

Recommended Salary Scales for Organists

1 January 2022 – 31 December 2023

There have been significant changes to the working conditions of organists since the COVID-19 outbreak, mainly resulting from the widespread adoption of streaming systems to broadcast services. Historically high levels of inflation represent an additional challenge in calculating appropriate salary scales. The SFO recognises that these changes affect churches as much as they affect organists, so in revising this guide the SFO has sought to make recommendations that are sustainable and practical for both parties. The information below constitutes the SFO's recommendations for best practice; rather than dictating exact procedures and amounts, it should form a starting point from which organists and churches can enter into dialogue and consider their unique circumstances.

Level of adjustment

After careful consideration, the SFO Committee agreed that the 2019–2020 Organists' Recommended Salary Scales (extended to 2021) should be increased by 6% from 1st January 2022, reflecting the same increase in the Retail Price Index across the two year period 2020–21. With a 10% increase in RPI across the first six months of 2022, it is likely that any recommendation below the 20–21 figure of 6% will only necessitate an even larger increase in future: in respect of promoting transparency and sustainability, the SFO recommends spreading the load of these high inflationary levels through smaller increases over a longer period.

The new scales are endorsed by The Church of Scotland through its Mission and Discipleship Council. It is intended that these scales should remain in force until 31st December 2023, at which time they will be reviewed. The 2022–2023 scales are shown below with the 2019–2020 (extended until 31 December 2021) scales shown for reference.

Streaming of services

Musicians' recorded performances are protected as property rights by statute, and consent for broadcasting these performances is not often given within existing contracts. The Musicians' Union, with endorsement from the Royal College of Organists, published guidance on per-service additional fees for streamed worship, but it is the opinion of the SFO that these rates are too high to represent a sustainable solution for many churches on a weekly basis. It is, however, crucial that the intellectual property rights of organists are protected and respected; the SFO therefore recommends that churches obtain written consent from organists prior to any streaming.

Streaming can enable participation in worship from those unable to attend services in person. Where this is the intention, the SFO recommends the broadcast is made available for one week, or until the next service (whichever is sooner), with no increased fee for organists (although consent must still be obtained). For broadcasts remaining available over longer periods – e.g. special services – the SFO recommends organists are paid an additional 50% fee for audio recording, and additional 100% fee for video recordings.

Salary	<i>2019–21 rate for reference</i>	Extra service or deputy fee	<i>2019–21 rate for reference</i>	Wedding fee
A: Churches without choirs				
£1,802–2,809	<i>£1,700–2,650</i>	£69	<i>£65</i>	£103
B: Churches with choirs making an occasional contribution to worship				
£2,809–4,399	<i>£2,650–4,150</i>	£69–85	<i>£65–80</i>	£103–127
C: Churches with choirs making a substantial individual contribution to worship				
£4,399–5,883	<i>£4,150–5,550</i>	£85–111	<i>£80–105</i>	£127–167
D: Churches with competent choirs singing full choral services				
£5,883–8,798	<i>£5,550–£8,300</i>	£111–122	<i>£105–115</i>	£167–183
E: Churches employing a professional director of music with extensive responsibilities				
£8,798+	<i>£8,300+</i>	£122+	<i>£115+</i>	£183+

Notes

1. To enhance transparency, and encourage conversation between organists and employers, the SFO has instituted two major changes from the advice given in previous years:

- Funerals are brought under the same classification as ‘extra services’.
- With the vast majority of weddings now being recorded – either professionally or by guests – the former system of additional recording fees is no longer practical. These new fees are set at 150% of the previous rates, and there should **not** be any additional uplift for recording.

2. The SFO seeks to promote a culture of professionalism with the publication of this document, believing ‘the labourer is worthy of their hire’. As such, the salary bandings take into consideration the training, skill and preparation necessary for an organist to fulfil their duties. Churches and organists alike should ensure the levels of competency offered and requested are appropriate to the style of worship, and can build mutual respect by fully considering the responsibilities of both parties.

3. These guidelines are not mandatory. They exist to provide a basis from which organists and churches can agree solutions appropriate to their individual circumstances. The SFO encourages open dialogue and negotiation between parties in these matters.

4. These salary scales are endorsed by the Mission and Discipleship Council of The Church of Scotland, although are applicable to other denominations.

5. This document does not constitute formal legal advice. The current Church of Contract pro-forma contract for organists is available at <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/music-for-worship/church-organists>. The SFO encourages parties to seek advice from a solicitor or professional adviser on any matters regarding taxation or individual contracts.

6. This document will be reviewed before the end of 2023, with revised figures produced for 2024.