church of England
Matt	Bement	1999		
Dr Charlotte	Bentley	2014	Lecturer in Music	Newcastle University
Dr Diana	Bickley	1966	Class and Private Teacher; running and conducting choirs and orchestras, MD for shows, retired	
Ellen	Bicknell	2024	Activities & Music Coordinator	Colten Care
Katie	Blackbourne	2016	Senior Client Services Manager	See Tickets by Eventim
Sophie	Bluff (née Denton)	2013	Professional Soprano, Teacher of Academic Music	Various professional groups incl.: Voces8 Foundation and the BBC Singers; Forest School London
Dr Daniel	Boucher	2019 2020		
Lily	Bracegirdle	2014	Freelance Learning Content Manager & UX Researcher	

Signatories

Miss	Brittain	2018	Educator	
Dr Simon	Brown	2009	Lecturer & Director of Education	NTU, The Open University and the Music Learning Collective
Matthew	Buxton	2018		
Rosi	Callery	2012	Head of Planning & Operations	The National Youth Orchestra
Kyle	Campbell	2020		
James	Campling	2019		
Georgia	Cannon	2019	Deputy Welfare Manager	NewstrAid Benevolent Fund
Vivienne	Carter (Lees)	1977	Retired Director of Music (Secondary), Tutor of Management Problem-Solving	University of Salford
Lauren	Cawkwell	2025	Trainee Music Therapist	
Rosie	Clark	2024	Customer Service Coordinator	Thebigword
Jessica	Clarke	2021	Critical Care Nurse	NHS
Caitlin	Connell	2021	Primary Class Teacher and Music Lead	
Catherine	Cook	1996	Music Administrator	Thomas's College
Joanne	Cormac	2006	Associate Professor of Music	University of Nottingham
Dr Ralph	Corrigan	1997		
Adam	Cowlishaw	2007	Regional Head of Strategy	Kenvue
Richard	Cox	2003	Managing Director	Europadisc, Windblowers
Rebecca	Craven	2020 2024	Teacher of Music	
Hannah	Cresswell	2015	Instrumental Music Teacher	
Dr James	Crockford	2007	Dean & Tutor	Jesus College, Cambridge
Miram	Croft	2025	Ministry Trainee	
Alexandra	Crook	2019		
Eloise	Crossman	2023	Proofreader/Quality Assurance Tester, Electronic Notetaker	BYG Systems Limited, The Learning Support Centre
Jack	Crozier	2017	Managing Director	through the noise
Charlotte	Daniel	2011	Head of Singing	Kristian Thomas Company
Gail	Davies-Fidler	2004	Visiting Music Teacher (Singing)	
Jordan	Deans	2020	Subject Lead for Music (Secondary School)	

Signatories

		(delayed to 2022, COVID-19)		
Dr Rebecca	Dellow	1994	Historical Musicologist	
Ed	Denham	2012	Software Developer	InMusic New Zealand
Elizabeth	Dennis	2006	Musician, Musical Director, Theatre Manager	Leicestershire County 006
Bethany	Desmond	2017	General Manager	Just Flutes Ltd
Alpheus	Deverill	2022		
Katherine	Dewar (née Auster)	2011		
Niamh	Donnelly	2022	Royalties Coordinator	Warner Music UK
George	Double	1994	Musician	Self-employed
Helen	Downer	2016	CBT Therapist	
Hannah	Dunster	2007	Charity CEO	Soundcastle
Stephen	Elliott	2000	Head of Music	The Snaith School
Fraser	Ellson	2022	Choral Director & Lay Clerk	Diocese of Arundel & Brighton/Guildford Cathedral
Paul	Emmett	2024	Musician	Self-employed
Serena	Evans	1998		Tower Marketing, Cayman Islands
Phil	Evans	1993	Music Therapist, Director	Attune Music Ltd
Adam	Ewers	2019	Teacher of Music and Drama	Light Hall School
Dr Hugo	Fagandini	2010	Management Consultant	
Madeleine	Faulder (née Simpson)	1994	Director of HR and Organisational Development	Zenics Ltd
Philippa	Fisher	2012	Primary School Teacher and Tutor	
Chris	Ford	1998	Partner	Landseer Asset Management
Miranda	Ford	2012	Management Accountant	Cameron Mackintosh Ltd
Chris	Foster	2007	Head of Academic Music, Fettes College; Tenor; Lay Clerk (Edinburgh, Newcastle, Southwell, Derby); Collaborative Pianist; Conductor	Fettes College
Claire	Franklin	2003	Head of Performing Arts	Bramcote College
Robin Jeremy	Franklin	2012	Director of Music	Royal Russell School
Laura	Freeman	2023	Freelance Music Educator and Musical Director	

Signatories

Amber	Frost	2020 (BA) 2022 (MRes)		
Adeline	Galen	2019	Musician	Self-employed
Oliver	Gaunt	2023		
Melanie	Gilbert	1978	Singing Teacher	
Annie	Gleeson	2010	Librarian	Churchill College, Cambridge
Catherine	Glenister	2024	Music and Audio Producer/ Editor	
Paul	Goodwin	1978	Professor of Historical Music Performance Studies. Former Principal Guest Conductor English Chamber Orchestra, The Academy of Ancient Music, Director Carmel Bach Festival USA	Escuela Superior de Musica Reina Sofia, Madrid
Dr Michael	Graham-Court	2010	Producer	Welsh National Opera
John	Green	1966	Retired Director of Music and ABRSM Examiner	
Sam	Griffiths	2019		
Mike	Gunn	2006	Legal Counsel	Stellantis Financial Services
Frances	Hall	2013	Finance Director - UK Productions	ATG Entertainment
Dr Katy	Hamilton	2003 (BA) 2005 (MA)	Classical Music Writer and Broadcaster	
Rebecca	Hart	2022	Administrative Assistant	Nottingham Music Service
Jessica	Harvey	2022	Teacher of Music	St Thomas More Catholic School, Willenhall
Elinor	Hawkes	2004	Senior Product Manager	Oxford University Press
Emma	Hawkins	2016	Community Partnerships & Marketing Manager	NFP health organisation. Melbourne, Australia
Ruth	Hayden-Cox	2006	English Teacher	Beijing Language and Culture University
Philip	Henderson	2002	Programme Manager	Islington Council
Carolyn	Hendry	1998	Head of Artistic Planning	BBC Concert Orchestra
Matt	Herbert	2019	Music Director	
Simonn	Hetherington Rea	2003 (BA) 2005 (MA)	Corporate Partnerships Manager	
Ellie	Holloway	2021	Teacher	
Stephen	Holmes	1988	Retired (Woodwind and Brass Instrument Retail)	
Jacob	Holmes	2022	Music Teacher & Sound Engineer	

Signatories

Ellie	Hoskin (née Post)	1998		Family business
Amy	Howe	2017	Development Manager	Opera Holland Park
Michael	Hyman	2006	Composer, Orchestrator, Musical Director	
Nancy	Iles	2012	Music Teacher	Simon Balle School
Siân	Jenkins	2019	Senior Partnerships Manager	Royal Ballet and Opera
Gay	Jones	1970	Retired Bookseller and Musician (Rehearsal Pianist and Accompanist)	Self-employed
Owen	Jones	2017	Musician	Self-employed
Gennie	Joy	2012	Senior Leader	Kent Music
Vasilis	Kallis	2003	Professor of Music Theory	University of Nicosia
Dr Emma	Kavanagh	2018	Assistant Professor of Historical Musicology	University College Dublin
Alana	Kearns	2020		
Kayleigh	Kennedy	2014	Primary School Music Teacher	
Katie	Kennedy	1994		
Alice	Kerby	2019	Speech and Language Therapist	Cambian
Annabel	Kidals	2018	Events Manager	BIMM University London
Sol	Kim	2022		
Dr Alexander	Kolassa	2010 & 2015	Senior Lecturer in Music	The Open University
Jade	Kong	2021	Music Teacher	
Helen	Kuby	2018	Musician, French Horn	Royal Academy of Music
Emily	Lawson née Blackwell	2006	Teacher of Music	Nottingham Girls' High School
Leandro	Layne	2006 (BA) 2007 (MA)	Music Teacher and Vice Principal	Providence Elementary School (Barbados)
Roger	Lewis	1976 (BMus Hons)	Former Head of BBC Radio 1 Music Department, Managing Director at EMI Records, President Decca Records, Programme Controller and Managing Director Classic FM	BBC, EMI, Decca, Classic FM
Matthew	Lewis	2011	Software Engineer	Net Purpose
Greg	Link	2014	Bass-Baritone, Actor-Musician & Choir Leader	
Claire	Lisi	2023	Drug Alcohol and Resilience Training Officer	Life Skills Education Charity
Celia	Lister	2005	Head of Marketing and Press	Naxos Music UK
Alyssa	MacGregor-Hastie	2013	Data Engineer	

Signatories

Professor Fiona	Magowan	1988	Professor of Anthropology	Queen's University Belfast
Lauren	March	2020	Events & Music Assistant	Alan March Sport
Sophie	Mart (formerly Pegum)	2018	Senior Careers Consultant	University of Manchester - Alliance Manchester Business School
Arienne	Masters	2021	Head of Music	Westfield
Joseph	Matthews	2011	Teacher	
Lydia	May	2016	Assistant Banking Manager	Handelsbanken
Lydia	Mellor	2016	Music Therapist	Nordoff and Robbins
Mrs	Mills	1990	Teacher	
Sunnay	Mistry	2023	English Teacher (ESL Abroad)	
Felicity	Moore	2006	Technology Product Manager	
Christine	Moore (formerly Pound)	1967		
Dr. César Octavio	Moreno Zayas	2020	General Director	Opera en Movimiento
Mr Thomas	Morris	2025	Tenor Choral Scholar	Norwich Cathedral
Clare	Morris	1994	Music teacher	
Andrew	Moxon	1996 (BA) 1997 (MA)	Head of Performing Arts, Music	Arete Learning Trust, North Yorkshire
Lee	Muncaster	1994	Retired Deputy Head	Leeds Music Service
Janet	Neilson (née Oldham)	1977	Music Teacher	Retired
Jamie	Njoku-Goodwin	2013	Former Chief Executive of UK Music; Former Director of Strategy at No.10 Downing Street. Current Board Director	Royal College of Music, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten Pears Arts, ABRSM
Mr Nicholas	Ong	2020		
Kieran	O'Riordan	1992	Instrumental Music Teacher	Leicestershire Music Service, Stamford Endowed Schools, Loughborough Schools' Foundation, Self-Employed
Alex	Patterson	2009	Director of Music	Salford Cathedral
Jane	Peckham	1972		
Caroline	Pethybridge	2006 (BA) 2007 (MA)	Musician, Composer / Head of Business Operations	Independent / Bigger Picture Finance
Jo	Philpot	1995	HR	Own business
Tom	Philpott	2009	Director of Artistic Planning and Partnerships	Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Helen	Piiparinen	2011	Primary School Teacher	

Signatories

Elizabeth	Pike	1978	Retired Music Teacher	
Mrs	Poppleton	1977	Instrumental Teacher. Former Head of Music (grammar school)	
Felix	Prasad-Weitz	2023		
Freddie	Priestley	2017	Product Analyst	
Sapir	Rajuan	2016	EFL Teacher. Previously Secondary Music School Teacher	
Susan	Rankin	1975	Emeritus Professor of Music	University of Cambridge
Ellie	Rennie	2020	Teacher of Music	Guildford County School (Specialist Music College)
Jenny	Reynolds	1996	Editorial Project Manager	
Miss Emma	Richardson	2015	Software Engineer	
Jessica	Ridgeon (née Melly)	2006	Teacher of Music	St Polycarp's Catholic Primary School
Dan	Riley-Ball	2016	Head of Performing Arts (Teacher)	
Lynsey	Rix	1997	Deputy Headteacher and Director of Music	Moorfield School
Siobhan	Robinson	2018	Primary School Teacher and District Councillor	
Kathleen	Rule	2010 (BA) 2011 (MA)	Concerts Publications Manager	Royal Academy of Music
Emilie	Rumney Scriven	2018	Head Gardener	Pippley Walled Garden
Dr. Maria	Ryan	2010	Assistant Professor of Musicology, Florida State University	
Rebecca	Sackman-Smith	2003	Music Teacher	Buckinghamshire Music Trust
Sheila	Sadler	1965	Proofreader	
Annamarie	Schooling	2022	Previously: Acoustics Consultancy/Acoustical Engineering. Currently: Master's student at Goldsmiths, University of London (MSc Music, Mind and Brain)	
Tim	Selman	2016	Organ Scholar	Lincoln Cathedral
Savannah Nandi	Semple-Sepiso	2025		
Rowena	Sharps	2014	Instrumental Teacher	
Emily	Shell	2024	Student (Masters in Performance at Trinity Laban)	
Debbie	Sheringham	1999	Dance Movement Psychotherapist	

Signatories

Dr Helen	Sills	1964	Independent Scholar and Professional Musician; Author of Stravinsky, God and Time (Brill Press, 2022) and Stravinsky and the Divine (to be published 2026)	
Alison	Slater	1976	Retired from Deputy Director, Academic Services Division	University of Nottingham
Dr Angela Elizabeth	Slater	2012	Freelance Composer, Curator, Scholar and Teacher	Freelance
Dr Neil Tòmas	Smith	2017	Composer / Teaching Fellow in Composition and Creative Musicianship	University of Edinburgh
Karen	Spence-Thomas	1982	Associate Professor (Teaching), Retired	UCL Institute of Education
Emma	Stafford	2017		
Christopher	Stanley	Incomplete MA	Production Sound Mixer for Film & TV	
Alice	Stone	2019	Primary School Teacher	
Matthew	Sturgeon	2012	Music Therapist	Self-employed
Caroline	Swinburne	1982	Piano Teacher and Author of Music-Themed Fiction (debut novel, Solo, published in 2025)	Self-employed
Jessica	Taylor	2003	Director of Music	Private Secondary and Prep School
Mei	Tee	2021		
Caroline	Teodorescu	2016	Arts Support Officer, NPO	Inspire- Culture, Learning, Libraries
Sandra	Thompson	2016	Freelance Musician	
Poppy	Todd	2018	Teacher	
Russell	Torrance	1998	Presenter ABC Classic (Australia)	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Ella	Townsend	2022 (BA) 2024 (MRes)	PhD Music Student (at UoN)	
Hannah	Treacher	2021		
Nathan	Truesdale	2002	Volunteer Engagement Coordinator	Nottingham City Council
Professor Laura	Tunbridge	1997 (MA)	Heather Professor of Music	University of Oxford
Hilary	Waddington	1980	Music Teacher (Head of Music, then peripatetic)	Formerly North Yorkshire County Council, now self-employed
Eleanor	Ward	2002	Executive Director	The Marian Consort
Louise	Waterfield	2012	Senior People & Culture Business Partner	Hotwire Global Public Relations
Mike	Wheeler	1993	Freelance Writer on Music; Adult Education Tutor.	

Signatories

Dr Adam	Whittaker	2012	Associate Professor of Music	
Elena	Wilcox	2022	Administrative Assistant and Visitor Experience Assistant	Fabric and Birmingham Hippodrome
Catherine	Wilde (nee Few)	2007	Solicitor	Oxford University Press
Richard	Wilkins	1976		
Prof. Justin	Williams	2010 (PhD)	Professor of Music	University of Bristol
Dr Frankie	Williams	1969	Retired	
Anna	Williams	2006	Music Editor	
James	Williams	2005 2006	Head of Academic Music	Rugby School
Dr Katherine	Williams	2008 (MA) 2012 (PhD)	Research Fellow in Popular Music Songwriting	University of Huddersfield
Laura	Willis	2010	Development Director	London Philharmonic Orchestra
Niki	Wilson	1994		
Dr Wendy H.W.	Wong	2017	Lecturer (Music History)	Community College, HKU Space, University of Hong Kong
Dean	Wood	2012	Neonatal Music Therapist / Paediatric Psychological Therapist	Noah's Ark Children's Hospice (at UCLH NICU, Great Ormond Street NICU, Barnet Hospital NNU), and Basildon Hospital
Charlotte	Yates	1997	Music Curriculum & Suzuki Violin Teacher	Birmingham Council
Nicola	Zadrozny	2017	Chartered Valuation Surveyor (Company Director)	Bramble & Wagg Ltd
Julia	Zak	2024		