



Guidelines for blind and partially sighted candidates

Our policy

In addition to the specific provisions described below, we are happy to consider each person individually if their needs are not covered by our standard arrangements. However, it is important to understand that whilst we are able to make provisions for the administration of the exam, e.g. extra time or alternative tests, we are not able to make any concessions in the marking – all candidates will be treated equally.

Preparing for the exam

Using the information below, decide which tests and provisions will work best. If you need further information or advice, please refer to page 8 for relevant contact information.

Entering for the exam

- Once you are sure of what is needed for the exam, choose the correct code on the entry form.
- You must make sure that you use the right code, and where additional arrangements are needed, these must be discussed and agreed with the Associated Board before entry.
- Sometimes none of the codes will be relevant, in which case you should include a covering letter. Alternatively, you might like to use one of the codes and include a covering letter to give us more specific information – the more information you can provide the better.

Venue and equipment

- We are aware that blind or partially sighted candidates may want to visit the exam venue before the exam date itself, to check the lighting and acoustics. If you decide this would be useful, please contact the Board before entry.
- Partially sighted candidates who would like to use visual aids during their exams should contact the Board before entry to discuss suitable arrangements.
- On the day itself, candidates are welcome to be accompanied into the exam room and assisted to familiarize themselves with their surroundings before the start of the exam.

The examiner

Our examiners are given guidance on examining blind and partially sighted candidates, and will also have been fully briefed on any extra information you provide.

Alternative Tests

All information within these guidelines refers to the new tests for blind and partially sighted candidates, introduced for use in exams from 1 January 2007. From this date any previous test material will be replaced. Please ensure you refer to the correct specimens (see page 8 for further details).

Sight-reading

Blind candidates

Blind candidates may choose between one of the two options listed below.

Please write one of the following codes in the access code box on the entry form.

- B Braille memory test** This test consists of a short passage transcribed into Braille which will be given to the candidate to study, with a time allowance as indicated in 'Additional time allowances' (page 5). The candidate will then be asked to play the test from memory immediately following the preparation time.
- R Aural repetition test** This test consists of a short passage played three times on the piano by the examiner, who will first play and name the key-chord and starting note, and indicate the tempo before asking the candidate to repeat the passage on his/her instrument. Candidates will be given a short amount of time to try out the test following the second and final playings.

Subject-specific information

Please refer to the specimen tests for more detailed information.

Organ

At Grades 6–8, candidates will be required to repeat the test transposed up or down a tone or semitone, as requested by the examiner.

Horn and Trumpet

Candidates will not be required to do any transposition tests at Grades 6–8.

Singing candidates

Aural repetition test This test will be accompanied by the examiner who will play the vocal line, together with its accompaniment, three times. Candidates can sing the vocal line to 'la' or any other vowel sound.

Braille memory test Candidates may opt to attempt this section as a memory test or read directly from the Braille, and the examiner should be informed which option they have chosen at the start of the exam. The Braille copy will contain, in addition to the vocal line, a sketch of the piano introduction and a brief description of the examiner's accompaniment.

Candidates reading directly from the Braille will be required to sing the vocal line to 'la' or any other vowel sound, and read the Braille score at the same time. They will therefore be given only 2 minutes at all grades to study the test.

Candidates wishing to memorize the test will be expected to incorporate the lyrics, and will be given the same additional time allowance as all other subjects.

Partially sighted candidates

Partially sighted candidates may request sight-reading tests in large notation or modified staff notation. They may read and play the test at the same time, or alternatively they may opt to memorize the test before performing it.

Please write one of the following codes in the access code box on the entry form.

- L Large notation sight-reading test** The standard enlargement of tests is normally 200%. Standard large notation specimen tests may be obtained from Allegro Music (see page 8).
- M Large notation memory test** Candidates will be given additional time as indicated in 'Additional time allowances' (page 5).
- P Modified staff notation sight-reading test** If modified staff notation is required for exam tests, a covering letter and a sample must be submitted at the time of entry, stating the relevant specifications (see pages 5–6).
- T Modified staff notation memory test** Candidates will be given additional time as stated in 'Additional time allowances' (see page 5). Please send a sample and letter as above.

Aural tests

Candidates who have opted for a Braille memory test or an aural repetition test will automatically receive a Braille version of Aural Test B at Grades 6–8 (see below). Similarly, candidates who have requested a large or modified staff notation sight-reading test will receive an enlarged or modified copy of Aural Test B at Grades 4–8.

Grades 4 and 5

Test B, requiring candidates to sing from score in free time (five notes at Grade 4 and six notes at Grade 5), is conducted as a 'Talking Score' for blind and partially sighted candidates who are unable to read the music in an enlarged or modified version of the staff notation. The examiner will first play and name the key-chord and tonic and will then read out each note in turn, indicating whether the pitch rises or falls, for the candidate to sing back.

Grades 6, 7 and 8

Test B, requiring candidates to sing a short melody from score with an accompaniment played by the examiner, is presented in Braille music for blind candidates giving the melody line only with phrase and breath marks included, but with dynamics and most articulation indications removed. A brief description of the relevant features of the accompaniment will be given in literary Braille. Candidates will be given approximately 1 minute to study the test.

Written exams

Blind candidates

Please write one of the following codes in the access code box on the entry form.

- B Braille paper** Exam papers will be supplied in Braille and answers will be accepted in Braille. Contact the Access Coordinator for more details (see page 8)
- A Amanuensis** Candidates who are unable to access printed material, or who are unable to write down their answers may use an amanuensis to act as a reader, a scribe or both. ABRSM endeavours to provide a fully trained amanuensis. This may not be possible on all occasions, and candidates must be prepared to make their own arrangements if necessary. For essential information on this option, please contact the Access Coordinator (see page 8).

Candidates who require an amanuensis must contact the Theory office *telephone*: +44 (0)20 7467 8270; *email*: theory@abrs.ac.uk, prior to entry. A covering letter must be included with the entry form, detailing the candidate's requirements.

Partially sighted candidates

Please write one of the following codes in the access code box on the entry form.

- L Large-print paper** (A4–A3 enlargement)
- P Modified paper** If modified staff notation and text is required for an exam paper, a covering letter and a sample must be submitted, stating the relevant specifications and paper size (see pages 5–6). We will do our best to produce a paper to match your specifications. To give us the best chance of providing you with a suitable paper, please ensure you contact us by no later than the closing date – preferably before.

Other exams

Jazz exams

As the Board's Jazz exams are designed to be accessible for candidates to attempt entirely by ear, it is assumed that blind candidates will attempt the exam in this way unless we are specifically informed otherwise. However, the option is still available for the quick study test to be provided in either large notation, modified staff notation or Braille if requested on entry.

Practical Musicianship

Blind candidates Tests requiring the candidate to read from score will be provided in Braille. A covering letter, stating which instruments the candidate will use and which options they will take, should be included with the entry.

Partially sighted candidates will be provided with tests in enlarged or modified staff notation if requested on the entry form. A covering letter together with a sample of the staff layout required must be provided with the entry form for candidates requiring modified staff notation (see page 6). Additional time allowances are added as per the practical grades (see 'Additional Time Allowances' on page 5).

Performance Assessment

Blind and partially sighted candidates whose needs cannot be met within the current graded system, may take the Performance Assessment. A written statement should accompany the entry explaining the particular needs of the candidate (this is essential if the candidate is under 21) so that this information can be passed on to the examiner. For further information on this please visit our website or contact the Access Coordinator for a leaflet.

Diploma exams – quick study test

Blind candidates should tick the box for Braille quick study test. This test can be taken at any time during the exam.

Singing candidates may opt to take the quick study either as a memory test or reading directly from the Braille. Candidates will not be required to incorporate the lyrics provided and may sing the vocal line to 'la' or any other vowel sound. For additional time allowances see page 5.

Partially sighted candidates may request quick study tests in enlarged or modified staff notation, and should tick the relevant box on the entry form. The standard enlargement of tests is normally 200%. The test can be done either as a quick study or as a memory test.

Those requiring modified staff notation must send a sample, preferably with the relevant parameters (see pages 5–6), with their entry form.

As there are no specimen tests at Diploma level, candidates should use ABRSM syllabus material at Grade 6 for Dip ABRSM, or at Grades 7/8 for LRSM/FRSM. Candidates should contact the RNIB for Braille music at the relevant level, Allegro Music for large notation copies (see page 8), or, depending on the copyright, may be able to modify specimen material themselves (see page 8).

Additional general information

Certificates

In addition to the standard printed copy, a Braille certificate is automatically issued to all successful candidates who requested Braille memory tests or Braille Theory papers. Braille certificates are also available to successful candidates who opted to do aural repetition tests, but only if a specific request is made at the time of entry.

Our certificates are produced by the RNIB, and will be forwarded to applicants a few weeks after the session has ended. We do our best to produce Braille certificates in the shortest possible time, but should you experience a delay, please call the Access Administrator on *telephone*: +44 (0)20 7467 8814.

Additional time allowances

Braille, large or modified staff notation memory test

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Grades 1–3 | 5 minutes extra |
| Grades 4–5 | 10 minutes extra |
| Grades 6–7 | 15 minutes extra |
| Grade 8: | 20 minutes extra |

Braille memory for singers: singers are given the choice of taking the test as a memory test, or performing directly from the Braille. For singers who opt to perform directly from the Braille, only 2 minutes additional time is allocated at all grades for this test. Otherwise additional time is allocated as above.

Large or modified staff notation sight-reading test: 5 minutes additional time is allowed during the exam, with up to 2 minutes for the sight-reading test at all grades.

Aural repetition test: 5 minutes additional time is allowed during the exam for this test.

Diplomas: candidates who are memorizing the quick study test before performing it (e.g. Braille memory test/large notation memory test) will be given 30 minutes to read and memorize the test. Candidates who wish to read and play the test at the same time (e.g. large notation or Braille memory for singers) will be given 10 minutes preparation time, and will be allowed to use the score when performing the test.

Theory exams: the time allowances for visually impaired candidates working Theory papers is as follows:

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Grades 1–3 | 30 minutes extra |
| Grades 4–5 | 40 minutes extra |
| Grades 6–8 | 1 hour extra |

Modified staff notation and print

Modified staff notation: candidates requiring modified staff notation should send in a copy of their preferred layout of music score with their entry. The Board has access to the Sibelius score writing program so a musical example in this format can be e-mailed to us at accesscoordinator@abrs.ac.uk When sending in a paper copy, the parameters required must be specified, as in the example on page 6.

Modified print: candidates requiring a modified theory paper will need to send in a sample as described above, also including details of font size and paper size. We can produce papers in either A4 or A3, but you will need to consider how font and staff size will impact on the paper size needed.

Modified staff notation example – see page 5

Moderato ritmico

The image displays four staves of musical notation for the piece 'Moderato ritmico'. Each staff shows a different set of modifications to the original notation. The first staff is marked *f leggiero*. The second staff is marked *mf*. The third staff is marked *p*. The fourth staff is marked *f*. The notation includes treble clefs, 4/4 time signatures, and various note values and rests.

- 1 Made into landscape
- 2 Staff changed from 7 to 10
- 3 Beams 0.5 to 0.7 thick
- 4 Stems 0.1 to 0.2 thick
- 5 Leger lines 0.16 to 0.25 thick

- 6 Barlines 0.16 to 0.2 thick
- 7 Leggiero – Arial Bold
- 8 Tempo marking - Arial Bold
- 9 Moved four systems closer together
- 10 Altered length of some bars to make similar bars approximately the same size.

Candidates requiring modified staff notation theory papers must also specify any modifications required for the text, for example: size, font and spacing.

Specimen tests

The following materials are available in Braille from RNIB Customer Services:

- **Specimen Braille Memory tests**
- **Specimen Aural Tests in Braille, (Grades 1–5, 6, 7 and 8)** The RNIB has also issued two volumes of specimen aural tests in Braille, primarily for the use of blind teachers with sighted candidates. In the appendix of the Grades 6-8 volume, the examples are rewritten for blind candidates. Print copies of the Board's aural tests can be ordered from any music shop which stocks ABRSM publications.
- **Specimen Braille Theory Papers**

The following materials are available on order from Allegro Music:

- **Specimen Aural Repetition Tests**
- **Specimen large notation sight-reading tests**
- **Specimen modified staff notation sight-reading tests:** depending on the copyright, candidates may be able to modify specimen material themselves (see below).

Other publications

Associated Board publications

Large-print copies of all the Associated Board's publications (not including syllabuses and regulations) may be purchased from Allegro Music. The RNIB produce Braille transcriptions of all the pieces set each year for Piano Grades 1-8. To obtain copies of these, please contact RNIB Customer Services.

Syllabuses and regulations

The Board's website, containing all the syllabus lists and regulations information, is accessible to most screen-reading and enlargement software packages. For syllabuses, regulations or copies of these guidelines in alternative format, please contact the Access Coordinator. Relevant extracts from the Board's syllabuses and regulations can be requested in Braille from the RNIB.

Copyright

The Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002 provides an exception for making individual copies of printed material for the benefit of visually impaired people, where such copies are not commercially available. Authorized photocopies of ABRSM works are available in standardized large print format from Allegro Music (see page 8). These will meet the needs of many visually impaired candidates, but, if not, individual large print copies may be made without application to ABRSM. It is your responsibility to contact the publisher to check whether suitable large print copies of any other copyright work are available. Only where such copies are not available may an individual large print copy be made. Any copy made under this exception must include certain information. For details visit www.abrsm.org/exams

Organizations wishing to make two or more large print or otherwise accessible copies (e.g. Braille) should contact the Music Publishers Association for details of the MPA's VIP Licensing Scheme.

For further information contact the ABRSM Publishing's Copyright Department:

e-mail: copyright@abrsm.ac.uk

Further information

Access Coordinator, ABRSM, 24 Portland Place, London W1B 1LU

telephone: +44 (0)20 7467 8247

textphone: +44 (0)20 7637 2582

e-mail: accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk

Guidelines are also available for, deaf and hearing impaired candidates, candidates with dyslexia or other learning difficulties, candidates with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and candidates with other specific needs.

Candidates with a dual sensory impairment should make sure they have a copy of both sets of relevant guidelines.

Useful contacts

For specimen tests contact:

RNIB Customer Services

telephone: +44 (0)845 702 3153

Allegro Music

telephone: +44 (0)1885 490 375

For general information for children and adults interested in music who are blind or partially sighted, contact:

Music Officer

Royal National Institute of the Blind

105 Judd Street

London WC1H 9NE

telephone: +44 (0)20 7391 2296

e-mail: emma.lincoln@rnib.org.uk

All tests used in exams from 2003 use the Braille music rules as stated in the *New International Manual of Braille Music Notation*. Earlier materials may be in slightly different formats.

These guidelines were produced in consultation with the RNIB.

All information correct at time of going to press. Updates will be posted on the website at www.abrsm.org