

**A guide to the *Viva Voce*
requirements of the
Associated Board's Diploma
Examinations**

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The *Viva Voce*- Guidance and Information for potential Diploma candidates

Note- all the information given in this booklet is taken directly from the *Syllabus of Diploma Examinations from 2000*.

The Purpose of the *Viva Voce*

The *Viva Voce* is an important mode of assessment, providing an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, approach and understandings with the examiners. In all cases it is used to reassure examiners that the candidate is the author of all submissions made for the Diploma and examiners are asked to comment specifically on this point in their reports. It is to be hoped that examiners will be able to reach such a judgement in the normal course of events. However, if examiners perceive a significant discrepancy between the level of authority communicated by the submission and the candidate's performance in the *Viva Voce* (after allowing for the fact that candidates may be nervous, and that some candidates are better at writing than they are at spoken discourse), then it may be necessary to probe deeper. Candidates who have had improper levels of assistance with their submission will usually be unable to express a clear view on the main sources used in their investigation, or to expand on key issues contained in the work they have submitted.

In the Directing and Performing Diplomas the *Viva Voce* is also an opportunity for you to discuss your approach to putting together and matching the demands of the programme. In the Teaching line the Teaching Skills *Viva Voce* is the main part of the examination and includes performances and demonstration of teaching techniques. Your own individual approach to teaching will be observed and discussed.

The Conduct of the *Viva Voce*

Viva Voce examinations vary in duration, content and style, according to the subject under examination. The following general guidelines apply to all subject-lines.

- (i) The tone and manner of *Viva Voce* examinations is as relaxed as possible and every effort is made to put candidates at ease. The opening questions are informal, progressing to topics on which candidates are likely to be knowledgeable, then on to more challenging questions.
- (ii) All questions are clearly and directly expressed and phrased so that they can elicit genuine answers. Some will be open-ended, others will be more direct.
- (iii) Candidates are not penalized if they ask for clarification of a question.
- (iv) Examiners are not concerned by short periods of silence if candidates are considering their answers.
- (v) Candidates may opt not to answer a question because, for example, they feel they might expose an area of fundamental ignorance. If this happens, examiners will assist the candidate with a number of helpful prompts. Examiners will form a judgement as

to whether a candidate's incapacity to offer an answer to a particular question or series of questions is a significant factor in the assessment of the candidate's overall performance in the examination.

- (vi) Examiners may invite candidates to expand upon or clarify a particular point raised.
- (vii) Demonstrations can take place at any point in the examination. Examiners will invite candidates to indicate when they would like to perform, and demonstrations can be given at any time upon the candidate's initiative or the examiner's request. It is perfectly permissible for candidates to demonstrate a particular feature by performing it rather than describing it verbally, if this is appropriate.
- (viii) At the end of the examination candidates are given time to say something (if they so wish) which emphasizes the value of their work.

How the *Viva Voce* affects the overall mark

Programme Notes, Written Submissions, Arrangements, Case Studies and Videos of Teaching are drawn into *Viva Voce* discussions. With the exception of Programme Notes (which are reviewed during the examination) these requirements are assessed before the examination and given a guideline mark according to the Associated Board's criteria.

The mark given to Arrangements for Directors and Section 2.1 Written Submissions for Teachers may be either confirmed or reduced, depending on the supporting commentary given by the candidate during the *Viva Voce*.

In the case of FRSM Written Submissions for Directors and Performers, and for Teachers the Case Studies and Video, the guideline mark contributes to the overall *Viva Voce* mark. Because in these cases the *Viva Voce* covers others areas in addition to these submissions, the guideline mark may be adjusted or confirmed on the basis of the candidates responses in the *Viva Voce*.

Viva Voce: Directing Diplomas

Topics that the Viva Voce will cover

The *Viva Voce* will cover the rehearsal and performance demonstration, the Arrangement, the Programme Notes or Written Submission and other aspects of directing. Candidates should expect a greater breadth of questioning at successively higher levels.

You will be asked questions

- designed to put you at ease,
- relating to the rehearsal/performance,
- relating the rehearsal/performance to its wider context, which allow you to demonstrate your strengths. (For example, a final question such as: 'Are there any really important points which you want to make that I have not yet asked you about?')

Directors can expect some or all of the following areas to be covered within this pattern of questioning:

- Programming: the choice made and challenges presented by the repertoire.
- Problems that arose in the rehearsal and performance and how these could have been tackled differently – any further thoughts.
- Technique – your personal style and influences, ways that these could be further adapted or developed.
- Rehearsal structure and approach – that chosen for the examination and discussion of other approaches.
- Problem solving including the communication to the ensemble of the interpretation of the music balanced against the need to listen to their ideas and draw on their experience.
- Awareness of established interpretations of the repertoire where these exist.
- Orchestration: to display an understanding of the technical issues surrounding the instruments in the ensemble.
- Arrangement: a discussion of the approach taken and its effectiveness.

How the Viva Voce is marked

MARK AND CATEGORY	DIPABRSM	LRSM	FRSM
19-25 Distinction. Excellent. Candidate has demonstrated exemplary standards in most areas examined.	Outstanding communication skills. A commanding knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.	Outstanding communication skills. A commanding knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.	Outstanding communication skills. A commanding knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Written Submission.
16-18 A high pass. Very good. Candidate has demonstrated commendable standards in most areas examined and may have shown excellence in some.	Impressive communication skills. A comprehensive knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.	Impressive communication skills. A comprehensive knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.	Impressive communication skills. A comprehensive knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Written Submission.

<p>13-15 A clear pass. Good. The candidate has demonstrated a good overall standard in most areas examined.</p>	<p>Good communication skills and a sound working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.</p>	<p>Good communication skills and a sound working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.</p>	<p>Good communication skills and a sound working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Written Submission.</p>
<p>10-12 Pass. Candidate has shown competence in most areas examined and has satisfied the requirements for the award.</p>	<p>Competent communication skills. A broad working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Adequate understanding of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.</p>	<p>Competent communication skills. A broad working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.</p>	<p>Competent communication skills. A broad working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Written Submission.</p>
<p>0-9 Fail. Candidate has not satisfied the basic requirements for the award.</p>	<p>Weak communication skills. Patchy knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.</p>	<p>Weak communication skills. Patchy knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes.</p>	<p>Weak communication skills. Patchy knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Written Submission.</p>

Viva Voce: Performing Diplomas

Topics that the *Viva Voce* will cover

The *Viva Voce* will cover the recital, the Programme Notes or Written Submission and other aspects of performing as indicated below. Candidates should expect a greater breadth and depth of questioning at successively higher levels.

DipABRSM in Performing

At DipABRSM level you can expect questions on:

- Basic biographical information about each composer.
- Context: each work in the life and compositional output of the composer and in the general musical trends of the era with details of commission if any, process of composition and first performance.
- Musical language and form of each work. The place of the work in the context of the instrument itself: developments, idiom, core repertoire and technical demands.
- Your interpretation of the items including aspects of style, technique and ensemble.

LRSM in Performing

At LRSM level you can expect questions on each programme item in the context of:

- the general musical trends of the era
- detailed biographical information about the composer
- the compositional output of the composer including details of commission,
- process of composition and performers closely associated with it when it was written
- its general relevance in the history of western music
- the instrument itself (as appropriate): developments, idiom, technical demands, design history, leading makers, major developments in technical approach, the most important exponents and their influence on performing conventions now in common usage, the developing role of the instrument in either solo or chamber or orchestral music and the associated repertoire (dependent upon specialism).
- its musical language and form with reference to influences on the composer, individuality and typicality (personal and contemporary)
- the particular challenges facing the performer
- your interpretation of the items including all aspects of style, technique and ensemble
- the core recorded performances of the items where applicable.

FRSM in Performing

At FRSM level you can expect questions on each programme item in the context of:

- the life and compositional output of the composer and his significant contemporaries
- its place in the development of musical language and use of structure: degree of innovation and personal style as opposed to conformity with contemporary trends and received/traditional style - an evaluation of the level of success achieved
- the instrument itself (as appropriate): developments, idiom, technical demands, compositional sympathy (all understood in terms of, and in relation to, the core

repertoire of the instrument) design history, leading makers, major developments in technical approach, the core didactic material, the most important exponents and their influence on performing conventions now in common usage, the developing role of the instrument in either solo or chamber or orchestral music (dependent upon 2/3 specialism).

- the editorial apparatus (the logic and consistency of approach and the faithfulness to the original source) and any alternatively viable solutions
- the particular challenges facing the performer in terms of demands on technique, musicianship and performance practice and how these can be effectively addressed
- the core recorded performances of the items where applicable.

How the *Viva Voce* is marked

MARK AND CATEGORY	DIPABRSM	LRSM	FRSM
19-25 Distinction. Excellent. Candidate has demonstrated exemplary standards in most areas examined.	Outstanding communication skills. A commanding knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Outstanding communication skills. A commanding knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Outstanding communication skills. A commanding knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised in the Written Submission.
16-18 A high pass. Very good. Candidate has demonstrated commendable standards in most areas examined and may have shown excellence in some.	Impressive communication skills. A comprehensive knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Impressive communication skills. A comprehensive knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Impressive communication skills. A comprehensive knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission.
13-15 A clear pass. Good. The candidate has demonstrated a good overall standard in most areas examined.	Good communication skills and a sound working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Good communication skills and a sound working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Good communication skills and a sound working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission.
10-12 Pass. Candidate has shown competence in most areas examined and has satisfied the requirements for the award.	Competent communication skills. A broad working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A grasp of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Competent communication skills. A broad working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A grasp of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Competent communication skills. A broad working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission.
0-9 Fail. Candidate has not satisfied the basic requirements for the award.	Weak communication skills. Patchy knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Weak communication skills. Patchy knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised in the Programme Notes.	Weak communication skills. Patchy knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission.

Viva Voce: Teaching Diplomas

The ability to communicate both verbally and through musical demonstration is central to the art of instrumental teaching. For this reason it is the main mode of assessment in the Teaching Diplomas. This type of *Viva Voce* is designed to reflect your daily experience as a teacher. The specialist examiner will administer the examination. The aim is to explore your ability to teach up to and including the level specified in the Syllabus. At DipABRSM level, for example, you are required to explore repertoire up to and including Grade 6 standard and you should be prepared to discuss openly and to answer questions relating to the teaching of that repertoire.

The examiners will invite you to perform and demonstrate examples from the music you have brought with you. They may also select other items from the Syllabus in order to amplify discussion and enable you to reinforce answers to questions. Be prepared to act as teacher to one of the examiners. The *Viva Voce* also draws on your Written Submission and, at LRSM level, the Case Study Portfolio and Video of Teaching Practice. Examiners will ask open-ended and progressively more probing questions at each level of Diploma. You will therefore have the opportunity to talk about teaching strategies and learning styles. Examiners will be looking for a practical and personal approach to teaching.

Topics that the *Viva Voce* will cover

DipABRSM

Teaching Skills *Viva Voce*, (c.40 minutes) with demonstrations of teaching approaches, making use of current graded repertoire up to and including ABRSM Grade 6. Candidates will be expected to prepare to perform three pieces, one from each of the current ABRSM Grade 6 lists in the instrument taught. They will be asked to perform extracts from these, as selected by the examiner, and to discuss teaching and learning issues as they arise. The *Viva Voce* may cover issues relating to the teaching of pupils up to and including Grade 6 and also include matters arising from the Written Submission.

At DipABRSM level you may be asked questions

- relating to the repertoire chosen for the teaching demonstration,
- arising from the demonstration,
- about your strategies, if you are not a keyboard, harp or guitar teacher, for making your pupils familiar with the full texture of the accompaniments to their pieces,
- relating to the Written Submission and the sources you have used,
- that prompt you to expand on points of detail in the submission or which seek clarification or expansion of points made.

LRSM

Teaching Skills *Viva Voce*, (c. 50 minutes) with demonstrations of teaching approaches, making use of current graded repertoire up to and including ABRSM Grade 8. Candidates will be expected to be prepared to perform a piece from each of the current ABRSM Grade 8 lists in the instrument taught, as selected by the examiner, and discuss teaching and learning issues as they arise. The *Viva Voce* may cover issues relating to the teaching of pupils up to and including Grade 8 level and also include matters arising from the Written Submission, Case Study Portfolio and Video of Teaching Practice.

Additionally, at LRSM level there may be questions:

- arising from the video submission,
- relating to the case studies in terms of their content and how the experience of teaching the pupils featured has informed the approach taken in the demonstration,
- designed to link the case studies, video submission, Written Submission and demonstration.

FRSM

Teaching Skills *Viva Voce*, (c. 60 minutes) with demonstrations of teaching approaches, making use of current ABRSM graded repertoire up to and including DipABRSM. Candidates will be expected to prepare to perform three pieces from the DipABRSM list in the instrument taught. One of these must be taken from the list below and performed complete, normally at the beginning of the examination, whilst the other two will be chosen by the candidate from the entire DipABRSM list and should provide stylistic contrast. DipABRSM performance criteria will be applied both to the complete performance and the performance of extracts from the other two pieces selected by the examiners. Candidates must provide their own accompanists. The *Viva Voce* may cover issues relating to the teaching of pupils up to and including Grade 6 and also include matters arising from the Written Submission.

Additionally, at FRSM level there may be questions

- on the relationship of your written submission to standard texts in that area.
- that prompt you to expand on points of detail in the submission which are particularly interesting or original.

How the *Viva Voce* is marked

MARK AND CATEGORY	DIPABRSM	LRSM	FRSM
42-60 Distinction. Excellent. Candidate has demonstrated exemplary standards in most areas examined.	Outstanding communication skills and assured and authoritative demonstration of teaching concepts and techniques. Commanding knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. An excellent grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission.	Outstanding communication skills and assured and authoritative demonstration of teaching concepts techniques. Commanding knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. An excellent grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. Case Study Portfolio and Video of Teaching Practice confirm exceptional qualities as a teacher.	Outstanding communication skills and assured and authoritative demonstration and application of teaching concepts and techniques. A commanding knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and its canonical repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised in the Written Submission.

<p>36-41 A high pass. Very good. Candidate has demonstrated commendable standards in most areas examined and may have shown excellence in some.</p>	<p>Impressive and persuasive communication skills. A thoroughly convincing demonstration of sound methodology and teaching techniques. A comprehensive knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire, and a firm grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission.</p>	<p>Impressive and persuasive communication skills. A thoroughly convincing demonstration of teaching concepts and techniques. A comprehensive knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. Case Study Portfolio and Video of Teaching Practice confirm excellent qualities as a teacher.</p>	<p>Impressive and persuasive communication skills. A thoroughly convincing demonstration and application of teaching concepts and techniques. A comprehensive knowledge of the instrument, its family/voice types and registers, its idiom and its repertoire. Impressive understanding of the issues raised in the Written Submission.</p>
<p>30-35 A clear pass. Good. The candidate has demonstrated a good overall standard in most areas examined.</p>	<p>Good communication skills. A convincing demonstration of teaching concepts and techniques. A thorough working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission.</p>	<p>Good communication skills. A convincing demonstration of teaching concepts and techniques. A thorough working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. Case Study Portfolio and Video of Teaching Practice confirm good qualities as a teacher.</p>	<p>Good communication skills. A convincing demonstration and application of teaching concepts and techniques. A thorough working knowledge of the instrument, its family/voice types and registers, its idiom and its repertoire. A detailed understanding of the issues raised in the Written Submission.</p>
<p>24-29 Pass Candidate has shown competence in most areas examined and has satisfied the requirements for the award.</p>	<p>Competent communication skills. A broadly convincing demonstration of teaching concepts and techniques. A working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission.</p>	<p>Competent communication skills. A broadly convincing demonstration of teaching concepts and techniques. A sound working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. A grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. Case Study Portfolio and Video of Teaching Practice confirm competence as a teacher.</p>	<p>Competent communication skills. A broadly convincing demonstration and application of teaching concepts and techniques. A working knowledge of the instrument, its family/voice types and registers, its idiom and its repertoire. Genuine understanding of the issues raised in the Written Submission.</p>
<p>0-23 Fail. Candidate has not satisfied the basic requirements for the award.</p>	<p>Weak communication skills. Little understanding of teaching concepts and techniques. Patchy knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. Overall, insufficient evidence to give confidence in an ability to teach.</p>	<p>Insufficient evidence, either here or in the Case Study Portfolio or Video of Teaching Practice, that the candidate has advanced significantly beyond the competencies required at DipABRSM level.</p>	<p>Insufficient evidence that the candidate has advanced significantly beyond LRSM level.</p>