**Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (“ABRSM”)**

# Independent Trustee – About the Role

**WHO WE ARE**

ABRSM is a global music education charity. Founded in 1889 to act as an impartial and expert organisation promoting high standards of musical education and assessment, we work in partnership with four Royal Schools of Music to sustain a long legacy of musical excellence.

At the heart of everything we do is our belief that music enriches lives. Our mission is to bring the joy of music to lives everywhere by inspiring, recognising and supporting the global musical community. We believe that everyone, regardless of age or background, should have the opportunity to realise their musical potential.

More than an awarding organisation, we support learners from the first note they play and empower teachers who help build musical skills and encourage progress.

Our income from educational products and services enables us to meet our charitable goals. We invest all of our surpluses to support teaching, learning and music-making around the world. We support a range of organisations and individuals around the world through sponsorships, partnerships and scholarships. We also contribute to the body of research that provides insight into music teaching and learning, the barriers to musical progress and changes that are happening over time. We champion actively for the benefits of music education.

We collaborate with our partners to develop skills, resources and leadership in the sector, to open up access and opportunity to progress, to drive diversity and inclusion, and to be champions for music learning in all its forms.

Most important of our partners are the Royal Schools of Music. The extensive work these institutions do to support music education in schools and the wider community through their junior conservatoires, access and participation projects and outreach activities plays a vital part in ABRSM achieving its goal of supporting progression and inspiring and enabling the next generation of musicians.

**WHAT WE DO**

Inspired by the joy of music, we provide pathways, assessments, and resources for music learners and teachers. We are the largest music education organisation in the UK, one of its largest music publishers, and a global leader in the provision of music exams, a central part of our identity and reputation.

We provide music exams and assessments for learners of all ages and abilities that are recognised, valued and trusted all over the world. They are designed to encourage musical development, help build musical skills, provide clear goals and empower individuals to find their life with music. We offer regulated assessments to more than 469,000 candidates in over 90 countries every year.

Our annual turnover is around £50m, drawn mostly from exams and related resources, with significant activity in the UK, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and China. More than half of our income is derived from international customers.

Based in offices in London, ABRSM employs over 190 permanent members of staff, draws on the services of over 600 examiners, and has around 600 representatives worldwide.

Three key areas of activity underpin our purpose and vision.

1. **Music Making -** inspiring and celebrating music making and performance, embracing musical diversity and creativity as we help nurture future generations of musicians.

1. **Teaching and Learning -** supporting music teachers and learners and their ongoing learning and development.

1. **Qualifications and Assessments -** growing our portfolio of qualifications to recognise a wide range of musical achievement, embracing increasingly diverse genres, activities and learning settings.

A focus on the needs of our customers is at the core of our plans, which is also guided by principles of educational excellence, collaboration, leadership and advocacy, equality, diversity and inclusion, and sustainability. Whilst we are continuously striving to optimise the experience and value of our core products, we are investing in innovation, developing new propositions and broadening how we support and interact with our worldwide community of teachers and learners.

**MUSIC PUBLISHING**

ABRSM’s wholly owned trading subsidiary, The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (Publishing) Limited, produces, sells and distributes music publications, recordings and digital resources. We are investing in the transformation of our digital publishing business model to optimise value derived from our assets and intellectual property.

## **GOVERNANCE**

ABRSM is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity whose members are the Royal College of Music, Royal Academy of Music, the Trustees of the Royal Northern College of Music Endowment Fund and the Trustees of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Trust (together, the “Royal Schools”).

The Governing Body of ABRSM consists of twelve trustees who are also directors. Each Royal School appoints two representatives and there are four independent trustees, one of whom is the Chairman.

The Governing Body delegates detailed oversight of financial matters to a Finance & Business Development Committee. This committee oversees budgeting and performance, accounts and audit, investment plans, pricing and distributions.

The Governing Body delegates detailed oversight of risk management to the Audit & Risk Committee.

The Music Education Advisory Committee advises the Executive and Governing Body on the musical integrity, quality and relevance of ABRSM’s offer in the context of a contemporary global landscape. It has a varied and representative membership designed to bring in external voices, including through its three Youth Voice panels.

Remuneration Committee, Nominations Committee and Ethics Committee meetings are held as and when required.

## **GOVERNING BODY**

Find out more about our current trustees here

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chief Executive of ABRSM is Chris Cobb, who was appointed in January 2021.

## **THE ROLE**

We are looking for a two independent trustees to contribute to the overall strategic direction and governance of ABRSM in its role as an international leader in music education.

We are seeking dynamic, strategic thinkers who can demonstrate leadership in developing educational technology or digital learning—ideally at scale and/or who have a professional background in publishing, international business management, law or risk management.

They will ensure ABRSM continues to serve teachers and learners worldwide by delivering meaningful, accessible, and high-impact music experiences.

As a trustee and a director of ABRSM, you will:

* Bring insight and challenge to our digital innovation journey by steering plans for products, platforms, and customer engagement.
* Bring insight and support the development of our digital marketing strategy to grow audience reach and conversion.
* Inform our business development strategies in UK and international markets, particularly across Asia.
* Champion innovation, inclusion, and sustainability in our products and services design and delivery.
* Ensure that our mission is delivered efficiently, responsibly, and in accordance with ABRSM’s values and legal obligations.
* Provide scrutiny and support in identifying and mitigating legal, regulatory, and reputational risks, especially in cross-border contexts.
* Serve as a critical friend to the executive team, offering constructive challenge and guidance.
* Act in the charity’s best interests, exercising reasonable skill and care

**Qualities and Experience:**

* Proven leadership in developing educational technology or digital learning—ideally at scale OR
* Proven experience of digital marketing strategies, customer journeys, and content-driven brand growth OR
* Proven experience of commercial business management, ideally publishing, from a sales, legal or risk perspective.
* Strong analytical and strategic thinking skills, with an ability to assess risk and opportunity in a charity setting.
* Independence of mind, curiosity and motivation to challenge the status quo.
* Strong communication skills and the ability to contribute to constructive board dialogue

Experience as a Trustee or Non-Executive Director is welcome but **not essential**—we value fresh perspectives and diverse lived experience.

**TIME COMMITMENT**

The Governing Body meets four times a year, plus a full day’s strategic planning day.

The expected time commitment for the new trustee will be approximately 4 formal meetings a year (two hours each) plus the Strategy Away Day. In addition, subject to complementary skills and capacity, the trustees may be invited to join a committee. Finance & Business Development Committee meets four times a year. Audit & Risk Committee meets three times a year.