

# MUSIC PERFORMANCE GRADES



Level 1 Award in Music Performance  
Level 2 Certificate in Music Performance  
Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance

**3 December 2020**

# Qualification Specification: Performance Grades

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# 1. Introduction

## About ABRSM

At ABRSM we aim to support learners and teachers in every way we can. One way we do this is through the provision of high quality and respected music qualifications. These exams provide clear goals, reliable and consistent marking, and guidance for future learning. They are a tried and tested way to inspire musical achievement and, with backing from four Royal Schools of Music in the UK, are valued and trusted around the world.

We offer a comprehensive portfolio of qualifications and assessments for a range of instruments (including singing) and genres, as well as for Music Theory and Practical Musicianship. Our syllabuses are based on core musical skills – listening, performing, reading, writing, musical knowledge and understanding, and improvising. Together these skills give learners a good foundation for their musical development and a range of different musical activities.

Taking an exam is an exciting challenge with many benefits for learners. There's the boost to motivation which comes from working towards an exam. There's an opportunity to discover and perform some fantastic music and to build new skills. And there's the sense of achievement which comes from successfully reaching a musical goal.

We do everything we can to make the exam experience positive and rewarding. We work closely with specialists, teachers and examiners to provide syllabuses of the highest quality with a wide variety of pieces and songs to choose from. We train our friendly, expert examiners to ensure that all candidates are rewarded and recognised for their musical achievements during the assessment. Using our clear, easy-to-understand marking criteria examiners can assess all candidates reliably, objectively and consistently. Finally, candidates receive a mark form containing valuable feedback, with a celebratory certificate for everyone who passes.

Whether you're a learner or teacher, we hope our syllabuses inspire and support your music learning or teaching. We wish you every success for your musical journey!

### **Our mission**

ABRSM's mission is to inspire musical achievement. We do this in partnership with four Royal Schools of Music: Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music, Royal Northern College of Music and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

We are passionate about music, its value as an art form and the importance of music education. We believe that being involved with music gives people unique, positive experiences with life-long benefits.

Through our world-leading assessments, books and resources we provide people worldwide with the tools they need to teach, learn, make and enjoy music. Our scholarships, donations, sponsorship and partnerships create opportunities for people of all ages to discover music and fulfil their potential. Everything we do is designed to support learners and teachers on their musical journey.

### **Who we are**

We are the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), a company registered in England and Wales (company registration number 1926395) and a registered charity (charity registration number 292182). Our registered office is at 4 London Wall Place, London EC2Y 5AU.

Find out more at [www.abrsm.org](http://www.abrsm.org).

## About this qualification specification

### What it covers

This specification provides all the relevant requirements and information teachers, candidates, parents and organisations need in order to prepare for the following qualifications – ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Performance (Grades 1, 2 and 3), ABRSM Level 2 Certificate in Music Performance (Grades 4 and 5) and ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance (Grades 6, 7 and 8). It also provides information on how the exams will be assessed, their learning outcomes, and regulated qualification details.

Further details, as well as administrative information about the exams, are given in ABRSM's Exam Regulations ([www.abrsm.org/examregulations](http://www.abrsm.org/examregulations)) which should be read before making an exam booking.

### Document structure

This specification contains six sections. Sections 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 apply to all subjects (instruments) included in the Music Performance suite of graded exams. Section 3 is the syllabus, which contains requirements and repertoire lists specific to individual subjects. The syllabuses (Section 3s) for all subjects can be found at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

### Validity of this specification

This specification is valid from 3 December 2020. The repertoire lists contained within each instrumental/singing syllabus (Section 3) have specific validity periods, confirmed in the respective syllabus.

We may update this specification from time to time, but we will not make changes to the relevant syllabus (Section 3) during its period of validity, other than in exceptional circumstances. In such cases, advance notice of any changes will be posted on our website, as will advance notice of any planned syllabus refreshes. The latest version of this specification will be available from [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

## About our Music Performance qualifications

### Qualification objectives

Our Music Performance qualifications are designed for learners to demonstrate a combination of key performance-related skills such as instrumental (or singing) technique and control, musical interpretation, communication, and delivery. Each grade is progressive and represents a new challenge for the learner, providing motivation and structure to hone and refine their performance skills.

Exams allow learners to receive formal recognition of the level of mastery they have achieved, and feedback to support their learning journey. Music Performance qualifications further allow learners to be rewarded and recognised for their skills in delivering a whole performance, communicating musically over a sustained programme.

### Who the qualifications are for

These qualifications are intended for learners who are interested in developing their performance skills holistically. Candidates may be entered at any age, but those entering for Grades 6–8 must fulfil the prerequisite detailed on page 10.

Every effort has been made to feature a broad range of repertoire to suit and appeal to candidates of different ages, backgrounds and interests. In order to provide flexibility when creating a

musical programme, candidates are also able to include one piece/song of their own choice (of an appropriate standard).

We are committed to providing all candidates with fair access to our assessments by putting in place access arrangements and reasonable adjustments where required. Music Performance qualifications are particularly accessible as there are no written or spoken elements and no supporting tests at any grade.

### **Structure**

Each Music Performance qualification has been carefully designed to assess synoptically the underpinning knowledge and understanding required for music performance. At all grades, these creative skills are presented through the technical control of an instrument, interpretation of repertoire, and the delivery and successful communication of a selected programme of repertoire. Collectively, these skills enable candidates to progress to higher grades and other qualifications in the creative arts sector.

Candidates are required to perform a programme of four pieces/songs, three from set repertoire lists and one that is their own choice. For certain instruments and grades, the own choice piece can be performed on a related instrument. Each piece/song is equally weighted in marks and an additional mark is awarded for the performance as a whole.

### **Progression route**

ABRSM Music Performance qualifications are available from Grade 1 to Grade 8 and each grade progresses from the previous in their level of demand. The syllabuses that form Section 3 of this specification detail the subjects covered and the grades available for each. It is not a requirement for any candidate to complete one grade before moving on to the next although there is a prerequisite for entering a Grade 6, 7 or 8 exam (see page 6).

This new suite of Music Performance qualifications embeds from Grade 1 the importance of understanding how a performance is delivered to best reflect the technique and character of the performer.

Music Performance candidates may, during their learning journey, wish to focus on their all-round musical skills and progress across to our Practical Music suite of qualifications. These long-standing qualifications are designed for learners to demonstrate a combination of performance and other all-round musical skills and knowledge. Each grade is progressive and represents a new challenge for the learner, providing motivation and structure to develop and hone their musical skills. Practical Music qualifications further allow learners to be rewarded and recognised for their skills in performing songs as well as technique, notation, listening and musical perception.

The nature of both sets of qualifications makes them an ideal platform from which to progress to ABRSM's diploma offer, beginning with the performance-only ARSM. ARSM gives candidates greater flexibility and responsibility in programme building as well as providing further opportunity to develop performance technique and interpretative skills while extending their repertoire.

Through a combination of live and written components, candidates at DipABRSM (Music Performance), and the higher LRSM and FRSM levels, demonstrate their performance, communication and research skills, as well as their musical knowledge and understanding. DipABRSM progresses to LRSM level and LRSM to FRSM. Further details of these can be found in Section 6 of this specification and at [www.abrsm.org/diplomas](http://www.abrsm.org/diplomas).

### Prerequisite

We believe that a thorough understanding of the elements of music is essential for a full and satisfying performance at the higher grades. Our Music Theory graded exams assess candidates on their ability to identify, use and manipulate musical symbols, to study extracts and to answer questions about the elements of music. We also offer Practical Musicianship exams where, in developing their musicianship skills, candidates gain the understanding as well as the expressive and interpretive skills needed to master the musical language of the repertoire they are learning. A pass at ABRSM Grade 5 or above is required in either Music Theory, Practical Musicianship or any Practical Music solo Jazz instrument before learners can enter for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 Music Performance or Practical Music exam.

## Regulation and UCAS points (UK)

### Our regulators

ABRSM Music Performance, Practical Music and Music Theory grades, and higher-level qualifications (diplomas) are regulated in the UK by:

- Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)
- Qualifications Wales
- Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA Regulation)

For further information, see [www.abrsm.org/regulation](http://www.abrsm.org/regulation).

### The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)

All our regulated qualifications can be found on the RQF. There are nine qualification levels in the framework, labelled in order of difficulty from Entry Level to Level 8. For further information, visit <https://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

### Entry to higher education

In the UK, ABRSM's Grades 6–8 in Music Performance and Practical Music can contribute towards entry into higher education through the allocation of UCAS points; the table below shows the UCAS Tariff value of these grades. For further information visit [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com).

Qualification	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Grade 6	8	10	12
Grade 7	12	14	16
Grade 8	18	24	30

## Regulated qualification details

### Qualification titles

The table below shows the regulated titles and qualification numbers of our Music Performance qualifications. Further information can be found at <https://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

Qualification Number	Qualification Title
603/5993/6	ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Performance (Grade 1)
603/5994/8	ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Performance (Grade 2)
603/5995/X	ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Performance (Grade 3)
603/5996/1	ABRSM Level 2 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 4)
603/5997/3	ABRSM Level 2 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 5)
603/5998/5	ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 6)
603/5999/7	ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 7)
603/6000/8	ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 8)

### Qualification size

The table below describes the size of the Music Performance qualifications by showing the amount of time that a candidate would typically need to spend preparing for them:

- Under the guidance of a teacher (Guided Learning Hours);
- Under the guidance of a teacher and time spent preparing independently (Total Qualification Time);

and:

- The assigned credit value (which denotes the size of the qualification).

Qualification	Guided Learning Hours* (GLH)	Total Qualification Time* (TQT)	Credits
Grade 1	12	60	6
Grade 2	18	90	9
Grade 3	18	120	12
Grade 4	24	150	15
Grade 5	24	180	18
Grade 6	36	220	22
Grade 7	48	270	27
Grade 8	54	320	32

\* The Guided Learning Hours and Total Qualification Time are estimates of the average amount of time that it might take a candidate to prepare for these qualifications, and should be used as guidance only; it is recognised that there will be variance dependent on each individual's level of experience and ability.



## Regulation (Europe)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is an overarching framework that links the qualifications of different countries together and allows for comparison and translation. The EQF has eight levels across which qualifications can be mapped. The levels do not correspond directly with the UK's Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), although they are similar.

The table below shows the level of each of ABRSM's Music Performance qualifications on the RQF and the EQF.

Qualification	RQF Level	EQF Level
Grade 1		
Grade 2	Level 1	Level 2
Grade 3		
Grade 4	Level 2	Level 3
Grade 5		
Grade 6	Level 3	Level 4
Grade 7		
Grade 8		

## Regulation (Rest of world)

Information on how ABRSM exams are recognised in individual countries can be found at [www.abrsm.org/regulation](http://www.abrsm.org/regulation).

## Qualification title referencing

The qualifications covered by this specification are 'ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Performance' (Grades 1, 2 and 3), 'ABRSM Level 2 Certificate in Music Performance' (Grades 4 and 5) and 'ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance' (Grades 6, 7 and 8). For ease of reading, 'Performance Grade(s)' is used in place of the full qualification titles throughout the remainder of this document. Similarly, when referring to our other, long-standing, suite of graded practical exams, 'Practical Grade(s)' is used in place of the full qualification titles.

## 2. Performance Grades

### Syllabuses

When preparing for an exam, it is important to read the relevant syllabus, which makes up Section 3 of this specification. Syllabuses (Section 3s) for each Performance Grades subject (instrument) are available at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

#### Syllabus repertoire validity

The repertoire lists for each subject are updated periodically. Validity periods vary from subject to subject and are confirmed in the relevant syllabus (Section 3). The current repertoire lists for each subject are available at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

#### Syllabus amendments

Any updates to the syllabus – e.g. changes to publication details or other minor corrections or clarifications – will be posted at [www.abrsm.org/syllabuscorrections](http://www.abrsm.org/syllabuscorrections).

#### Syllabus repertoire overlap

In the first year of any revised Performance Grades syllabus repertoire lists, we offer an overlap period where candidates may choose repertoire from the preceding lists. Information on the length of the overlap period is given at [www.abrsm.org/overlap](http://www.abrsm.org/overlap).

#### The next syllabus

Advance notice of any planned changes to syllabus repertoire lists will be posted at [www.abrsm.org/syllabusupdates](http://www.abrsm.org/syllabusupdates).

### Exam Regulations

When preparing for an exam, it is important to read ABRSM's Exam Regulations, which set out the rules for completing the exams listed in this specification. This information is available at [www.abrsm.org/examregulations](http://www.abrsm.org/examregulations).

### Malpractice and maladministration

We are committed to inspiring achievement in music. Our qualifications are used by thousands of people to support their music learning or teaching. Many people also use them when applying to study at further and higher education institutions. It is therefore vital that our qualifications remain a valuable and reliable measure of a candidate's skills and knowledge. We take any form of malpractice or maladministration very seriously.

- **Malpractice** is defined as any act that compromises or is an attempt to compromise the assessment process, the integrity of any qualification or the validity of a result or certificate. This also includes any act that damages our reputation or credibility as an awarding organisation.
- **Maladministration** is defined as any act that breaches the regulations through a mismanagement of administrative processes, particularly where such a breach could compromise the integrity of a qualification or assessment.

Applicants and candidates must follow the requirements set out in this specification, Exam Regulations and all other ABRSM policies about the delivery of our exams. In cases where applicants or candidates have committed malpractice, a sanction or penalty may be given. Further information about our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy can be found at [www.abrsm.org/policies](http://www.abrsm.org/policies).

## Entry requirements

There are eight grades of Performance Grade exams. Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age. They do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s) in the same subject. To enter for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 exam, candidates must already have passed one of the following:

- ABRSM Grade 5 (or above) in Music Theory
- ABRSM Grade 5 (or above) in Practical Musicianship
- ABRSM Grade 5 in any Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument

For full details, including a list of accepted alternatives, see [www.abrsm.org/prerequisite](http://www.abrsm.org/prerequisite).

## Exam venues

Performance Grades are taken at a venue of the candidate's/Applicant's choosing. This can be the candidate's school, their teacher's studio, or any other location where appropriate space and instruments are available (including a suitable piano for any accompaniments). The venue can also be the candidate's home.

## Exam booking

Details of exam dates, fees and how to book an exam are available at [www.abrsm.org/exambooking](http://www.abrsm.org/exambooking).

## Access (for candidates with specific needs)

We are committed to providing all candidates with fair access to our assessments by putting in place access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. Guidelines for candidates with specific needs are available at [www.abrsm.org/specificneeds](http://www.abrsm.org/specificneeds). Where a candidate's needs are not covered by the guidelines, each case is considered individually.

Performance Grades have no supporting tests, or anything that requires candidates to respond to questions from an examiner, so extra-time allowances are not normally needed. However, if a candidate has access requirements that we or the examiner should be aware of, please contact our Access Co-ordinator ([accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk](mailto:accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk)) before booking the exam with the relevant details. We will then liaise with the Applicant and the examiner to ensure that all appropriate arrangements are made.

Applicants are also welcome to contact the Access Co-ordinator before booking an exam, for further information or to discuss arrangements.

## Exam content

Performance Grades consist of five components – four Pieces/Songs and an assessment of the performance as a whole. Information on how marks are allocated is given on page 15.

## How the exam works

Performance Grades lend themselves to being remotely assessed, which is how they are currently offered – candidates' performances are video recorded and submitted to ABRSM for assessment. The candidate/Applicant is responsible for organising a suitable venue and any equipment needed to run the exam (e.g. music stand, recording device).

The repertoire must be performed and recorded in one continuous take. Candidates should show a written programme and the opening of their own-choice piece/song, as well as verbally introduce themselves and their repertoire to camera before beginning their performance. Examiners will start assessing candidates from the point at which they start to perform their repertoire.

Where candidates are under 18, the recording process must be overseen by a Responsible Adult who must be aged 18 or over, and may be the Applicant, teacher or parent/guardian.

Detailed instructions on how to record and submit the exam are available at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

## 3. Performance Grades syllabus

### Introducing the qualification

Performance Grades are new qualifications from ABRSM, introduced in 2020 to run alongside our long-standing and respected Practical Grades. They allow learners to focus on and showcase their performance skills if that is their preference. This additional suite of qualifications has been designed to allow learners to play to their strengths and interests and still have their level of achievement formally recognised with a regulated qualification that attracts UCAS points (in the UK) at Grades 6–8. Performance Grades are accessible exams given their sole focus on performance, without the assessment of any supporting tests. Instead they encourage the selection of appropriate repertoire to be delivered in a sustained performance, even at the earliest levels.

Musicians learn to play an instrument to explore and perform repertoire, which is why pieces/songs, and the way they can be combined to create a convincing and sustained performance, are the focus of the exam. For Performance Grades, candidates are asked to present four pieces/songs at each grade.

ABRSM Performance Grades draw on the same repertoire set for our Practical Grades. This syllabus repertoire is organised into lists, which explore different traditions and styles, dating from the Renaissance period to the present day. Choosing repertoire from different lists gives candidates the opportunity to perform a balanced selection and demonstrate a range of skills.

Since Performance Grades focus on performance alone, the choice of repertoire is important, and attention should be given to the way pieces/songs are contrasted, the order in which they are presented, and the different moods and characters they inhabit. This will enable candidates to demonstrate their ability to deliver a coherent and convincing performance event, not just a series of individual pieces/songs. Credit for this is given through the performance as a whole assessment criteria that are applied (see page 16).

### Grades 1–8: requirements and information

*Individual Performance Grades syllabuses (i.e. Section 3s), with relevant requirements and information, are available at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades) for the following subjects:*

- Piano
- Bowed Strings – Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass
- Woodwind – Descant Recorder (Grades 1–5), Treble Recorder, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Soprano Saxophone, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone
- Brass – Horn, Trumpet, B♭ Cornet, E♭ Soprano Cornet, Flugelhorn, E♭ Horn, Trombone, Bass Trombone (Grades 6–8), Baritone, Euphonium, Tuba
- Percussion – Snare Drum, Timpani, Tuned Percussion, Percussion (Combined)
- Guitar
- Harp – Harp (Pedal), Harp (Non-Pedal)
- Harpsichord (Grades 4–8)
- Organ
- Singing
- Singing for Musical Theatre

## 4. Assessment and marking

### Assessment objectives

The following tables describe the level of knowledge and skills required of candidates taking Performance Grades. They also show the assessment objectives and corresponding marking criteria that examiners use to assess the performances at each level. The full marking criteria used by examiners are available on pages 17-18.

### Grades 1-3 (RQF Level 1)

Assessment objectives	Marking criteria
Learners will:	Learners can:
Apply musical skill, knowledge and understanding to performances of straightforward pieces in a mixture of styles. <b>80%</b>	Perform straightforward pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reliable pitch and intonation</li><li>• Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo</li><li>• Reliable tonal control and awareness</li><li>• Musical shape and detail</li><li>• Communication of character and style</li></ul>
Demonstrate skills in musical communication, interpretation and delivery by applying them with a degree of consistency across the whole programme. <b>20%</b>	Perform a programme of straightforward pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Projection and involvement</li><li>• Performance awareness and control</li><li>• Stylistic realisation</li><li>• Awareness and control of textures and ensemble</li><li>• Technical control and instrument management</li></ul>

## Grades 4–5 (RQF Level 2)

Assessment objectives	Marking criteria
Learners will:	Learners can:
Apply musical skill, knowledge and understanding to performances of intermediate pieces in a mixture of styles. <b>80%</b>	Perform intermediate pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliable pitch and intonation</li> <li>• Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo</li> <li>• Reliable tonal control and awareness</li> <li>• Musical shape and detail</li> <li>• Communication of character and style</li> </ul>
Demonstrate skills in musical communication, interpretation and delivery by applying them with a degree of consistency across the whole programme. <b>20%</b>	Perform a programme of intermediate pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projection and involvement</li> <li>• Performance awareness and control</li> <li>• Stylistic realisation</li> <li>• Awareness and control of textures and ensemble</li> <li>• Technical control and instrument management</li> </ul>

## Grades 6–8 (RQF Level 3)

Assessment objectives	Marking criteria
Learners will:	Learners can:
Apply musical skill, knowledge and understanding to performances of advanced pieces in a mixture of styles. <b>80%</b>	Perform advanced pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliable pitch and intonation</li> <li>• Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo</li> <li>• Reliable tonal control and awareness</li> <li>• Musical shape and detail</li> <li>• Communication of character and style</li> </ul>
Demonstrate skills in musical communication, interpretation and delivery by applying them with a degree of consistency across the whole programme. <b>20%</b>	Perform a programme of advanced pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projection and involvement</li> <li>• Performance awareness and control</li> <li>• Stylistic realisation</li> <li>• Awareness and control of textures and ensemble</li> <li>• Technical control and instrument management</li> </ul>

## Mark allocation

Marks are allocated for each component of the assessment, as shown in the table below:

Component	Maximum marks	% of total mark
Piece/Song 1	30	20%
Piece/Song 2	30	20%
Piece/Song 3	30	20%
Piece/Song 4	30	20%
Performance as a whole	30	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Result categories

The result categories for Performance Grades are set as follows. A Pass in each component of the assessment is not required to pass overall.

Result category	Mark band
Distinction	130-150
Merit	120-129
Pass	100-119
Below Pass	50-99

## Synoptic assessment

Synoptic assessment is a form of assessment that requires candidates to demonstrate that they can identify and effectively use a selection of skills, techniques, concepts and knowledge to carry out a key task. Performance Grades allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to draw together different skills, knowledge and understanding – theory, notation, instrument control, listening skills, creative interpretation – and apply these collectively during the performance of a sustained programme of music.

## Awarding

An examiner's assessment of a piece or song will be based on the performance given at that time towards the qualification for which the candidate has been entered. Prior performances of the same pieces or songs will not be taken into account for the qualification, nor will marking appeals be accepted on that basis. The transfer of marks, at any grade, between Performance Grades and Practical Grades is not permitted.

Candidates may not perform the same repertoire (in full or individual pieces/songs) for both a Performance Grade and a Practical Grade qualification. If choosing to enter at the same grade for both qualifications, irrespective of when the exams are taken, the pieces presented must be different.



## Marking criteria

The tables on pages 17–18 show the marking criteria used by examiners for Performance Grades. Each piece/song is marked out of 30 using the first set of criteria. After the full programme has been completed, a mark out of 30 is awarded for the performance as a whole using the second set of criteria.

Examiners mark up or down from the pass mark for each component by balancing the extent to which the qualities and skills listed in the criteria are demonstrated and contribute towards the overall musical outcome.

## Marking criteria

Grades 1–8	Criteria for each of the pieces/songs presented				
	<i>Pitch</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Tone</i>	<i>Shape</i>	<i>Performance</i>
<b>Distinction 27-30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highly accurate notes and intonation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fluent, with flexibility where appropriate</li> <li>● Rhythmic character well conveyed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Well projected</li> <li>● Sensitive use of tonal qualities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expressive, idiomatic musical shaping and detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assured</li> <li>● Fully committed</li> <li>● Vivid communication of character and style</li> </ul>
<b>Merit 24-26</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Largely accurate notes and intonation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sustained, effective tempo</li> <li>● Good sense of rhythm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mainly controlled and consistent</li> <li>● Good tonal awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear musical shaping, well-realised detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Positive</li> <li>● Carrying musical conviction</li> <li>● Character and style communicated</li> </ul>
<b>Pass 20-23</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally correct notes</li> <li>● Sufficiently reliable intonation to maintain tonality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suitable tempo</li> <li>● Generally stable pulse</li> <li>● Overall rhythmic accuracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally reliable</li> <li>● Adequate tonal awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some realisation of musical shape and/or detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally secure, prompt recovery from slips</li> <li>● Some musical involvement</li> </ul>
<b>Below Pass 17-19</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frequent note errors</li> <li>● Insufficiently reliable intonation to maintain tonality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unsuitable and/or uncontrolled tempo</li> <li>● Irregular pulse</li> <li>● Inaccurate rhythm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Uneven and/or unreliable</li> <li>● Inadequate tonal awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Musical shape and detail insufficiently conveyed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Insecure, inadequate recovery from slips</li> <li>● Insufficient musical involvement</li> </ul>
<b>13-16</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Largely inaccurate notes and/or intonation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Erratic tempo and/or pulse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Serious lack of tonal control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Musical shape and detail largely unrealised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lacking continuity</li> <li>● No musical involvement</li> </ul>
<b>10-12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highly inaccurate notes and/or intonation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Incoherent tempo and/or pulse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No tonal control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No shape or detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unable to continue for more than a short section</li> </ul>
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>

Grades 1–8	Criteria for the performance as a whole		
	<i>Communication</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Delivery</i>
<b>Distinction</b> 27–30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consistently well-projected and involved, showing strong performance commitment and conviction</li> <li>● Effective sequence and pacing of chosen programme; consistently good performance awareness and control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consistently effective stylistic characterisation; interpretative demands of the programme well met</li> <li>● Consistently good awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with effective blending and balancing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consistently assured and controlled; technical challenges of the programme well met</li> <li>● Consistently effective instrument management, fully responsive to the performance situation</li> </ul>
<b>Merit</b> 24–26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mainly well-projected and involved, showing positive performance commitment</li> <li>● Largely effective sequence and pacing of chosen programme; mainly good performance awareness and control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mostly effective stylistic realisation; interpretative demands of the programme largely well met</li> <li>● Mainly good awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with appropriate blending and balancing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Effectively controlled; most technical challenges of the programme well met</li> <li>● Mostly effective instrument management, mainly responsive to the performance situation</li> </ul>
<b>Pass</b> 20–23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Projection and involvement sufficient to maintain an overall sense of performance</li> <li>● Sequence and pacing of chosen programme shows adequate performance awareness and control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sufficient stylistic realisation to meet the interpretative demands of the programme</li> <li>● Adequate awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with sufficient blending and balancing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally controlled; technical challenges of the programme securely met overall</li> <li>● Sufficiently reliable instrument management to meet the demands of the performance situation</li> </ul>
<b>Below Pass</b> 15–19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Insufficient projection or sense of involvement to maintain a sense of performance</li> <li>● Sequence and/or pacing of chosen programme shows inadequate performance awareness or control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stylistic realisation not equal to the interpretative demands of the programme</li> <li>● Insufficient awareness or control of textures and ensemble, and/or unsuitable blending and balancing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consistency of control insufficient to meet the technical challenges of the programme</li> <li>● Insufficiently reliable instrument management to meet the demands of the performance situation</li> </ul>
<b>10–14</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sense of performance largely absent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stylistic realisation and/or control of textures and ensemble largely absent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Very insecure technical control and/or instrument management</li> </ul>

## 5. After the exam

### Results

All candidates receive a copy of their mark form; successful candidates also receive a certificate that shows the qualification title as well as the subject and level that they have been examined in. We aim to release results for Performance Grades in line with the schedules on our website at [www.abrsm.org/results](http://www.abrsm.org/results); however, some results may take longer. Examiners will not issue or discuss a candidate's result; the mark form (and certificate for successful candidates) will be issued by ABRSM after the exam. Unless otherwise requested at the time of booking, mark forms and certificates are issued to the applicant, whose responsibility it is to pass them on to candidates.

### Exam feedback

Specific guidance for questions about the administration of the exam or the results awarded is available on our website. We also welcome feedback about other matters. All feedback is logged and plays a valuable part in our quality assurance procedures. For further information on our processes and deadlines for submitting feedback, please visit [www.abrsm.org/send-exam-feedback](http://www.abrsm.org/send-exam-feedback).

## 6. Other assessments

ABRSM offers a range of other practical assessments for instrumentalists and singers:

- Music Medals
- Prep Test
- Practical Grades (including Jazz for selected instruments)
- Performance Assessments
- Ensembles
- Choral Singing
- diplomas

Full information is available at [www.abrsm.org/exams](http://www.abrsm.org/exams).

### Practical Grades

ABRSM Practical Grades are our long-standing progressive qualifications that test all-round musical skills. They are available from Initial Grade to Grade 8 (nine grades). Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age and do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s) in the same subject. Full information is available at [www.abrsm.org/exams](http://www.abrsm.org/exams) and in the qualification specification, available at [www.abrsm.org/specifications](http://www.abrsm.org/specifications).

### About Practical Grades

Each Practical Grade has been carefully designed to test all-round musical skills – technique, notation, listening and musical perception – as well as knowledge, understanding and creativity. These creative skills are demonstrated through the playing/singing of repertoire and completing supporting tests. Collectively, these skills enable candidates to progress to higher grades, further education, employment and other qualifications in the creative arts sector.

The exams are made up of six components:

- three Pieces/Songs – selected by candidates from set lists and played/sung as separate items
- technical work – Scales and arpeggios/Unaccompanied song/Studies, as required for the individual subject
- Sight-reading\* (Quick Study for Jazz subjects)
- Aural tests

The exams are held as face-to-face assessments and are led by an examiner. Examiners ask for a selection of the technical work in the exam. Candidates can prepare for the Sight-reading and Aural test components, based on published parameters and sample materials, but they will not have seen or heard the tests given in the exam before.

Marks for each component are differently weighted and are awarded to each component individually.

Those entering for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 Practical Grades exam must first have passed ABRSM Grade 5 (or above) in Music Theory, Practical Musicianship or a Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument; for full details, including a list of accepted alternatives, see [www.abrsm.org/prerequisite](http://www.abrsm.org/prerequisite).

## Music Theory

ABRSM Music Theory exams are available for Grades 1–8. Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age and do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s). Further information is available at [www.abrsm.org/theory](http://www.abrsm.org/theory) and the qualification specification (including the full syllabus) is available at [www.abrsm.org/specifications](http://www.abrsm.org/specifications).

### About Music Theory

Developing musical literacy forms a key part of a rounded education for performers, composers and listeners of all kinds. Understanding how written symbols relate to the elements of music, and having the skills to interpret and translate them into sounds, empowers us to communicate and experience music in a meaningful way.

ABRSM's Music Theory grades give learners:

- a knowledge of the notation of western music, including commonly used signs and terminology
- an understanding of fundamental musical elements such as intervals, keys, scales and chords
- an ability to apply theoretical knowledge and understanding to score analysis
- skills in harmonic completion of extracts and melody writing (at Grades 6–8).

Candidates are assessed on their ability to identify, use and manipulate musical symbols, to study extracts and to answer questions about the elements of music according to the parameters detailed in the full syllabus at [www.abrsm.org/theory](http://www.abrsm.org/theory).

### Grade 5 as a prerequisite

We believe that a thorough understanding of the elements of music is essential for a full and satisfying performance at the higher grades.

It is therefore an ABRSM requirement that candidates must provide evidence of a pass at ABRSM Grade 5 or above in Music Theory, Practical Musicianship or a Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument before they can enter for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 Practical Grades or Performance Grades exam.

## Practical Musicianship

ABRSM Practical Musicianship exams are available for Grades 1–8 and are open to singers and instrumentalists. Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age and do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s). The full syllabus is available at [www.abrsm.org/practicalmusicianship](http://www.abrsm.org/practicalmusicianship).

### About Practical Musicianship

Musicianship is a broad concept that covers a complex range of musical abilities. For the purposes of this syllabus, it is loosely defined as the ability to ‘think in sound’. This occurs when a musician is able to produce music which they perceive internally and in the imagination, whether through playing by ear, singing, reading from notation, or through improvisation.

ABRSM’s Practical Musicianship grades encourage learners to develop their ability to ‘think in sound’ and perform spontaneously. While Performance Grades and Practical Grades focus on aspects of performance and/or supporting tests that are prepared in detail in advance, here the playing (or singing) is in response to immediate challenges and stimuli, presented both aurally and via notation.

The exams also cover the following key skills:

- the ability to internalise music and to reproduce it
- interpreting written music with a minimum of preparation
- exploring the possibilities inherent in a short motif
- the ability to detect differences between what is heard and what is written.

In developing their musicianship skills, learners will be gaining the understanding as well as the expressive and interpretative skills needed to master the musical language of the repertoire they are learning.

### Grade 5 as a prerequisite

We believe that a thorough understanding of the elements of music is essential for a full and satisfying performance at the higher grades.

It is therefore an ABRSM requirement that candidates must provide evidence of a pass at ABRSM Grade 5 or above in Practical Musicianship, Music Theory or a Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument before they can enter for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 Practical Grades or Performance Grades exam.

## ARSM

The ARSM diploma is available to instrumentalists and singers of any age. It is the first of our diploma qualifications and provides musicians with an opportunity to develop their performance technique and interpretative skills, while focusing on programme building and extending their repertoire.

### Key features

- Candidates present a balanced and varied programme, as follows:
  - the programme lasts 30 minutes
  - at least 20 minutes of the music is chosen from the repertoire list
  - the remaining programme time may be made up of own-choice repertoire, of Grade 8 standard or above
- There are no additional supporting tests or other requirements
- There are two assessment methods available:
  - face-to-face – held at the same venues and during the same time periods as ABRSM's Practical Grades
  - remote – a video recorded performance submitted to ABRSM for assessment
- ARSM is a letter-bearing qualification. Candidates awarded the diploma can use the letters ARSM (Associate of the Royal Schools of Music) after their name.

Those entering for an ARSM diploma must first have passed ABRSM Grade 8 (or a listed alternative). Full details of the exam and entry requirements are available at [www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma](http://www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma) and the qualification specification is available at [www.abrsm.org/specifications](http://www.abrsm.org/specifications).

We update our syllabuses from time to time. Advance notice of any changes will be given at [www.abrsm.org/exams](http://www.abrsm.org/exams). Please refer to the website for the most recent version of the ARSM syllabus.



## DipABRSM, LRSM, FRSM (Music Performance)

These diplomas are available to instrumentalists and singers of any age. Through a combination of live and written components, candidates demonstrate their performance, communication and research skills, as well as their musical knowledge and understanding. Each diploma serves as a stepping stone to the next level.

### Key features

- Candidates:
  - present a recital programme
  - submit programme notes (DipABRSM & LRSM) or a written submission (FRSM)
  - undertake a viva voce, with questions covering the recital, programme notes/written submission as well as other aspects of performance
  - perform a short piece of unaccompanied and previously unseen music after five minutes' preparation time (quick study)
- These diploma exams take place at specific venues and times of the year
- Each diploma is a letter-bearing qualification. Candidates awarded a diploma can use the letters DipABRSM (Diploma of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music), LRSM (Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music) or FRSM (Fellowship of the Royal Schools of Music) after their name as appropriate.

Those entering for one of these diplomas must fulfil a specific ABRSM prerequisite (or a listed alternative). Full details of the exam and entry requirements are available at [www.abrsm.org/diplomas](http://www.abrsm.org/diplomas) and the qualification specification is available at [www.abrsm.org/specifications](http://www.abrsm.org/specifications).

We update our syllabuses from time to time. Advance notice of any changes will be given at [www.abrsm.org/exams](http://www.abrsm.org/exams). Please refer to the website for the most recent versions of the diploma syllabuses.

### Further diploma exams

DipABRSM, LRSM and FRSM diplomas are also available for Instrumental/Vocal Teaching and Music Direction. Full details are available at [www.abrsm.org/diplomas](http://www.abrsm.org/diplomas).

# Programme form – Performance Grades

Please show this completed form and your own-choice piece/song to the camera, and announce yourself (name, subject, grade) and your pieces/songs (titles, composers, list information) in the order you will be performing them, before beginning your performance.



Candidate name \_\_\_\_\_ Subject (instrument) \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Piece/Song	Title	Composer	List*	Number*
1				
2				
3				
4				

Year of syllabus repertoire lists \_\_\_\_\_ Break (if taking) between pieces \_\_\_ and \_\_\_

Related instrument(s) (if used) \_\_\_\_\_

\* Write 'OC' for your own-choice piece/song (unless from the repertoire lists); leave 'List' blank if a Snare Drum, Timpani or Tuned Percussion candidate

Additional information for own-choice piece/song (unless chosen from the repertoire lists)

Piece/ Song no.	Arranger (if applicable)	Book title	Publisher
--------------------	-----------------------------	------------	-----------

# Programme form – Performance Grades



Please show this completed form and your own-choice piece/song to the camera, and announce yourself (name, subject, grade) and your pieces/songs (titles, composers, list information) in the order you will be performing them, before beginning your performance.

Candidate name \_\_\_\_\_

Subject (instrument) \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Piece/Song	Title	Composer	List*	Number*
1				
<hr/>				
2				
<hr/>				
3				
<hr/>				
4				
<hr/>				

Year of syllabus repertoire lists \_\_\_\_\_ Break (if taking) between pieces \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_

Related instrument(s) (if used) \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information for own-choice piece/song (unless chosen from the repertoire lists)

Piece/ Song no.	Arranger (if applicable)	Book title	Publisher
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\* Write 'OC' for your own-choice piece/song (unless from the repertoire lists);  
leave 'List' blank if a Snare Drum, Timpani or Tuned Percussion candidate

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