

THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The Associated Board graded examinations for Theory of music, individual instruments and singing (excluding Practical Musicianship) are accredited in England by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the corresponding regulatory authorities in Wales (ACCAC) and Northern Ireland (CCEA). They are part of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). They have also been approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

| <i>Associated Board Examination Title</i> | <i>NQF Level</i> | <i>NQF Title</i> | <i>Accreditation No.</i> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Practical Grades 1–3 | 1 | Music Performance | 100/0783/0 |
| Practical Grades 4 & 5 | 2 | Music Performance | 100/0784/2 |
| Practical Grades 6–8 | 3 | Music Performance | 100/0785/4 |
| Theory of Music Grades 1–3 | 1 | Music Literacy | 100/0786/6 |
| Theory of Music Grades 4 & 5 | 2 | Music Literacy | 100/0787/8 |
| Theory of Music Grades 6–8 | 3 | Music Literacy | 100/0788/X |

ATTAINMENT DESCRIPTIONS

The following attainment descriptions have been created to give a general indication of the levels of attainment likely to be shown by candidates with results classified as Distinction, Merit, Pass and Fail at each practical grade and each Theory of Music grade. (Assessment objectives and criteria for each part of the practical examination are published in *These Music Exams* by Clara Taylor, Chief Examiner, available free of charge from the Board's London offices.) It should be noted that each NQF level contains more than one ABRSM Grade and that the descriptions must be read in relation to the examination content.

The mark awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Weakness in some aspects of the examination may be balanced by better performance in others. The descriptions for Fail categories typify a level of attainment that may be approximately 10% below the mark required for a pass.

Music Performance

NQF Levels 1 & 2

Distinction: Fluent and accurate playing or singing, with a convincing choice of tempi. A confident sense of performance and tonal control, with clear contrasts and sensitivity to musical detail and mood. Supporting tests show a lively response, good overall accuracy and musical awareness.

Merit: A good level of accuracy in which any blemishes are unobtrusive. Prepared work is played at suitable and controlled tempi, and with a good sense of rhythm. Simple contrasts are mostly well observed and there is evidence of tonal awareness and control. A sense of the character of the piece is conveyed. Supporting tests are technically secure and steady.

Pass: Generally accurate in pitch, rhythm and tempo, with a reasonable sense of continuity. Some slips or occasional hesitations may occur, but there will be quick recovery. Responses in the supporting tests may be a little cautious or uneven, but they will be broadly accurate.

Fail: Some ability to communicate the essence of the music will often be evident in places, but elsewhere errors in pitch or hesitations in rhythm compromise the accuracy of prepared work. Stumbles or breakdowns in continuity may occasionally occur. Unprepared work may be marred by very slow or hesitant responses and technical insecurity.

NQF Level 3

Distinction: Musically authoritative playing or singing, with excellent control and a high level of technical assurance. Good projection, with full use of the dynamic range and vivid contrasts where appropriate. A convincing sense of mood and style. Supporting tests show a lively response, good overall accuracy and musical awareness.

Merit: A high level of accuracy with attention to musical detail, and an awareness of style and musical shape, with tonal control contributing to the musical character. Supporting tests are technically secure and steady.

Pass: Generally accurate and secure at a suitable and sustained tempo. Ability to use appropriate dynamics, phrasing and articulation. Any slips or hesitations will not disturb the flow. Responses in the supporting tests may be a little cautious or uneven, but they will be broadly accurate.

Fail: Performances may be accurate in terms of notes, but will be lacking in dynamic awareness, phrasing or other musical detail – or they may be at an unsuitable or uncontrolled tempo. In other cases, parts of the prepared work may be well presented, but there will be significant problems of continuity, such as stumbles or breakdowns, elsewhere. Tone may be very poor or uncontrolled. Unprepared work may be marred by very slow or hesitant responses and technical insecurity.

Music Literacy

NQF Levels 1 & 2

Distinction: Candidates will have a secure knowledge of common symbols and terminology used in music notation, with a thorough understanding of intervals, keys, scales and chords. Skill in writing a musically satisfactory rhythm or melody that complements the given material will be evident, and answers involving the writing of notation will generally be neat and accurate.

Pass: Candidates will know the more common symbols and terms used in music notation, and will understand some of the principles of intervals, keys, scales and chords. They are likely to be able to write a simple answering phrase that contains the correct number of beats to balance the given material, and write answers that will mainly be clear and unambiguous.

Fail: Candidates will be able to answer some of the more basic questions that require simple identification, but there will be significant carelessness, confusion or omission in other parts of the paper. Answering rhythms may be incomplete, or contain an incorrect number of beats per bar.

NQF Level 3

Distinction: Harmonization will show ability to use an appropriate harmonic vocabulary, with interest in part-writing (where required) and few errors in musical grammar. Figured bass will be correctly interpreted. Melody writing (or completion of the keyboard piece at Grade 8) will have musical shape, harmonic foundation and will exploit the style and content of the given material. Candidates will have a secure knowledge of notation, instrumentation and musical techniques, as well as a thorough understanding of harmonic structure.

Pass: Candidates will show the ability to use a simple harmonic vocabulary in an appropriate fashion, including recognition of key and cadence points, despite some grammatical errors. Figured bass will mainly be correctly understood. Melody writing will show an ability to extend the given material, although perhaps in an over-repetitious way. Candidates will know the more common symbols, terms and techniques used in music.

Fail: Candidates may show the ability to use chords correctly in isolation, but fail to grasp the basic key and have difficulty in identifying harmonically acceptable progressions. Many grammatical errors are likely to appear and part-writing may lack musical interest. There is likely to be considerable confusion over the interpretation of figured bass and answers may be incomplete. Simple melody writing will be attempted but the result may lack structure and direction, and perhaps be unidiomatic. Candidates will be able to answer in simple terms some questions that require basic recognition of notational and compositional features, but there may be significant confusion over more complex elements such as the concepts of key, modulation or phrase structure.

KEY SKILLS

Key Skills are the general skills that can help you to improve your own learning and performance in six areas: Communication, Application of number, IT, Working with others, Improving own learning and performance, and Problem solving. They are relevant to what you do in education and training and work and life in general, and are described in terms of units at four levels. These levels correspond to the levels used for other qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework. In preparing for and entering Associated Board examinations, candidates are able to develop these key skills, depending on teaching and learning styles, and provide evidence that may contribute to certification at NQF levels 1–3. Candidates who wish to gain certification in the key skills will need to be provided with a structured assessment plan to assist them in identifying opportunities for development and assessment. Further information is available from educational institutions or from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 83 Piccadilly, London W1J 8QA (www.qca.org.uk).