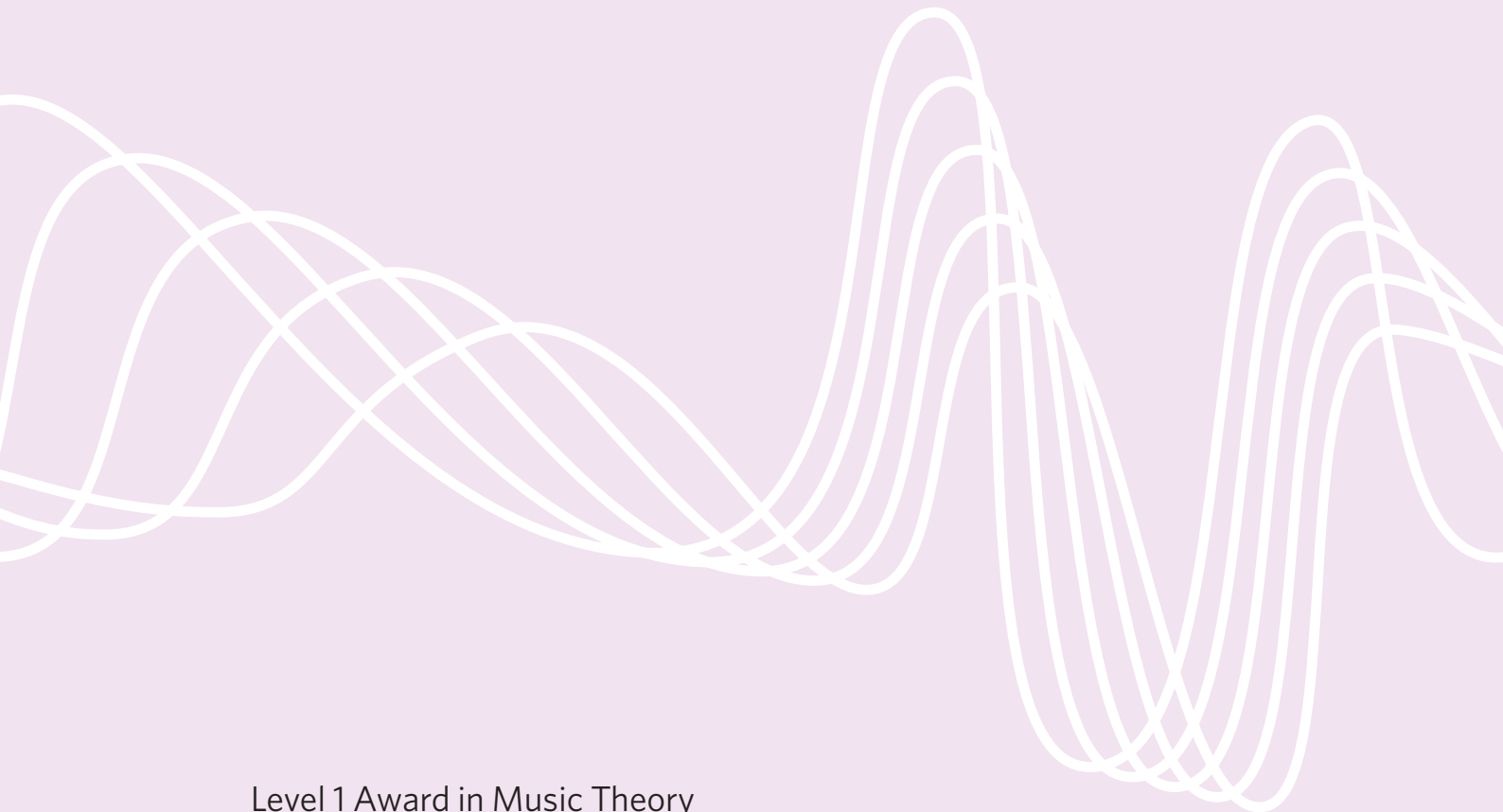


MUSIC THEORY GRADES



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

Version 1.2: April 2023

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Changes in Version 1.2

This version of the Music Theory Qualification Specification is a merging of two former documents covering Online Grades 1 to 5 and Paper Grades 6 to 8 respectively. Some texts have been adjusted and clarified as a result.

There are no changes to the syllabus content or other exam requirements.

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 a teacher, we hope our syllabuses inspire and support your music learning or teaching. We wish you ever 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 lifelong 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, sponsorships 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.uk.

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 Theory' (Grades 1, 2 and 3)
- 'ABRSM Level 2 Award in Music Theory' (Grades 4 and 5)
- 'ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Theory' (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) which should be read before making an exam booking.

Validity of this specification

This specification is valid from April 2023 until further notice.

We may change or add to this specification from time to time, but will not make changes to the syllabus (Section 3) 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/exams.

About our Music Theory qualifications

Qualification objectives

Our Music Theory qualifications are designed for learners developing their skills in musical literacy. Each grade is progressive and represents a new challenge for the learner, providing motivation and structure to develop and hone skills in reading, writing, understanding and interpreting staff notation. Exams allow learners to receive formal recognition of the level of mastery they have achieved and feedback to support their learning journey.

Developing musical literacy forms a key part of a rounded education for performers, composers and listeners of all kinds. An understanding of 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 to 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 Section 3.

Who the qualifications are for

Learners may be entered for Music Theory qualifications at any age and without previously having taken any other grade, though the material for each assessment builds cumulatively on earlier grades. We are committed to providing fair access to our assessments by putting in place access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for candidates with specific needs.

Structure

Each Music Theory qualification has been carefully designed to assess the knowledge and understanding of musical grammar, in addition to musical creativity at the higher grades.

Candidates are required to respond to musical tasks involving notation, context, compositional processes and analysis which collectively demonstrate an understanding of the language of music.

The knowledge and understanding of music theory can be both demonstrated independently, and applied to instrumental performance. This broad set of skills enables candidates to progress to higher grades, further education, employment and other qualifications in the creative arts sector.

Progression route

The Music Theory syllabus for Grades 1 to 5 progressively covers the basic elements of music, including clefs, pitch, keys and rhythm. We believe that a thorough understanding of these basic elements is essential for a full and satisfying performance at the higher instrumental and singing grades, and require candidates to pass Grade 5 in Music Theory before they can enter for Grade 6, 7 or 8 exams in Practical Music or Music Performance. Some alternatives are accepted and details can be found at www.abrsm.org/prerequisite.

The Music Theory syllabus for Grades 6 to 8 builds on the knowledge of basic elements acquired in the earlier grades, and includes harmony, melody writing and score reading, to provide a strong foundation for musicians who wish to progress to higher learning in music.

Regulation and UCAS points (UK)

Our regulators

ABRSM Music Theory, Practical Music and Music Performance 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.

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 <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

Entry to higher education

In the UK, ABRSM's Grades 6 to 8 in Music Theory 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.

| Qualification/Level | Pass | Merit | Distinction |
|---------------------|------|-------|-------------|
| Grade 6 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Grade 7 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Grade 8 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Regulated qualification details

Qualification titles

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

| Qualification Number | Qualification Title |
|----------------------|---|
| 603/6414/2 | ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Theory (Grade 1) |
| 603/6415/4 | ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Theory (Grade 2) |
| 603/6416/6 | ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Theory (Grade 3) |
| 603/6417/8 | ABRSM Level 2 Award in Music Theory (Grade 4) |
| 603/6418/X | ABRSM Level 2 Award in Music Theory (Grade 5) |
| 603/6419/1 | ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Theory (Grade 6) |
| 603/6420/8 | ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Theory (Grade 7) |
| 603/6422/1 | ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Theory (Grade 8) |

Qualification size

The table below describes the size of the Music Theory 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).

| Level | Guided Learning Hours* (GLH) | Total Qualification Time* (TQT) | Credits |
|---------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| Grade 1 | 6 | 20 | 2 |
| Grade 2 | 9 | 30 | 3 |
| Grade 3 | 9 | 50 | 5 |
| Grade 4 | 12 | 70 | 7 |
| Grade 5 | 12 | 90 | 9 |
| Grade 6 | 18 | 130 | 13 |
| Grade 7 | 24 | 170 | 17 |
| Grade 8 | 36 | 210 | 21 |

**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 following table shows the level of each of ABRSM's Music Theory 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 | | |
| Grade 7 | Level 3 | Level 4 |
| Grade 8 | | |

Regulation (Rest of world)

Information on how ABRSM exams are recognised in individual countries can be found at www.abrsm.org/regulation.

Qualification title referencing

For ease of reading, 'Music Theory' is used in place of the full qualification titles throughout this document.

2. Music Theory grades

Syllabus

Syllabus validity

The Music Theory syllabus is valid for exams from 2020 until further notice. This version of the Music Theory Qualification Specification is a merging of two former documents covering Online Grades 1 to 5 and Paper Grades 6 to 8 respectively.

Syllabus amendments

Any updates to a syllabus – e.g. minor corrections or clarifications – will be posted at www.abrsm.org/syllabuscorrections.

The next syllabus

Advance notice of any planned changes to the Music Theory Syllabus will be posted at 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.

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 therefore 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 the relevant 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.

Entry requirements

There are eight grades of Music Theory exam. Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age. They do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s), though the material for each grade builds cumulatively on previous ones.

Exam booking

Details of exam dates, locations, fees and how to book an exam are available at www.abrsm.org/exambooking.

Access (for candidates with specific needs)

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

Special consideration

Special consideration is given to candidates who suffer temporary illness, injury or indisposition, or adverse circumstances at or near the time of the assessment that are beyond the candidate's control. This will not result in an adjustment to marks and will not change the assessment criteria. Please refer to our Special Consideration Policy (www.abrsm.org/policies).

Exam content

Music Theory exams at Grades 1 to 5 consist of seven sections, each made up of several individual questions. Exams at Grades 6 to 8 consist of five questions, two of which are broken down into several individual questions based on a music extract. The information on pages 16–21 of this specification shows in detail the content of the assessment at each grade. Information on how marks are allocated is given on page 25.

Supporting publications

Examples of exam questions and model answers are given in:

- *Discovering Music Theory Workbooks and Answer Books* (Grades 1 to 5)
- *Music Theory Sample Papers for new format Theory Exams and Model Answers* (Grades 1 to 5)
- *More Music Theory Sample Papers for new format Theory exams and Model Answers* (Grades 1 to 5)
- *Music Theory Practice Papers and Model Answers 2021-2022* (Grades 1 to 5)
- *Theory Workbooks* (Grades 6 to 8)
- *Past Theory Papers and Model Answers 2017-2022* (Grades 6 to 8)
- *First Steps in Music Theory*
- *The AB Guide to Music Theory* (in two parts)
- *Music Theory in Practice and Music Theory in Practice Model Answers* (Grades 1 to 5)
- *Harmony in Practice and Harmony in Practice Answer Book*

Available at www.abrsm.org/shop. Purchasing these resources is not a requirement.

In the exam (Grades 1 to 5)

Format of exam

Grades 1 to 5 are only available as digital exams with the exception of those candidates with Access requirements or those who require reasonable adjustments. For information see paragraph above on Access (for candidates with specific needs).

Place of exam

Candidates can take their exam in any suitable location where they have access to a laptop or desktop computer with a webcam, and the internet, that meets our requirements. For further information see Exam Information at www.abrsm.org/onlinetheory.

Supervision of the exam

For candidates under 18 and vulnerable adults, a Responsible Adult must be present in the room at the beginning of the exam to help with the initial set up. They are also permitted to remain in the exam room for the whole exam. Candidates aged 18 and over also have the option to have a Responsible Adult available but this is not compulsory. The Responsible Adult should not communicate with the candidate once the exam has started unless technical assistance is required.

Conduct of the exam

At the start of the exam, the candidate will be required to display a Photo ID document to confirm their identity, and take a photo of themselves using the exam software. ABRSM's Candidate Identification Policy can be found at www.abrsm.org/policies. Candidates are also required to film a scan of the room in order to confirm the environment in which the exam is being taken.

The candidate will be filmed for the duration of the exam via the webcam and exam software, and each exam will be reviewed by trained proctors. ABRSM exams are not proctored live, but are all recorded and then reviewed after the assessment has taken place. Full information can be found at ABRSM Online Music Theory Exams (www.abrsm.org/onlinetheory), in our Online Music Theory Proctoring document (www.abrsm.org/policies) and in our Online Safeguarding Policy Statement (www.abrsm.org/safeguarding).

Candidates must complete the Music Theory exam online without help or reference to notes or books of any kind. Any depiction of a piano keyboard, including an actual piano, in the room must be covered. Candidates can use their own blank paper during the exam (manuscript or plain) to work out their answers. Candidates must show any paper to the camera at the start of the exam to confirm that it is blank. At the end of the exam they must hold up the paper to the camera and destroy it.

Copyright

All exam content is confidential and **must not be copied or reproduced in any way**. Any candidate infringing these rules may be investigated for malpractice and be subject to a penalty or in severe cases, disqualification. Further information about our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy is given on page 8 and can be found at www.abrsm.org/policies.

Exam timings

The timings in the table below show the maximum time allowed for each Music Theory exam. At the beginning of the exam, the online system will tell you how long you have to complete the exam. A countdown timer on every screen will tell you how much time you have left remaining.

| Grade | Timing |
|---------|-----------|
| Grade 1 | 1.5 hours |
| Grade 2 | 1.5 hours |
| Grade 3 | 1.5 hours |
| Grade 4 | 2 hours |
| Grade 5 | 2 hours |

Marking of the exams

The exam is marked automatically but results will only be available once the videos of the assessments have been reviewed.

In the exam (Grades 6 to 8)

Invigilators

Invigilators are present for the whole exam and make sure that proper exam conditions are met. The invigilators open the sealed packet of exam papers in the exam room in front of the candidates, collect the papers at the end of the exam and seal them in secure envelopes to be returned to ABRSM for marking.

Conduct of the exam

Candidates must fill in their exam paper without help or reference to notes or books of any kind. They must not talk or in any way communicate with each other during the exam. Candidates are not allowed to bring mobile phones, other electronic devices or any unauthorised material or equipment (such as their own manuscript or other paper, any representation of the piano keyboard or recording devices) into the exam room. Any candidate infringing these rules or helping another candidate may be investigated for malpractice and be subject to a penalty. Further information about our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy can be found at www.abrsm.org/policies.

Leaving the exam room

Candidates may leave the exam room at any time after 40 minutes from the start of the exam. If a candidate wishes to hand in their exam paper, they should stay seated and raise their hand until an invigilator approaches them to collect it. After handing in their exam paper, candidates must leave the exam room and may not return. Once candidates have left the exam room, they are no longer under the invigilators' supervision. Candidates must not take any exam papers or rough notes from the room. Full information about the conduct of Music Theory exams can be found in the Exam Regulations, available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations.

Exam timings

The timings in the table below show the maximum time allowed for each Music Theory exam. The time allowed is also printed at the top of each candidate's exam paper.

| Grade | Timing |
|---------|---------|
| Grade 6 | 3 hours |
| Grade 7 | 3 hours |
| Grade 8 | 3 hours |

Where English is not a candidate's first language, the candidate can request to bring a bilingual paper dictionary and receive 15 minutes extra time. Requests must be made at the time of entry.

3. Music Theory syllabus

Music Theory syllabus

The Music Theory syllabus below describes the requirements for exams from May 2020. A more detailed breakdown of the elements covered is shown in the tables on pages 16–21. The syllabus must be read in conjunction with the Exam Regulations, available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations.

GRADE 1

- 1 Note values of semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver and semiquaver, and their equivalent rests. Tied notes. Single-dotted notes.
- 2 Simple time signatures of 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, bar-lines and the grouping of the notes listed above within these times.
- 3 The staff. Treble (G) and bass (F) clefs. Names of notes on the staff, including middle C in both clefs. Sharp, flat and natural signs, and their cancellation.
- 4 Construction of the major scale, including the position of the tones and semitones. Scales and key signatures of the major keys of C, G, D and F in both clefs, with their tonic triads (root position), degrees (number only), and intervals above the tonic (by number only).
- 5 Some frequently used terms and signs concerning tempo, dynamics, performance directions and articulation marks. Simple questions will be asked about a melody written in either treble or bass clef.

GRADE 2

As in Grade 1, with the addition of:

- 1 Simple time signatures of 2/2, 3/2, 4/2 and 3/8, and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. Triplets, and triplet note groups with rests.
- 2 Extension of the staff to include two ledger lines below and above each staff.
- 3 Relative major and minor keys. Construction of the minor scale (harmonic only). Scales and key signatures of the major keys of A, B \flat and E \flat , and the minor keys of A, E and D, with their tonic triads (root position), degrees (number only), and intervals above the tonic (by number only).
- 4 More terms and signs in common use.

GRADE 3

As in preceding grades, with the addition of:

- 1 Compound time signatures of 6/8, 9/8 and 12/8, and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. The demisemiquaver (32nd note) and its equivalent rest.
- 2 Extension of the staff beyond two ledger lines. Transposition at the octave from the treble clef to the bass clef, and vice versa.
- 3 Scales and key signatures of all major and minor keys up to and including four sharps and flats, including both harmonic and melodic forms of minor scales, with their tonic triads (root position), degrees (number only), and intervals above the tonic (number and type).
- 4 More terms and signs.

GRADE 4

As in preceding grades, with the addition of:

- 1 All simple and compound duple, triple and quadruple time signatures, and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. The breve and its equivalent rest. Double-dotted notes and rests. Duplets.
- 2 Alto clef (C clef centred on 3rd line). Notes in the alto clef in any of the keys set for this grade (see below). Notes of the same pitch written in different clefs (treble, alto, bass) and transposition at the octave from the treble or the bass clef to the alto clef, and vice versa. Double sharp and double flat signs, and their cancellation. Enharmonic equivalents.
- 3 Scales and key signatures of all major and minor keys up to and including five sharps and flats, with both forms of minor scales. Technical names for the notes of the diatonic scale (tonic, supertonic, etc.). Construction of the chromatic scale. All intervals, not exceeding an octave, between any two diatonic notes in any of the keys set for this grade.
- 4 Triads (root position) on the tonic, subdominant and dominant notes in any of the keys set for this grade. Chords in root position on the tonic, subdominant and dominant notes in any of the keys set for this grade (the harmonic form of the scale will be used in minor keys).
- 5 More terms and signs, including the recognition and naming of the trill, turn, upper and lower mordent, acciaccatura and appoggiatura. Questions about a passage of music will include simple related questions about standard orchestral instruments.

GRADE 5

As in preceding grades, with the addition of:

- 1 Irregular time signatures of 5/4, 7/4, 5/8 and 7/8, and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. Irregular divisions of simple time values.
- 2 Tenor clef (C clef centred on 4th line). The identification of notes in the four clefs in any of the keys set for this grade (see below), and the transposition at the octave of a simple melody from any clef to another. Transposition to concert pitch of a short melody notated for an instrument in B \flat , A or F, and vice versa (the interval of transposition up or down will be given).
- 3 Scales and key signatures of all major and minor keys up to and including six sharps and flats. All simple and compound intervals from any note.
- 4 The root position (a), 1st inversion (b) and 2nd inversion (c) forms of the tonic, supertonic, subdominant and dominant chords in any of the keys set for this grade. The choice of suitable chords at cadential points of a simple melody in the major key of C, G, D or F. Perfect, plagal and imperfect cadences in the major keys of C, G, D or F.
- 5 More terms and signs. The recognition of ornaments, including the replacement of written-out ornamentation with the appropriate signs, but not vice versa. Questions on the types of voice and names of instruments, the clefs they use, instrument family groups and the basic way by which they produce sound, as well as points of general musical observation designed to test the candidate's ability to apply theoretical knowledge to actual music.

GRADE 6

As in preceding grades. The harmonic vocabulary expected will include:

- *the use of 5/3, 6/3 and 6/4 chords on any degree of the major or minor (harmonic and melodic) scale;*
- *the recognition of the dominant seventh chord in root position, first, second and third inversions, in any major or minor key;*
- *the recognition of the supertonic seventh chord in root position and first inversion, in any major or minor key;*
- *the figuring for all the above chords.*

An understanding of the principles of modulation and a knowledge of cadences, ornamentation and melodic decoration (which might include passing notes, auxiliary notes, appoggiaturas, changing notes and notes of anticipation) will also be expected.

Questions will cover:

- 1** Writing specified chords for voices in four parts or for keyboard (at the candidate's choice) above a given bass part of about four bars.
- 2** The indication of suitable chords for the accompaniment of a diatonic melody of about eight bars in any key, using any recognised method of notation, *or*, at the candidate's choice, the provision of a bass to a given melody, adding figures to indicate the intended harmonies.
- 3** Composition of a melody for a specific instrument (a choice will be given), using a given opening. Modulation to the dominant, subdominant, relative major or relative minor may be required.
- 4** Questions on short extracts of music written for piano or in open score for voices or for any combination of instruments and/or voices, designed to test the candidate's knowledge of the elements and notation of music, including the realisation of ornaments, the identification and notation of underlying harmonic structure, phrase structure, style, performance, and on the voices and instruments for which the works were written.

GRADE 7

As in preceding grades, with the addition of recognition of all diatonic secondary seventh chords and their inversions, the Neapolitan sixth and the diminished seventh chords, and of all figures commonly used by composers during the period c.1620–1790 to indicate harmonies above a bass part. Questions will cover:

- 1** The indication of chords and movement of the inner parts by figuring the bass in a passage in which both the melody and bass are given.
- 2** Rewriting a given passage to include appropriate suspensions and notes of melodic decoration.
- 3** Continuation of a given opening for solo instrument with keyboard accompaniment, which will be given in full throughout the passage, by completing the solo part, *or*, at the candidate's choice, composition of a melody for a specified instrument (a choice will be given) based on a given progression of chords or melodic figure.
- 4** Questions on short extracts of music written for piano or in open score for voices or for any combination of instruments and/or voices, designed to test the candidate's knowledge of the elements and notation of music, including the realisation of ornaments, the identification and notation of underlying harmonic structure, phrase structure, style, performance, and on the voices and instruments for which the works were written.

GRADE 8

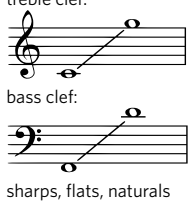
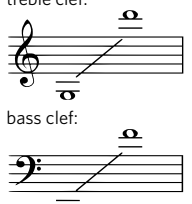
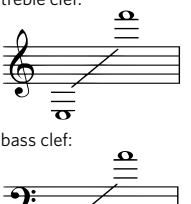
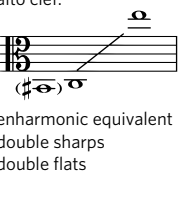
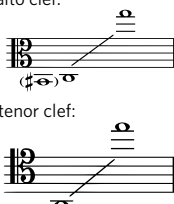
As in preceding grades. The harmonic vocabulary expected will include all standard diatonic and chromatic chords. Questions will cover:

- 1** Continuation of a given opening of a passage from a Baroque trio sonata for two treble instruments and basso continuo. The basso continuo part will be given throughout and fully figured (but a realisation for keyboard will not be required).
- 2** Completion of an outline of a short passage for keyboard. Some knowledge of the styles practised by composers from the time of Haydn onwards will be assumed.
- 3** Continuation of a given opening of a melody for a specified instrument (a choice will be given).
- 4** Questions on short extracts of music written for piano or in open score for voices or for any combination of instruments and/or voices, designed to test the candidate's knowledge of the elements and notation of music, including the realisation of ornaments, the identification and notation of underlying harmonic structure, phrase structure, style, performance, and on the voices and instruments for which the works were written.

Exam content

The following tables show the introduction of elements at each grade. These requirements are presented cumulatively, i.e. once introduced, they apply to all subsequent grades.

Grades 1 to 5

| Topic | Grade 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Clef | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> treble bass | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> alto | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tenor |
| Time signatures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2/4 3/4 4/4 C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3/8 2/2 ♩ 3/2 4/2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6/8 9/8 12/8 upbeat opening | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4/8 6/4 9/4 6/16 9/16 12/16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5/4 7/4 5/8 7/8 |
| Pitches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> treble clef: bass clef: sharps, flats, naturals  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> treble clef: bass clef:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> treble clef: bass clef:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> alto clef: enharmonic equivalent double sharps double flats  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> alto clef: tenor clef:  |
| Degrees of scale | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> degrees of scale within one octave and above the tonic: 1st-8th | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> degrees of scale beyond one octave, above the tonic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> degrees of scale above or below the tonic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> technical names: tonic, supertonic, mediant, subdominant, dominant, submediant, leading note | |
| Keys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of C, F, G, D | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of B\flat, E\flat, A minor keys of A, E, D and their relative majors relative minors of C, F, G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of E, A\flat minor keys of C\sharp, F, B, G, C, F\sharp relative majors/minors of all keys set for this grade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of B, D\flat minor keys of G\sharp, B\flat relative majors/minors of all keys set for this grade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of F\sharp, G\flat minor keys of D\sharp, E\flat relative majors/minors of all keys set for this grade |
| Scales | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all keys set for the grade ascending and descending | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all keys set up to and including this grade harmonic minor only | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all keys set up to and including this grade melodic and harmonic both required | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chromatic scale all keys set up to and including this grade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all keys set up to and including this grade |
| Time values <i>N.B. American equivalents are shown at the beginning of each relevant section</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> semiquaver; quaver; crotchet; minim; semibreve dotted quaver; dotted crotchet; dotted minim | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dotted semibreve triplet semiquavers; triplet quavers; triplet crotchets; triplet minims | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demisemiquaver triplet demisemiquavers dotted semiquaver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> breve double-dotted notes semiquaver, quaver and crotchet duplets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> quintuplet; sextuplet |
| Rests <i>N.B. American equivalents are shown at the beginning of each relevant section</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> semiquaver; quaver; crotchet; minim; semibreve whole-bar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dotted quaver; dotted crotchet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demisemiquaver simple or compound time dotted semiquaver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> breve dotted minim (6/4 or 9/4 time only) | |
| Intervals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> melodic intervals 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8ve in all keys set for the grade above the tonic only semitones and tones | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8ve in all keys set up to and including this grade above the tonic only | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> major 2nd, minor and major 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th, minor and major 6th, minor and major 7th, perfect 8ve in all keys set up to and including this grade above the tonic only | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> any diatonic interval: minor 2nd, augmented 2nd, augmented 4th, diminished 4th, augmented 5th, diminished 5th, diminished 7th in all keys set up to and including this grade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chromatic intervals: augmented 3rd, diminished 3rd, augmented 6th, diminished 6th, augmented 7th, augmented 8ve, diminished 8ve compound intervals: 9th or compound 2nd, 10th or compound 3rd, 11th or compound 4th, 12th or compound 5th, 13th or compound 6th, 14th or compound 7th, 15th or compound 8ve |

| Topic | Grade | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Triads | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tonic triads in all keys set for this grade with the tonic as the lowest note | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tonic triads in all keys set up to and including this grade with the tonic as the lowest note | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tonic triads in all keys set up to and including this grade with the tonic as the lowest note | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tonic, subdominant, dominant triads in all keys set up to and including this grade in root position | |
| Chords | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> primary triads (I, IV, V) in root position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supertonic first and second inversions recognition of perfect, plagal and imperfect cadences |
| Transposition | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> notes written at the same pitch in treble and bass clefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> octave transposition between treble and bass clefs, up to three ledger lines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> octave transposition between all clefs set up to and including this grade, up to four ledger lines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transposition between all clefs set up to and including this grade instruments in F, B\flat or A interval of transposition given with or without key signature |
| Grouping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> grouping and beaming of all notes set for this grade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> grouping and beaming of all notes and rests set up to and including this grade in simple time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> grouping and beaming of all notes and rests set up to and including this grade in simple or compound time | | |
| Ornaments | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognising signs for trill, (upper) turn, upper mordent, lower mordent, acciaccatura, grace note(s), appoggiatura | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognising written-out ornaments |
| Instruments | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> string: violin, viola cello, double bass woodwind: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon brass: trumpet, horn, trombone, tuba percussion: timpani, side drum, bass drum, cymbals knowledge of clefs used and broad understanding of range and family percussion: definite or indefinite pitch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> harp; piccolo; cor anglais; piano triangle; tambourine; castanets; tam-tam; xylophone; marimba; glockenspiel; vibraphone; celesta; tubular bells (definite or indefinite pitch only) single reed; double reed transposing/non-transposing |
| Instrumental directions | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pizzicato (pizz.)/arco; up bow; down bow; slur; con/senza sord./sordini; avec/sans sourdines; sul G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> una corda; tre corde; pedalling signs; con/senza pedale; mano sinistra (m.s.); mano destra (m.d.); arpeggiation |
| Voices | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> standard voice-types: soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass broad understanding of range |

| Topic | Grade | | | | |
|--------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Terms | Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a tempo accelerando (or accel.) adagio allegretto allegro andante cantabile crescendo (or cresc.) da capo (or D.C.) decrecendo (or decresc.) diminuendo (or dim.) dolce <i>f</i> (forte) <i>ff</i> (fortissimo) fine, al fine legato <i>mf</i> (mezzo forte) moderato <i>mp</i> (mezzo piano) <i>p</i> (piano) <i>pp</i> (pianissimo) rallentando (or rall.) ritardando (or ritard. or rit.) staccato (or stacc.) | Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> alla marcia allargando con moto con, col dal segno (or D.S.) e, ed espressivo (or espress.) <i>fp</i> (fortepiano) grave grazioso largo lento ma meno meno mosso molto non troppo più più mosso poco, poco a poco presto ritenuto (or riten. or rit.) senza vivace, vivo | Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> agitato andantino animato ben con forza energico giocoso leggiero maestoso marcato, marc. pesante prestissimo prima, primo risoluto scherzando semplice sempre sforzando, sforzato, sfz, sf simile (or sim.) sostenuto, sost subito, sub. tranquillo triste, tristamente | Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> affettuoso alla breve amabile appassionato assai come prima comodo, tempo comodo con brio deciso largetto mesto misterioso ritmico rubato, tempo rubato stringendo French terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> animé douce lent modéré retenu vite | Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a niente ad libitum, ad lib. attacca cantando con dolore con spirito doloroso largamente morendo perdendosi quasi rinforzando, rf, rfz, rinf. smorzando, smorz. sonoro sotto voce German terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> langsam lebhaft mässig ruhig schnell traurig |
| Signs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> crescendo diminuendo slur tie staccato accent pause metronome indications repeat marks common time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong accent semi-staccato staccatissimo tenuto 8^{va} alla breve multiple-bar rests volta brackets | | | |

Grades 6 to 8

An overall knowledge of all elements set for Grades 1 to 5 is assumed by Grade 6. Some instruments and performance directions may appear in an exam a grade earlier than listed below, but these will not be assessed.

| Topic | Grade 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|--|--|--|
| Keys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all major and minor keys modulation to related keys modern scores without key signatures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> modulation to unrelated keys | |
| Figured bass | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (5/3), 6(3), 6/4 (3)^b, (3)^b, (3)[#] 5/(3)^b, 5/(3)^b, 5/(3)[#] 6^b, 6^b, 6[#] 6/(3)^b, 6/(3)^b, 6/(3)[#] 6/4, 6^b/4, 6^b/4, 6[#]/4 6/4 - 5/3, 6/4 - 5/(3)^b, 6/4 - 5/(3)^b, 6/4 - 5/(3)[#] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 4, 5/4 4/2, 6/4/2 4/3, 6/4/(3) 6/5, 6/5/(3) 7, 7/(3), 7/5/(3) 9, 9 - 8, 7 - 6, 4 - 3 the above figures including any necessary accidentals, e.g. 5^b/(3)[#] or 6^b/5/(3)^b the above including a combination of figures, e.g. 7 - 6[#] | |
| Harmonic usage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5/3, 6/3, 6/4 chords on any degree of the major or minor scale 6/4 - 5/3 progression | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> V7a, V7b, V7c, V7d diminished 7th chord in root position and inversions all diatonic secondary 7th chords and their inversions Neapolitan 6th | |
| Chord identification and recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5/3, 6/3, 6/4 chords on any degree of the major or minor scale 6/4 - 5/3 progression Roman notation V7a, V7b, V7c, V7d ii7a, ii7b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> diminished 7th chord in root position and inversions all diatonic secondary 7th chords and their inversions Neapolitan 6th | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> augmented 6th chords (Italian/French/German) V9, V11, V13 and their inversions all chromatic chords |
| Harmonic feature recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cadences: perfect, imperfect, plagal, interrupted pedal points: tonic, dominant harmonic sequences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> false relation suspensions Tierce de Picardie identification of enharmonic equivalent of a triad | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identification of enharmonic equivalent of a chord |
| Melodic feature recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> melodic sequences imitation/canon melodic motifs texture: no more than four parts enharmonic change between two consecutive notes in the same part | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> simultaneous enharmonic change between two different instruments (non-transposing instruments) melodic inversion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contrapuntal features motivic development texture: more than four parts |
| Rhythmic feature recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> imitation/canon rhythmic motifs syncopation augmentation/diminution | | |
| Notes of melodic decoration usage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> unaccented passing notes lower/upper auxiliary note (diatonic) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> accented passing notes lower/upper auxiliary note (chromatic) appoggiatura note of anticipation changing note (échappée) | |
| Notes of melodic decoration identification and recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> unaccented/accented passing note lower/upper auxiliary note (diatonic and chromatic) appoggiatura note of anticipation changing note (échappée) grace note(s) | | |
| Melodic composition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using a given opening tonal and in more modern styles modulation to related keys eight to ten bars in length | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continuation of a melody with a given accompaniment or using a given opening/harmonic framework with optional opening at least eight bars in length | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using a given opening at least 12 bars in length |
| Stylistic completion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> indicating chords to accompany a given melody or two-part completion: adding a bass line and figured bass to a melody four-part realization of figured bass for SATB or keyboard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reconstruction of an extract from a Bach chorale by adding suspensions and notes of melodic decoration reconstruction of an extract from a simple piano piece using notes of melodic decoration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> three-part counterpoint: completing an extract from a trio sonata completing an extract from a moderately complex piano piece using the given outline |

| Topic | Grade 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Score reading and analysis | <p>Question 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> solo piano/keyboard voice/instrument and piano string/vocal quartet solo instrument non-transposing only (e.g. violin sonata) and treble/bass clef <p>Question 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> full score (orchestra or large ensemble or chorus with orchestra); up to ten staves sounding simultaneously (e.g. four woodwind, horns, timpani, five strings) | <p>Question 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transposing solo instrument, including the use of C clefs <p>Question 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> full score up to 14 staves sounding simultaneously (e.g. five woodwind, four to five brass, percussion, strings) | <p>Question 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> up to five staves <p>Question 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> full score up to 24 staves sounding simultaneously |
| Instruments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transposing instruments in: F, B\flat or A, clarinet, cor anglais, horn, trumpet (not bass clarinet or double bassoon) transposing instruments in C: piccolo, double bass commonly used instrument names in English, German, French, Italian | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transposing instruments in: D or E\flat horns additionally in E or G double bassoon percussion: occasional transposition less commonly used instrument names in English, German, French, Italian | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> bass clarinet (may be in score in Grade 7, but no related questions will be asked) percussion: more frequent transposition of xylophone, celesta, glockenspiel |
| Instrumental features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> terms and signs relating to instrumental techniques, e.g. tremolo, glissandi; or score layout, e.g. <i>a2</i>, <i>l//l</i>, <i>tutti</i>, <i>unis. div.</i>; or change of pitch e.g. <i>muta G in A</i> open strings, double stopping muting signs for reiterations and repeated patterns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> harmonics: any string instrument more advanced instrumental features, e.g. flutter tonguing, playing on the fingerboard pitch names e.g. B, H, mi\flat, si\flat, la\sharp | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> further advanced instrumental techniques, e.g. bouché, cuivré, chiuso, etc. |
| Intervals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> harmonic or melodic all major, minor, perfect, augmented and diminished intervals, including compound intervals chromatic semitone (augmented unison) including the use of transposing instruments but, if different transposing instruments, one of those will be double bass or piccolo | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> intervals in treble/bass/C clefs and between two transposing instruments in different keys (including E\flat horn or E\flat clarinet) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> including double bassoon and bass clarinet |
| Composer/period/style | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> underlining name of composer/period of composition, three choices (all from the Baroque period onwards, each from a different period) naming reasons when or by whom the extract was written | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> underlining name of composer/period of composition, maximum of four choices (all from the Baroque period onwards) | |
| Ornaments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> realisation and recognition of ornaments (written out or signs) trill, (upper) turn, lower/inverted turn, upper mordent, lower mordent, acciaccatura, grace note(s), appoggiatura | | |
| Voices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> standard voice types and ranges | | |
| Phrase structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> indicating phrase structure of whole extract | | |
| General features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> naming features which show change in mood/texture, prominence of solo instrument, climactic point, melodic variation, etc. describing similarities and differences | | |

| Topic | Grade 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-------|--|--|---|
| Terms | <p>Italian terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adagietto • affrettando • amore • a piacere • calando • delicato • dolciss. (dolcissimo) • dolente • giusto • marziale • mezza voce • possibile • prestissimo • seconda, secondo • soave • spiritoso • strepitoso • tanto • teneramente • tenerezza • tenuto • volta <p>French terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • à • avec • doux • encore • et • non • peu • plus • sans • très • un, une <p>German terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ausdrück, ausdrücksvoll • ein • etwas • geschwind • langsamer • mit • nicht • ohne • rasch • sehr • und • ziemlich • zu | <p>Italian terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brillante • colla parte • facile • fuoco • legg. (leggiero) • l'istesso • lunga, lunga pausa • marc. (marcato) • ossia • piacevole • pochettino, poch. • pochiss. • segue • sopra • veloce <p>French terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1^{er} mouvt. (mouvement) • assez • au mouvt. (mouvement) • cédez • en animant • en serrant • mais • moins • ralentir • sonore • vif <p>German terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aber • doch • empfindung • fröhlich • gesangvoll • langsamer als • süß • voll • zart | <p>Italian terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affretare (affrettando) • ancora • brioso • calma • calmato • doppio movimento • estinto • incalzando • lacrimoso • legatissimo • loco • lusingando • mancando • misura • nobilmente • parlando • piangevole • precipitando • scherzo, scherzoso • stretto • tosto • volante <p>French terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • en dehors • légèrement • modérément • peu à peu • presser, pressez <p>German terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bewegt • breit • einfach • gesprochen • immer • lebhafter • leicht • leise • ruhiger • schleppend • schneller • wenig • wieder |

4. Assessment and marking

Assessment objectives

The following tables describe the level of knowledge and skills required of candidates taking Music Theory exams. They also show the assessment objectives and corresponding learning outcomes. The marking criteria are available on pages 26–27.

Grades 1 to 3 (RQF Level 1)

Qualification aims

Our Level 1 qualifications in Music Theory are designed to provide learners with a solid foundation in fundamental elements of Western music notation, including pitches, rhythms, keys, time signatures, notational conventions, simple transpositions and common Italian terms. The exact scope of the material covered is laid out in the exam content listed on pages 16–18 of this specification.

| Assessment objectives | Learning outcomes |
|--|---|
| Learners will: | Learners can: |
| Demonstrate basic factual knowledge of simple music notation within a defined set. | Identify basic elements of music notation, including pitches, key signatures, tonic triads, scales, degrees of the scale and intervals in treble and bass clefs, with a general degree of accuracy. |
| Demonstrate basic factual knowledge and understanding of commonly occurring musical signs and terms. | Identify, name and explain basic elements of music notation, including dynamics, other musical instructions, and Italian terms relating to tempo and expression, with a general degree of accuracy. |
| Demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of the processes involved in completing and/or amending musical examples to make them grammatically correct. | Complete musical extracts by adding time signatures, bar lines and rests, and amend them by grouping notes and rests, with a general degree of accuracy. |
| Demonstrate musical knowledge and understanding in analysing simple melodies and by transposing individual pitches or basic musical fragments. | Identify and describe the meaning of various features of a piece of simple music, and transfer pitches and short melodic fragments between clefs and octaves, with a general degree of accuracy. |

Grades 4 to 5 (RQF Level 2)

Qualification aims

Our Level 2 qualifications in Music Theory are designed to provide learners with a solid foundation in more complex elements of Western music notation, including pitches, rhythms, keys, time signatures, notational conventions, transpositions and common Italian, French and German musical terms. The exact scope of the material covered is laid out in the exam content listed on pages 16–18 of this specification, and builds cumulatively on material learned at Level 1.

| Assessment objectives | Learning outcomes |
|--|--|
| Learners will: | Learners can: |
| Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of moderately complex music notation within a defined set. | Identify, name and explain elements of more advanced music notation, including pitches, key signatures, scales, technical names of notes in diatonic scales, intervals and chords of I, IV, V and (Grade 5 only) II in treble, bass, alto and (Grade 5 only) tenor clefs, with a general degree of accuracy. |
| Demonstrate factual knowledge and understanding of less commonly occurring musical signs, including ornaments, musical terms, and the ranges and characteristics of standard orchestral instruments. | Identify, name and explain more advanced elements of music notation, including dynamics, ornaments, other musical instructions, and Italian, French and German musical terms relating to tempo and expression, with a general degree of accuracy. |
| Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the processes involved in completing and/or amending incomplete musical examples of moderate difficulty to make them grammatically correct. | Complete musical extracts of moderate difficulty by adding time signatures, bar lines and rests; grouping notes and rests; and amending musical passages in notes of half or twice the value, or from compound to simple time and vice versa, with a general degree of accuracy. |
| Demonstrate musical knowledge and understanding in analysing moderately complex musical extracts, and by transposing more complex music. | Identify and describe the meaning of various features of a piece of moderately complex music, and transfer short melodic fragments between clefs, octaves and keys, with a general degree of accuracy. |

Grades 6 to 8 (RQF Level 3)

Qualification aims

Our Level 3 qualifications in Music Theory are designed to provide learners with a solid foundation in fundamental elements of Western music harmony, melodic writing and interpretation of complex written scores, covering figured bass, trio sonata, keyboard writing, and music in a range of styles up to full orchestral score. The exact scope of the material covered is laid out in the exam content listed on pages 19–21 of this specification, and builds cumulatively on material learned at Levels 1 and 2.

| Assessment objectives | Learning outcomes |
|---|---|
| Learners will: | Learners can: |
| Demonstrate advanced musical skills, knowledge and understanding of applied harmony, showing sophisticated awareness of stylistic conventions. | Complete advanced harmonic tasks in interpreting figured bass, completing harmony and counterpoint exercises from a stimulus drawn from real repertoire, reconstructing music from skeleton scores with a general degree of accuracy and awareness of harmonic conventions, styles and characteristics. |
| Demonstrate advanced musical skills, knowledge and understanding of melodic writing for a range of instruments. | Compose an original melody with a sense of shape and direction, generally continuing in the same style and character as indicated by the opening, and write idiomatically for a range of instruments with a general degree of accuracy and awareness of their technical characteristics and of stylistic conventions. |
| Demonstrate factual knowledge and understanding of advanced musical signs, including ornaments, musical terms, and the ranges and characteristics of standard orchestral instruments. | Identify, name and write advanced elements of music notation, including dynamics, ornaments, other music instructions, and Italian, French and German musical terms relating to tempo and expression, with a general degree of accuracy. |
| Demonstrate musical knowledge and understanding in analysing complex musical extracts. | Identify and describe the meaning of various features of a piece of complex music, including its underlying form and harmonic structure, with a general degree of accuracy. |

Mark allocation

Marks are allocated for each section/question, as shown in the tables below. The marks allocated for each individual question are shown in brackets to the right-hand side of the screen/exam paper.

| Grades 1 to 3 | | Grade 4 to 5 | | Grades 6 to 8 | |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Section number | Maximum marks | Section number | Maximum marks | Question number | Maximum marks |
| 1 | 15 | 1 | 10 | 1 | 15 |
| 2 | 15 | 2 | 10 | 2 | 15 |
| 3 | 15 | 3 | 15 | 3 | 20 |
| 4 | 10 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 25 |
| 5 | 10 | 5 | 10 | 5 | 25 |
| 6 | 5 | 6 | 10 | Total | 100 marks |
| 7 | 5 | 7 | 10 | | |
| Total | 75 marks | Total | 75 marks | | |

Result categories

The result categories for Music Theory exams are set as follows.

Grades 1 to 5

| Result category | Mark band |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Distinction | 65-75 |
| Merit | 60-64 |
| Pass | 50-59 |
| Below Pass | 0-49 |

Grades 6 to 8

| Result category | Mark Band |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Distinction | 90-100 |
| Merit | 80-89 |
| Pass | 66-79 |
| Below Pass | 0-65 |

Marking criteria

The following tables show the marking criteria for Music Theory grades.

Grades 1 to 5

| Grades 1 to 3 | Grades 4 to 5 |
|--|--|
| Learners are assessed on: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhythm • Pitch and transposition • Keys and scales • Intervals • Tonic triads • Terms and signs • Music in context | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhythm • Pitch and transposition • Keys and scales • Intervals • Triads and chords • Terms, signs and instruments • Music in context |

| Grades 1 to 5 | Marking criteria |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Distinction 65-75 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly accurate with excellent attention to detail • The required basic elements of music are fully grasped • Confident use of simple logical and mathematical concepts |
| Merit 60-64 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely accurate with good attention to detail • The required basic elements of music are mainly grasped • Strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses |
| Pass 50-59 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally accurate but some lapses in attention to detail • The required basic elements of music are generally grasped • Strengths just outweigh weaknesses |
| Below Pass 1-49 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccuracies throughout • The required basic elements of music are not grasped • Weaknesses outweigh strengths • Some items incomplete |
| 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No work offered |

Grades 6 to 8

| Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Grade 8 |
|---|---|---|
| Learners are assessed on: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Harmonisation of a melody or completion of a bass line ▪ Figured bass ▪ Melodic composition ▪ Music in context | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The addition of figures to a bass line ▪ Embellishment of a harmonic skeleton ▪ Melodic composition ▪ Music in context | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trio sonata ▪ Keyboard completion ▪ Melodic composition ▪ Music in context |

| Grades 6 to 8 | Marking criteria |
|------------------------------|--|
| Distinction 90-100 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highly accurate with excellent attention to detail ▪ The required elements of key, tonality, modulation, cadences, harmonic progressions and figured bass are fully grasped ▪ The melody has an excellent overall sense of shape and direction and is unified in style and character ▪ Confident score reading and analysis |
| Merit 80-89 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Largely accurate with good attention to detail ▪ The required elements of key, tonality, modulation, cadences, harmonic progressions and figured bass are mainly grasped ▪ The melody has a good overall sense of shape and direction, and the style and character of the given opening is well maintained ▪ Largely confident score reading and analysis ▪ Strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses |
| Pass 66-79 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generally accurate but some lapses in attention to detail ▪ The required elements of key, tonality, modulation, cadences, harmonic progressions and figured bass are generally grasped ▪ The melody has some sense of shape and direction, and some attempt has been made to maintain the style and character of the given opening ▪ Some ability shown in score reading and analysis, despite errors ▪ Strengths just outweigh weaknesses |
| Below Pass 1-65 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inaccuracies throughout with little attention to detail ▪ The required elements of key, tonality, modulation, cadences, harmonic progressions and figured bass are not grasped ▪ The melody lacks overall shape and direction, with poor maintenance of the style and character of the given opening ▪ Frequent errors in score reading and analysis ▪ Weaknesses outweigh strengths ▪ Some items incomplete |
| 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No work offered |

5. After the exam

Results

All candidates receive a mark form which gives a breakdown of the marks awarded for each question and the total number of marks; successful candidates also receive a certificate that shows the qualification title as well as the subject and level that they have been examined in. Assessments are not returned after marking. We aim to release results for Music Theory grades in line with the schedules on our website at www.abrsm.org/results; however, some results may take longer. 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.

Appeals and feedback

Appeals

If a candidate has received an unexpected exam result, this can be appealed by requesting a Results Review (Grades 1 to 5) or a Re-Mark (Grades 6 to 8). These processes allow us to revisit the marks awarded and, subject to the outcome of the review, may result in a mark amendment.

Feedback

In addition to an appeal, we also welcome feedback about other matters, such as the overall exam experience, or the mark form at Grades 6 to 8. All feedback is logged and plays a valuable part in our commitment to continuous improvement and quality assurance procedures.

For further information on our processes and deadlines for appealing a result, or submitting feedback, please visit www.abrsm.org/send-exam-feedback.

6. Other assessments

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

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

Full information is available at www.abrsm.org/exams.

Practical Musicianship

ABRSM Practical Musicianship exams are available for Grades 1 to 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.

Practical Grades

ABRSM Practical Grades are our long-standing 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 and in the qualification specification, available at www.abrsm.org/specifications.

Performance Grades

ABRSM Performance Grades are our progressive qualifications that allow learners to focus on and showcase their performance skills. They are available from Grade 1 to Grade 8 and in some subjects from Initial Grade. 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, including the qualification specification, is available at www.abrsm.org/performancegrades.

Diplomas

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.

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.

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.

We are currently reviewing the diploma exams we offer and changes may be made during the lifetime of this specification. Please refer to www.abrsm.org/diplomas for up-to-date information.