

Adapted Instrument Policy

(Applicable for exams from 06 September 2021)

1-6-2021



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Adapted Instruments Policy outlines ABRSM's rules for the use of non-standard instruments by learners taking our exams, i.e. instruments that, typically, are reduced in size or made of lighter materials to facilitate younger / smaller players.
- 1.2. This policy does not cover related-instrument options or arrangements for candidates with specific needs; these are detailed in the relevant syllabuses and in ABRSM's Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy, respectively.

2. Instruments

- 2.1. Adapted instruments may be used in ABRSM exams, except diplomas, in line with the rules set out below, without prior approval needed.
- 2.2. Adapted instruments must be able to fulfil the exam requirements of the relevant qualification in full. This means that:
 - Adjustment to the candidate's line in the pieces is not allowed (e.g. altering or omitting individual notes/passages);
 - The full range of notes required for other exam components (e.g. scales and arpeggios, sight-reading), where applicable, must be available.
- 2.3. The following principles apply:
 - The sound must be produced in the same way as the standard instrument, i.e. the fundamental method of producing the sound via the mouthpiece, for example, must not be different;
 - The notes must be produced in the same way as the standard instrument, i.e. the instrument may not use a different valve/slide/key system or have a different number of strings¹;
 - Instruments must be acoustic; electronic instruments may not be used.
- 2.4. Candidates may play on an instrument that:
 - Is made of a different core material to the standard instrument (e.g. plastic/resin/carbon fibre);
 - Is smaller than the standard size instrument;
 - Has a different shaped head/neck joint (e.g. for flute and saxophone).
 - Sounds in a different key (but see also 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8);
 - Has a smaller range than the standard instrument, including reduced key work (but see also 2.2);
 - Has a reduced-size mouthpiece.

¹ Except harps, which may have fewer strings as long as all requirements for the grade can be fulfilled.

- 2.5. Candidates using adapted instruments:
- Must not use the same adapted instrument to enter for different instrument exams at the same or different grades (e.g. use a single beginner brass instrument for both Euphonium and Baritone exams);
 - Must enter for the instrument exam most closely matched to the adapted instrument being used.
- 2.6. Where instruments sound in a different key to the standard instrument, candidates must play the music as written and the piano accompaniment must be suitably transposed. ABRSM does not supply transpositions of piano parts for instruments sounding in a different key.
- 2.7. Where instruments sound in a different key to the standard instrument, the candidate needs to be aware of this and be prepared to let the examiner know if necessary.
- 2.8. It is the Applicant's responsibility to make sure that the chosen instrument is suitable for the exam by selecting appropriate pieces and by checking that the requirements for other components of the exam (where applicable), as detailed in the relevant syllabus, can be realised in full.

3. Assessment

- 3.1. ABRSM exams are marked by examiners using the published marking criteria. When awarding marks, examiners assess the candidate's control of the qualities and skills listed in the relevant marking criteria (including pitch, tone and musical shaping). Examiners will not alter or deviate from the criteria to take into account any differences in the construction, size or sound of the chosen instrument.

4. Syllabuses

- 4.1. The information set out in this policy is intended to supplement, rather than replace, any instrument-specific information contained in ABRSM's syllabuses. However, where older syllabus documents state that adapted instruments may be used to Grade 3 only, that grade restriction no longer applies (as long as the rules set out in Section 2 of this policy can be met).
- 4.2. Please refer to the relevant syllabus (available at www.abrsm.org) before making an exam.