

PERCUSSION (*Subject Code: 44*): Syllabus requirements

Syllabus validity

This syllabus is valid from 1990 until further notice.

Venues

Percussion exams are held at Visits, i.e. premises provided by the Applicant and visited by the examiner. They may be held independently of other exams or as part of a larger Visit that includes other subjects/grades. For full details about Visits, see Reg. 7 in the *Examination Information & Regulations*, in particular the requirements to:

- arrange for a steward to be present
- provide a suitable piano for the Aural tests
- provide transport for the examiner, if requested (without cost to ABRSM)

Instruments

Candidates are required to perform on one tuned percussion instrument *and*, at their choice, either timpani or snare drum.

Tuned percussion

Candidates may play the requirements on:

- xylophone
- marimba
- vibraphone (*with motor off*)
- glockenspiel (*Grades 1 and 2 only; the instrument's range must be sufficient to cover the range of the scale requirements and the chosen piece*)

Timpani

Hand- or pedal-tuned drums may be used.

The different roll notations should be played according to the guidelines contained in the exam books published by ABRSM. Candidates may, if they wish, omit damping crotchet and quarter rests in Grades 1–3, although they should damp the longer rests and at the end of a piece or study. From Grade 4, rests should be damped whenever feasible. In order to accommodate hand-tuned drums, tuning changes in the studies and pieces have been arranged to occur at pauses so they can be negotiated as smoothly as possible.

Snare drum

Candidates may use either traditional or matched grip. The different roll notations should be played according to the guidelines contained in the exam books published by ABRSM.

Teachers/candidates must ensure that the instruments are set up in advance of the exam so it can begin at the scheduled time. Candidates are expected to use the correct sticks and mallets for the instruments they have chosen to play.

Scales and arpeggios (*Tuned percussion*)

Examiners will usually ask for at least one type of scale/arpeggio required at each grade.

All scales and arpeggios should:

- be played from memory
- ascend and descend according to the specified range (and pattern)

- be played without undue accentuation and at a pace that is consistent with accuracy and distinctness
- be played with the repeat indications (as printed in the syllabus) duly noted and observed

Accompanied pieces (*Tuned percussion*)

In all grades, a selection of the tuned percussion exam pieces published by ABRSM are provided with optional piano accompaniments. If choosing to play these pieces accompanied, candidates must provide their own accompanist, who may remain in the exam room *only* while engaged in accompanying. The candidate's teacher may act as accompanist; under no circumstances will the examiner do so. For any of the tuned percussion pieces, candidates are free to use a piano accompaniment contained in any other published edition, provided it matches the main features and extent of the solo part.

Tuning (*Timpani*)

Tuning in Grades 1 and 2 may be done by the teacher (the examiner will not do so). In all other grades candidates must tune the timpani themselves. Candidates should also provide their own tuning forks or other pitch sources, and these may be used only before the beginning of each study or piece.

Sight-reading

The examiner will direct candidates to play a test *either* for tuned percussion *or* for the other instrument being used in the exam.

Candidates will be given a short interval of up to half a minute in which to look through and, if they wish, try out any part of the sight-reading test before they are required to perform it for assessment. Specimen sight-reading tests are included in the exam books published by ABRSM.

Aural tests

The standard aural tests as set for all other Practical subjects will be given, but candidates may choose to play (instead of clap) the pulse-clapping test (Grades 1–3) if they prefer.

Performance and assessment

When marking, examiners will be assessing not only the accuracy of notes and rhythm, but also other elements inherent in a good performance, including quality of touch, variety and gradation of tone, suitable choice of tempo, and expression, phrasing and accent. Further details of assessment criteria are given in *These Music Exams*, available free of charge from music retailers and from www.abrsm.org/exams.

Marking scheme

Schedule of maximum marks for all grades:

Tuned percussion	
Scales and arpeggios	21
Piece 1	30
Timpani or Snare drum	
Study	30
Piece 2	30
Sight-reading	21
Aural tests	18
Total	150