DOUBLE BASS scale requirements

These proposed new scale requirements reflect the fact that in recent years there has been a significant development in the standard of playing and learning the double bass. Small instruments and bows and properly calibrated strings are all now available. By the age of 18, many students today have been learning for the best part of 10 years. With this in mind, we believe it is reasonable to suggest that the depth and breadth of knowledge and skills on the instrument among learners today is considerably more developed than when the previous scale syllabus was introduced, in 1985. Indeed, the standard is much more akin to that of similarly-aged and -talented students on violin, viola and cello. As such, we would like to investigate bringing the exam requirements for double bass more into line with those for the other bowed strings, with appropriate adjustments according to the specifics of the instrument, of course. This is what is attempted in the proposals described below, many of which have received endorsement through our questionnaire to double bass teachers in 2008.
DOUBLE BASS scale requirements

GRADE 1

Scales  (Group I or Group II, at the candidate’s choice)

Group I (half position)
- C major (a sixth)
- F, Bb majors (one octave)
- A natural minor (one octave, as examples below)

or

Group II (first position)
- C, D majors (a sixth)
- G major (one octave)
- A natural minor (one octave, as examples below)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as examples below, and
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as examples below

Arpeggios  (same group as for scales)

Group I (half position)
- F, Bb majors (one octave)
- A minor (one octave)

or

Group II (first position)
- G major (one octave)
- A minor (one octave)

separate bows, even notes, as example below

The option to play scales in either half or first position is retained, but several changes are proposed in other areas. First, to bring double bass more into line with the other bowed strings, a larger number of scales and arpeggios is proposed, although two scale keys (C and D) are required to a sixth only, in order to avoid shifts. Arpeggios are not required for these two scales. The keys proposed for the first-position group have been chosen as they more

(cont.)
closely reflect the finger patterns found in many of the pieces being played at this level. The current syllabus’s harmonic minor is proposed to be replaced by the natural minor, again matching the other bowed strings (the chosen example, A minor, helpfully links to its relative major).

Even notes are now suggested as the rhythmic pattern for scales at Grades 1–5 to encourage good bow distribution, quality of sound and secure intonation from the outset. Slurred bowing of scales is added to Grade 1, again for conformity with the other bowed strings.
DOUBLE BASS scale requirements

GRADE 2

Scales (minors natural or harmonic, at candidate’s choice)
F, G, Bb, D majors (one octave)
A, B minors (one octave)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

Arpeggios
F, G, Bb majors (one octave)
A, B minors (one octave)

separate bows, even notes, as example below

To match the other bowed strings, an increase in the number of scales and arpeggios is again proposed. The suggested keys cover the scales and arpeggios of an octave range that are playable in half or first position, representing a logical progression from the two scale groups of Grade 1. The one-octave D major scale (without arpeggio) is felt to be a reasonable request, equivalent to the longstanding Grade 2 benchmark for cellists of G major over two octaves. For the minor-key scales, a choice of natural or harmonic is now proposed at this grade (both forms allowing these requirements to be played without shifts).
DOUBLE BASS scale requirements

GRADE 3

Scales (minors melodic or harmonic, at candidate’s choice)
E, A, C, D majors (one octave)
E, G, D minors (one octave)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

Arpeggios
Keys and ranges as for scales above

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

Chromatic scale
Starting on open string A (one octave)

separate bows, even notes, as example below

In Grades 3–5, it is proposed that the two scale groups of the current syllabus are now replaced by just one set of scales for all candidates. This proposal is motivated by concern that each of the current groups offers only limited opportunities for progression across these three grades and, moreover, several of the featured keys do not particularly relate to keys that are commonly encountered in the set pieces. Accordingly, this new approach results in several changes and increases to the keys set at each of these grades.

For parity with the other bowed strings, slurred arpeggios are now introduced at Grade 3, although a pattern of two notes to a bow is proposed to ensure candidates avoid having to shift as well as make a string crossing under a slur. Dominant sevenths are now postponed

(cont.)
Double Bass scale requirements Grade 3 (cont.)

until Grade 4, although the chromatic scale is brought forward to Grade 3, thus ensuring these two elements are introduced at the same grades for all bowed strings. However, only one chromatic scale is proposed, to avoid unnecessary duplication. The chosen chromatic scale consolidates the shift between first and half positions, making it a useful addition at this grade.

Again, in order to bring double bass into line with the other bowed strings, it is proposed that pizzicato requirements are now removed from the syllabus entirely. However, more pieces requiring pizzicato playing are being featured in the new syllabus repertoire issued later this year.
DOUBLE BASS scale requirements

GRADE 4

Scales (minors melodic or harmonic, at candidate’s choice)
E, F, G, A majors (a twelfth)
E, G, A minors (a twelfth)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

Arpeggios
Keys and ranges as for scales above

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, three notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

Dominant sevenths (resolving on the tonic, as example below)
In the keys of Bb and C (starting on F and G respectively) (one octave)

separate bows, even notes, as example below

Chromatic scales
Starting on G and B (one octave)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, three notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

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Double Bass scale requirements Grade 4 (cont.)

A significant new feature at Grade 4 (and also Grade 5) is the inclusion of scales and arpeggios over a twelfth. This range makes it possible to incorporate keys that are encountered in the pieces at these grades, taking into account the left-hand skills that candidates will have acquired by this stage. Requirements over a twelfth also reflect a progression in demand across the double bass scale syllabus as a whole.

Slurred arpeggios now revert to three notes to a bow, as in the current syllabus. Slurred bowing also becomes a requirement for chromatic scales from this grade, as it does for the other bowed strings, although for double bass there are three (not four) notes to a bow here. Dominant sevenths make their first appearance now, with two examples proposed, again for conformity with the other bowed strings.
DOUBLE BASS scale requirements

GRADE 5

Scales (minors melodic or harmonic, at candidate’s choice)
Eb major (one octave), G major (one octave, starting on open string)
F, Bb, C majors (a twelfth)
F, Bb, C minors (a twelfth)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, four notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

Arpeggios
Keys and ranges as for scales above

(i) separate bows, even notes, as examples below, and
(ii) slurred, three notes to a bow, even notes, as examples below

Dominant sevenths (resolving on the tonic, as examples below)
In the keys of F and Ab (starting on C and Eb respectively) (one octave)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

(cont.)
Double Bass scale requirements Grade 5 (cont.)

**Diminished sevenths**
Starting on open strings E and A (one octave)

*separate bows, even notes, as example below*

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\[\text{Diagram of diminished sevenths}\]
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**Chromatic scales**
Starting on D and Eb (one octave)

(i) *separate bows, even notes, as example below*, and
(ii) *slurred, three notes to a bow, even notes, as example below*

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\[\text{Diagram of chromatic scales} (i) \text{ and (ii)}\]
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Slurred scales continue to be played in even notes, but the slurring is now extended to four notes to a bow. Slurred bowing now becomes a requirement for dominant sevenths, as it does for the other bowed strings at this grade, although for double bass there are two (not four) notes to a bow (and this pattern applies until Grade 7). Again, in conformity with the other bowed strings, there are now two examples of diminished sevenths, both starting on open strings. There is one more dominant seventh than in the current syllabus; in compensation, however, one less chromatic scale is set.
DOUBLE BASS scale requirements

GRADE 6

Scales (minors both melodic and harmonic)
E, F, G, A majors (two octaves)
E, F, G, A minors (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two beats to a bow, as example below

(i) separate bows
(ii) slurred

Scale in thumb position
D major (one octave, starting with the thumb on the D string)

separate bows, even notes, as example below

Arpeggios
Keys and ranges as for scales above (excluding scale in thumb position)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, three notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

(i) separate bows
(ii) slurred

Dominant sevenths (resolving on the tonic, as examples below)
In the keys of A, Bb, C and D (starting on E, F, G and A respectively) (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

(i) separate bows
(ii) slurred

(cont.)
Double Bass scale requirements Grade 6 (cont.)

**Diminished sevenths**  
Starting on E and G (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and  
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

![Diminished sevenths example](image)

**Chromatic scales**  
Starting on E, F and F# (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and  
(ii) slurred, four notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

![Chromatic scales example](image)

**Scale in broken thirds**  
G major (one octave)

slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

![Scale in broken thirds example](image)

From Grade 6, there is a holistic use of tonal centres, so that the starting notes for chromatic scales, dominant and diminished sevenths always match those for the scales and arpeggios in each grade. (NB the examiner will ask for the various elements individually and not by tonal centres.) Across Grades 6–8 all major and minor keys are now encountered, albeit with notable differences to the current syllabus in the way the keys are distributed across these grades and the number of tonal centres set at each grade.

Also from Grade 6 onwards, the double bass syllabus reverts to the rhythmic patterns familiar from the current syllabus for the conventional scales: i) separately bowed, using even notes (as in the proposed new Grades 1–5); and ii) slurred, using the long-tonic pattern. However, unlike the current syllabus’s final three grades, one slurred bowing pattern (three notes to a bow) is now suggested for arpeggios, thus ensuring continuity throughout the new proposals from Grades 4 to 8.

(cont.)
Double Bass scale requirements Grade 6 (cont.)

Slurred bowing now becomes a requirement for diminished sevenths, as it does for the other bowed strings at this grade, although for double bass there are two (not four) notes to a bow (and this pattern applies to Grade 7 as well). Otherwise, a scale in thumb position is proposed (D major, one octave), to encourage candidates to explore this area of the instrument in a systematic manner. Finally, as an alternative to the double-stop scale required of the other bowed string instruments at this grade, a scale in broken thirds (G major, one octave) is proposed for double bass.
DOUBLE BASS scale requirements

GRADE 7

Scales (minors both melodic and harmonic)
F#, Ab, Bb, C majors (two octaves)
F#, G#, Bb, C minors (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two beats to a bow, as example below

Scales in thumb position (minor both melodic and harmonic)
D major (one octave, starting with the thumb on the D string)
D minor (one octave, starting with the thumb on the D string)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two beats to a bow, even notes, as example below

Arpeggios
Keys and ranges as for scales above (excluding scales in thumb position)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, three notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

Dominant sevenths (resolving on the tonic, as examples below)
In the keys of B, Db, Eb and F (starting on F#, Ab, Bb and C respectively) (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

(cont.)
Double Bass scale requirements Grade 7 (cont.)

**Diminished sevenths**
Starting on F# and Ab (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, **and**
(ii) slurred, two notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

(i) separate bows

(ii) slurred

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**Chromatic scales**
Starting on F#, G and Ab (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, **and**
(ii) slurred, six notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

(i) separate bows

(ii) slurred

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**Double-stop scale (broken)**
In thirds in Bb major (one octave)

*rhythm and bowing in broken steps, as example below*

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In addition to the global changes described already, the slurred pattern for chromatic scales now increases from four to six notes to a bow. Building upon the introduction of the thumb-position scale at Grade 6, two examples are now suggested (slurred as well as with separate bows). In order to bring the double bass requirements closer to those for the other bowed strings, a double-stop scale (Bb major in thirds, broken steps) is proposed.
DOUBLE BASS scale requirements

GRADE 8

Scales (minors both melodic and harmonic)
B, Db, D, Eb majors (two octaves)
B, C#, D, Eb minors (two octaves)
E, G majors (three octaves)
E, G minors (three octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as examples below, and
(ii) slurred, seven notes to a bow, as example below

Arpeggios
B, D majors (two octaves)
B, D minors (two octaves)
E, G majors (three octaves)
E, G minors (three octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, three notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

Dominant sevenths (resolving on the tonic, as examples below)
In the keys of A, C, E and G (starting on E, G, B and D respectively) (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, four notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

(cont.)
Double Bass scale requirements Grade 8 (cont.)

**Diminished sevenths**
Starting on Bb and B (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, four notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

(i) separate bows etc.

(ii) slurred etc.

**Chromatic scales**
Starting on A, Bb, B (two octaves)

(i) separate bows, even notes, as example below, and
(ii) slurred, six notes to a bow, even notes, as example below

(i) separate bows etc.

(ii) slurred etc.

**Double-stop scale (broken)**
In thirds in D major (one octave)

rhythm and bowing in broken steps, as example below

etc.

**Scale in running thirds**
G major (1 octave, starting on open string)

slurred, three notes to a bow, as example below

etc.

etc.

etc.

A substantial reduction in the workload is proposed at this grade. The current requirement to prepare all keys/notes from E to C (nine tonal centres) for scales, arpeggios, dominant sevenths and chromatic scales is now proposed to be reduced to six tonal centres for scales

(Cont.)
Double Bass scale requirements Grade 8 (cont.)

and up to four examples for the other elements. To compensate for this reduction in the number of requirements, the tessitura is significantly extended, with scales and arpeggios over three octaves now proposed for two tonal centres, so that candidates may acquire a more comprehensive grasp of the fingerboard in the full range that might be encountered in pieces at this grade.

Otherwise, slurred bowing for dominant and diminished sevenths is now four notes to a bow, matching the other bowed strings. The double-stop scale in thirds introduced at Grade 7 is reiterated here (in a higher key) and a scale in running thirds is also included to complement it. These two items are felt to represent a reasonable alternative to the double-stop requirements set for the other bowed strings at this grade.