

MUSIC PERFORMANCE GRADES



DRUM KIT

Syllabus

Valid for exams from 3 June 2024

Entry Level Award in Music Performance (Entry 3)
Level 1 Award in Music Performance
Level 2 Certificate in Music Performance
Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance

25 April 2024

Qualification Specification: Music Performance Drum Kit from 2024

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1. Introduction

About ABRSM

ABRSM is The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and a global music education charity. At the heart of everything we do is our belief that music enriches lives. Building on our heritage, we offer face-to-face and digital exams, sheet music, recordings, apps and courses for students and teachers across the world. Our music qualifications provide clear goals, reliable and consistent marking, and guidance for future learning.

In partnership with four Royal Schools of Music, we carry on a long legacy of musical excellence. More than an awarding organisation, we support learners from the first note they play, and empower teachers who help build musical skills and encourage progress around the world.

As a charity, we use all of the surpluses we generate to make significant donations towards music education initiatives and to develop our support for learners and teachers around the world. We advocate for music and its many forms, playing our part to ensure the future of music education and its place in society.

Together with our partners, our teachers and others around the world, we've been nurturing the future of music since 1889 – to help people start or continue their journey.

Who we are

We are the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), a company registered in England and Wales (company registration number 1926395) and a registered charity (charity registration number 292182). Our registered office is at 4 London Wall Place, London EC2Y 5AU.

Find out more at www.abrsm.org.

About this qualification specification

What it covers

This specification provides all the relevant requirements and information teachers, candidates, parents and organisations need in order to prepare for the following qualifications in the subjects and grades covered in Section 3:

- ABRSM Entry Level Award in Music Performance (Initial Grade) (Entry 3)
- ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Performance (Grades 1, 2 and 3)
- ABRSM Level 2 Certificate in Music Performance (Grades 4 and 5)
- ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance (Grades 6, 7 and 8)

It also provides information on how the exams will be assessed, their learning outcomes, and regulated qualification details.

For ease of reading, 'Drum Kit Performance Grade(s)' is used in place of the full qualification titles throughout the remainder of this document.

Further details, as well as administrative information about the exams, are given in ABRSM's Exam Regulations (www.abrsm.org/examregulations) which should be read before making an exam booking.

Validity of this specification

This specification is valid from 25 April 2024 until further notice.

We may update this document from time to time but will not make changes to the syllabus other than in exceptional circumstances. In such cases, advance notice of any changes will be posted on our website.

About our Music Performance qualifications

Qualification objectives

Our Music Performance qualifications are designed for learners to demonstrate a combination of key performance-related skills such as instrumental technique and control, musical interpretation, communication, and delivery. Each grade is progressive and represents a new challenge for the learner, providing motivation and structure to hone and refine their performance skills.

Exams allow learners to receive formal recognition of the level of mastery they have achieved, and feedback to support their learning journey. Music Performance qualifications further allow learners to be rewarded and recognised for their skills in delivering a whole performance, communicating musically over a sustained programme.

Who the qualifications are for

Drum Kit Performance Grades are intended for learners who are interested in developing their performance skills holistically. Candidates may be entered at any age, but those entering for Grades 6 to 8 must fulfil the prerequisite detailed on page 8.

Every effort has been made to feature a broad range of repertoire to suit and appeal to candidates of different ages, backgrounds and interests. In order to provide flexibility when creating a musical programme, candidates are also able to include one piece of their own choice (of an appropriate standard).

We are committed to providing fair access to our assessments by putting in place access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for candidates with specific needs. Drum Kit

Performance Grades include no requirements for candidates to respond to an examiner or to any previously unseen/unheard music. They can be taken at a time, and at a location, to suit the candidate.

Structure

Each Music Performance qualification has been carefully designed to assess synoptically the underpinning knowledge and understanding required for music performance. At all grades, these creative skills are presented through the technical control of an instrument, interpretation of repertoire, and the delivery and successful communication of a sustained programme of music. Collectively, these skills enable candidates to progress to higher grades and other qualifications in the creative arts sector.

Candidates are required to perform a programme of four pieces, three from set repertoire lists and one that is their own choice. Each piece is equally weighted in marks and an additional mark is awarded for the performance as a whole.

Progression route

ABRSM Music Performance qualifications in Drum Kit are available from Initial Grade to Grade 8. Each grade progresses from the previous in their level of demand. The syllabus that forms Section 3 of this specification details the subjects covered and the grades available. It is not a requirement for any candidate to complete one grade before moving on to the next, although there is a prerequisite for entering a Grade 6, 7 or 8 exam (see page 8).

This suite of Drum Kit Performance Grades embeds from the earliest grades the importance of understanding how a performance is delivered to best reflect the technique and character of the performer.

Regulation

Our regulators

ABRSM Music Performance, Practical Music and Music Theory grades, and higher-level qualifications (diplomas) are regulated in the UK by:

- Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)
- Qualifications Wales
- Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA Regulation)

For further information, see www.abrsm.org/regulation.

The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)

All our regulated qualifications can be found on the RQF. For further information, visit <https://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

Regulated qualification details

Qualification titles

The table below shows the regulated titles and qualification numbers of our Music Performance qualifications. Further information can be found at <https://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

Qualification Number	Qualification Title
610/0064/1	ABRSM Entry Level Award in Music Performance (Initial Grade) (Entry 3)
603/5993/6	ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Performance (Grade 1)
603/5994/8	ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Performance (Grade 2)
603/5995/X	ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Performance (Grade 3)
603/5996/1	ABRSM Level 2 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 4)
603/5997/3	ABRSM Level 2 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 5)
603/5998/5	ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 6)
603/5999/7	ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 7)
603/6000/8	ABRSM Level 3 Certificate in Music Performance (Grade 8)

Qualification size

The table below describes the size of the Drum Kit Performance Grades by showing the amount of time that a candidate would typically need to spend preparing for them:

- Under the guidance of a teacher (Guided Learning Hours);
- Under the guidance of a teacher and time spent preparing independently (Total Qualification Time);

and:

- The assigned credit value (which denotes the size of the qualification).

Qualification	Guided Learning Hours* (GLH)	Total Qualification Time* (TQT)	Credits
Initial Grade	8	40	4
Grade 1	12	60	6
Grade 2	18	90	9
Grade 3	18	120	12
Grade 4	24	150	15
Grade 5	24	180	18
Grade 6	36	220	22
Grade 7	48	270	27
Grade 8	54	320	32

* The Guided Learning Hours and Total Qualification Time are estimates of the average amount of time that it might take a candidate to prepare for these qualifications, and should be used as guidance only; it is recognised that there will be variance dependent on each individual's level of experience and ability.

Regulation (Europe)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is an overarching framework that links the qualifications of different countries together and allows for comparison and translation. The EQF has eight levels across which qualifications can be mapped. The levels do not correspond directly with the UK's Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), although they are similar.

The table below shows the level of each of ABRSM's Music Performance qualifications in Drum Kit on the RQF and the EQF.

Qualification	RQF Level	EQF Level
Initial Grade	Entry Level (Level 3)	Level 1
Grade 1		
Grade 2	Level 1	Level 2
Grade 3		
Grade 4		
Grade 5	Level 2	Level 3
Grade 6		
Grade 7	Level 3	Level 4
Grade 8		

Regulation (Rest of world)

Information on how ABRSM exams are recognised in individual countries can be found at www.abrsm.org/regulation.

2. Drum Kit Performance Grades

Specification

When preparing for an exam, it is important to read the relevant syllabus and guidance. More information on Drum Kit exams can be found at www.abrsm.org/drumkit.

Repertoire validity

The repertoire lists for Drum Kit are listed in the syllabus (Section 3) and are valid from 25 April 2024 until further notice.

Amendments

Any updates to the syllabus – e.g. changes to publication details or other minor corrections or clarifications – will be posted at www.abrsm.org/syllabuscorrections.

The next syllabus

Advance notice of any planned changes to syllabus repertoire lists will be posted at www.abrsm.org/syllabusupdates.

Exam Regulations

When preparing for an exam, it is important to read ABRSM's Exam Regulations, which set out the rules for completing the exams listed in this specification. This information is available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations.

Malpractice and maladministration

We take any form of malpractice or maladministration very seriously.

- **Malpractice** is defined as any act that compromises or is an attempt to compromise the assessment process, the integrity of any qualification or the validity of a result or certificate. This also includes any act that damages our reputation or credibility as an awarding organisation.
- **Maladministration** is defined as any act that breaches the regulations through a mismanagement of administrative processes, particularly where such a breach could compromise the integrity of a qualification or assessment.

Applicants and candidates must follow the requirements set out in this specification, Exam Regulations and all other ABRSM policies about the delivery of our exams. In cases where applicants or candidates have committed malpractice, a sanction or penalty may be given. Further information about our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy can be found at www.abrsm.org/policies.

Entry requirements

There are nine grades of Drum Kit Performance Grade exams. Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age. They do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s) in the same subject. To enter for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 exam, candidates must already have passed one of the following:

- ABRSM Grade 5 (or above) in Music Theory
- ABRSM Grade 5 (or above) in Practical Musicianship
- ABRSM Grade 5 in any Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument

For full details, including a list of accepted alternatives, see www.abrsm.org/prerequisite.

Exam venues

Drum Kit Performance Grades are taken at a venue of the candidate's/Applicant's choosing. This can be the candidate's school, their teacher's studio, or any other location where appropriate space, instruments and equipment are available (including suitable audio equipment for any accompaniments). The venue can also be the candidate's home.

Exam booking

Details of exam dates, fees and how to book an exam are available at www.abrsm.org/exambooking.

Access (for candidates with specific needs)

We are committed to providing fair access to our assessments, for candidates with specific needs, by putting in place access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. Guidelines for candidates with specific needs are available at www.abrsm.org/specificneeds. Where a candidate's needs are not covered by the guidelines, each case is considered individually.

Performance Grades include no supporting tests, or any requirement for candidates to respond to an examiner or any previously unseen/unheard music. Additional time for the performance itself is therefore not applicable. However, we offer candidates with a range of specific needs the option of taking rest breaks during their performance as required.

While we are not able to make allowances in the marking for candidates with specific needs, we are always happy to pass on relevant information to the examiner in order that they are aware of candidates' particular circumstances.

Please contact our Specific Needs Team (specificneeds@abrsm.ac.uk) before booking an exam with the relevant details.

Special consideration

Special consideration is given to candidates who suffer temporary illness, injury or indisposition, or adverse circumstances at or near the time of the assessment that are beyond the candidate's control. This will not result in an adjustment to marks and will not change the assessment criteria. Please refer to our Special Consideration Policy at www.abrsm.org/policies.

Diversity

ABRSM is committed to creating greater diversity, equality and inclusion in the field of music and we are actively working to achieve this across our portfolio of assessments, and wider organisation. Our Diversity Statement, and regular updates on progress, can be accessed at www.abrsm.org/diversity-statement.

Exam content

Drum Kit Performance Grades consist of five components – four pieces and an assessment of the performance as a whole. Information on how marks are allocated is given on page 23.

How the exam works

Drum Kit Performance Grades are currently offered as digital exams – candidates' performances are video recorded and submitted to ABRSM for assessment. The candidate/Applicant is responsible for organising a suitable venue and any equipment needed to run the exam (e.g. music stand, recording device).

The repertoire must be performed and recorded in one continuous take and the recording must not be paused at any point during that take. Candidates should show the opening of their own-choice piece, as well as verbally introduce themselves and their repertoire to camera before beginning their performance. Examiners will start assessing candidates from the point at which they start to perform their repertoire and may stop listening to the recording if the performance goes over the time limit.

Where candidates are under 18, the recording process must be overseen by a Responsible Adult who must be aged 18 or over, and may be the Applicant, teacher or parent/carer.

Detailed instructions on how to record and submit the exam are given in the Guidance for Music Performance Grades document available at www.abrsm.org/performance-grades.

3. Drum Kit Performance Grades syllabus

Introducing the qualification

Drum Kit Performance Grades, introduced by ABRSM in 2024, have been specifically designed with drum kit learners in mind, allowing them to focus on and showcase their performance skills across a diverse range of styles and disciplines. This suite of qualifications has been designed to allow learners to play to their strengths and interests, and to have their level of achievement formally recognised with a regulated qualification that attracts UCAS points (in the UK) at Grades 6 to 8. Drum Kit Performance Grades are accessible exams given their sole focus on performance, without the assessment of any supporting tests. Instead, they encourage the selection of appropriate repertoire to be delivered in a sustained performance, even at the earliest levels.

Musicians learn to play an instrument to explore and perform repertoire, which is why pieces, and the way they can be combined to create a convincing and sustained performance, are the focus of the exam. For Performance Grades, candidates are asked to present four pieces at each grade.

The repertoire for Drum Kit Performance Grades is organised into three lists, giving candidates the opportunity to perform a balanced selection of genres whilst demonstrating a range of skills. From rock, metal and pop to hip-hop and jazz, candidates are encouraged to explore different techniques through the presentation of each style.

Since Performance Grades focus on performance alone, the choice of repertoire is important, and attention should be given to the way pieces are contrasted, the order in which they are presented, and the different moods and characters they inhabit. This will enable candidates to demonstrate their ability to deliver a coherent and convincing performance event, not just a series of individual pieces. Credit for this is given through the performance as a whole assessment criteria that are applied (see page 24).

Drum Kit Performance Grades: requirements and information

This section provides a summary of the most important points that teachers and candidates need to know when taking ABRSM Performance Grades for Drum Kit. Further details, as well as administrative information about the exams, are given in ABRSM's Exam Regulations (available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations) which should be read before booking an exam.

Instruments

All pieces can be performed on a standard five-piece drum kit. Candidates are permitted to add additional kit if they wish, although this is not compulsory and gives no advantage. Double bass drum pedals may be used at Grades 6–8, if appropriate.

Acoustic and electric drum kits are permitted at any grade. Electric kits must use recognisable drum and cymbal sounds and be able to achieve all musical effects required in the notation. Pieces may not be altered to suit the instrument. The assessment will be based on the overall musical outcome, according to the marking criteria.

Performance as a whole

Performance skills are at the heart of Performance Grades, and go beyond the preparation of individual pieces. Designing programmes that play to learners' strengths as performers, and then delivering them with a real sense of musical intent and communication, is central to musical

development. This also builds stamina, and embeds the technical control required to play a whole programme through, including managing the transitions from one piece to another. Finding ways to put across the mood and character, and really get inside the style of different types of repertoire, as well as arranging pieces into coherent and compelling programmes, will in turn increase learners' knowledge and understanding of music more broadly.

For full details of how the performance as a whole component of the exam is assessed, see Section 4 of this Qualification Specification.

Selecting repertoire

Number of pieces: Candidates present four pieces in one continuous performance (without a break). They choose at least one piece from each of the three lists (A, B and C). The fourth piece can be from the repertoire lists or a piece of the candidate's choice. The pieces can be performed in any order. See further programming requirements within this 'Selecting repertoire' section before finalising choices.

Own-choice piece: The following options and restrictions apply to the own-choice piece selection:

- The piece should be broadly the same standard, or above, as repertoire set for the grade being taken (prior approval from ABRSM cannot be given).
- The piece may be chosen from any of the repertoire lists set for the grade, as long as all other requirements within this 'Selecting repertoire' section are also met, including the minimum duration. Performing all four pieces from the lists gives no advantage.
- The piece may be a candidate's own composition, arrangement or transcription (see 'Own composition').
- The piece must exist in a legible and fully-notated score using standard music notation, which may be a drum chart, and it must be performed as notated in that score.
- The piece may be unaccompanied or performed to a backing track. Own-choice pieces chosen from graded exam material should be performed with the backing track provided.
- The piece must not last less than the following timings for each grade (unless the overall programme time would be exceeded; see 'Programme times'):

	Grade									
	Initial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Minimum duration (mm:ss)	00:20	00:25	00:30	00:35	00:45	01:00	01:30	02:00	02:30	

The duration for each grade is the minimum time required in order to demonstrate the breadth and depth of skills required, including stamina.

The other programming requirements described in this 'Selecting repertoire' section must also be met.

In cases where there is a concern about the standard of an own-choice piece presented, ABRSM reserves the right to request a copy from the Applicant where we cannot readily access one ourselves. This may delay the issuing of the exam result.

Own composition: ABRSM welcomes the inclusion of candidates' own compositions, arrangements or transcriptions, to be performed as their own-choice piece. We will not judge or provide feedback on the structure or quality of the music, only the performance of it. However, as

with any other own-choice piece, the technical demand must be broadly the same as repertoire set for the grade being taken.

Programme times: The overall performance, including transitions between pieces, should not exceed the maximum programme time set for the grade, as shown in the following table. The programme time is the duration from the first note of the performance to the last. The examiner may stop listening to the recording if the candidate's performance goes over the maximum programme time.

	Grade									
	Initial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Maximum programme time (minutes)	5	6	7	8	10	12	15	20	25	

Backing Tracks: Pieces from List A and List B must be performed with the backing tracks provided. Pieces from List C must be performed unaccompanied. Own-choice pieces may be accompanied or unaccompanied (see 'Own-choice piece').

Backing tracks may be used with or without a click.

Unaccompanied pieces must not be performed with a click track or metronome. Candidates should remove any head-/ear-phones during the performance of unaccompanied pieces.

See www.abrsm.org/performance-grades/guidance for more information.

Repeats: For pieces published by ABRSM, all repeats should be played.

Repertoire lists: Every effort has been made to feature a broad range of repertoire to suit and appeal to candidates of different ages, backgrounds and interests. Pieces should be considered carefully for their appropriateness to each individual, which may need consultation between teachers and parents/carers. Teachers and parents/carers should also exercise caution when allowing younger candidates to research pieces online: www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety.

Preparing for the exam

Programme form & pre-performance procedures: Candidates should provide their programme information online when uploading their video. The piece information required should be given in the order the pieces will be performed.

Candidates should show the opening of their own-choice piece and announce themselves and their pieces before beginning their performance. Candidates taking a Grade 6, 7 or 8 must additionally show a form of photographic identification to the camera. This is because these qualifications can be used either as a prerequisite for higher grades and diplomas, or as part of a university application.

If preferred, a Responsible Adult present may show the music to camera (but not the ID, where applicable) and make the introductory announcement, as this does not form part of the performance. The assessment of the performance begins on the first note of music played.

More information on all of the above is given in the Guidance for Music Performance Grades available at www.abrsm.org/performance-grades.

Interpreting the score: Candidates are encouraged to interpret the score in a musical and stylistic way. For pieces published by ABRSM, the following sections are included to allow candidates to add their own embellishment and to demonstrate stylistic awareness and creativity:

- FILL Improvise a stylistic fill.
- CONT. SIM. Continue the groove in a similar manner, adding some minor stylistic variation.
- DEVELOP Develop the groove according to the musical context, e.g. through altering the drum voices used or adding rhythmic complexity.
- SOLO Improvise a stylistic passage where the drum part is the main musical feature.

Examiners' marking will be determined by how candidate's decisions contribute to the musical outcome of each individual piece and to the performance as a whole. Marking criteria for Drum Kit Performance Grades can be found on page 24.

Performing from memory: There is no requirement to perform from memory, although candidates are encouraged to do so if they believe it will enhance their performance. No extra marks are directly awarded for performing from memory.

Copyright: Performing from unauthorised photocopies (or other kinds of copies) or illegal downloads of copyright music is not allowed. In the UK, copies may be used in certain limited circumstances – for full details, see the MPA's *Code of Fair Practice* at www.mpaonline.org.uk/mpa-guidelines. In all other cases, application should be made to the copyright holder before any copy is made. Care should also be taken when making arrangements, as permission will be required in the case of copyright music.

Candidates and Applicants are expected to act within the law with regard to copyright. ABRSM may withhold the exam result where we have evidence that this is not the case.

INITIAL GRADE

FOUR PIECES: at least one chosen by the candidate from each of the three Lists, **A**, **B** and **C**, and a fourth of the candidate's own choice; for further programming requirements, see page 12.

All the pieces below are published by ABRSM in *Drum Kit Exam Pieces from 2024, Initial Grade*.

	Composer/Artist	Piece
A	1 Daniel Bond	Raptors
	2 Claire Brock	Pop Up
	3 Twenty One Pilots, arr. ABRSM	Stressed Out
B	1 Tamir Barzilay	Pink Suit
	2 Noam Lederman	You Know
	3 Queen, arr. ABRSM	We Will Rock You
C	1 Jason Bowld	Trailblazer
	2 Catherine Ring	You Bet
	3 Lizzy Swinford	Frosty Mornings

GRADE 1

FOUR PIECES: at least one chosen by the candidate from each of the three Lists, **A**, **B** and **C**, and a fourth of the candidate's own choice; for further programming requirements, see page 12.

All the pieces below are published by ABRSM in *Drum Kit Exam Pieces from 2024, Grade 1*.

	Composer/Artist	Piece
A	1 Dan Banks & Dan Earley	Funk For Geoff
	2 The Chainsmokers and Coldplay, arr. ABRSM	Something Just Like This
	3 Vicky O'Neon	Spacey Funk
B	1 Daniel Bond	Laguna
	2 Chicago, arr. ABRSM	Hard To Say I'm Sorry
	3 The White Stripes, arr. ABRSM	Ball And Biscuit
C	1 Emily Gunton	Cuban Roots
	2 Noam Lederman	Duck Walk
	3 Chris Woodham	Rock, Paper, Scissors!

GRADE 2

FOUR PIECES: at least one chosen by the candidate from each of the three Lists, **A**, **B** and **C**, and a fourth of the candidate's own choice; for further programming requirements, see page 12.

All the pieces below are published by ABRSM in *Drum Kit Exam Pieces from 2024, Grade 2*.

	Composer/Artist	Piece
A	1 The Who, arr. ABRSM	Baba O'Riley
	2 Dan Banks & Dan Earley	Cuiabá Castle
	3 Elton John & Dua Lipa, arr. ABRSM	Cold Heart (PNAU Remix)
B	1 Jason Bowld	Parkway Punch
	2 Tamir Barzilay	Inspector Tommy
	3 Noam Lederman	Nashville
C	1 Jonathan Grogan	Paradiddle Rock
	2 Lee Morris	Surf's Up
	3 Lizzy Swinford	Sticky Tricks

GRADE 3

FOUR PIECES: at least one chosen by the candidate from each of the three Lists, **A**, **B** and **C**, and a fourth of the candidate's own choice; for further programming requirements, see page 12.

All the pieces below are published by ABRSM in *Drum Kit Exam Pieces from 2024, Grade 3*.

	Composer/Artist	Piece
A	1 Nirvana, arr. ABRSM	Come As You Are
	2 Dan Banks & Dan Earley	Urban Disco
	3 Dave Rowles	No Better Than
B	1 Green Day, arr. ABRSM	Wake Me Up When September Ends
	2 Tony Robinson	Scrambled Eggs
	3 Vicky O'Neon	My Sunny Reggae
C	1 Matt Arnold	Got Pocket
	2 Lee Morris	Sweet Sixteens
	3 Noam Lederman	Beale Street

GRADE 4

FOUR PIECES: at least one chosen by the candidate from each of the three Lists, **A**, **B** and **C**, and a fourth of the candidate's own choice; for further programming requirements, see page 12.

All the pieces below are published by ABRSM in *Drum Kit Exam Pieces from 2024, Grade 4*.

	Composer/Artist	Piece
A	1 Jason Bowld	Alterfist
	2 Red Hot Chili Peppers, arr. ABRSM	Give It Away
	3 Tony Robinson	Metamorphic
B	1 Oasis, arr. ABRSM	Don't Look Back in Anger
	2 Dan Banks & Dan Earley	At The Ball
	3 Chris Hague & Steve Wright	Something
C	1 Noam Lederman	Don't Blink
	2 Lisa Tring	Gerald's Way
	3 Ben Twyford	Go Diddley

GRADE 5

FOUR PIECES: at least one chosen by the candidate from each of the three Lists, **A**, **B** and **C**, and a fourth of the candidate's own choice; for further programming requirements, see page 12.

All the pieces below are published by ABRSM in *Drum Kit Exam Pieces from 2024, Grade 5*.

	Composer/Artist	Piece
A	1 The Black Keys, arr. ABRSM	Lonely Boy
	2 Claire Brock	Sunset Funk
	3 Vicky O'Neon	Island Party
B	1 James Brown, arr. ABRSM	Cold Sweat (Parts 1 & 2)
	2 Jonathan Kitching	Know No More
	3 Slayer, arr. ABRSM	Delusions of Saviour
C	1 Emily Gunton	New Trend
	2 Noam Lederman	Evolving Echoes
	3 Ralph Salmins	Brushing Up

GRADE 6

FOUR PIECES: at least one chosen by the candidate from each of the three Lists, **A**, **B** and **C**, and a fourth of the candidate's own choice; for further programming requirements, see page 12.

All the pieces below are published by ABRSM in *Drum Kit Exam Pieces from 2024, Grade 6*.

	Composer/Artist	Piece
A	1 Foo Fighters, arr. ABRSM	The Pretender
	2 Tony Robinson	Cole Caller
	3 Jason Bowld	Bring Me The Leaders
B	1 Siân Monaghan	Journey Home
	2 The Meters, arr. ABRSM	Cissy Strut
	3 Catherine Ring	Max Montuno
C	1 Jonathan Grogan	In Concert
	2 Noam Lederman	Pepper Shuffle
	3 Chris Woodham	Break Beat Banger

GRADE 7

FOUR PIECES: at least one chosen by the candidate from each of the three Lists, **A**, **B** and **C**, and a fourth of the candidate's own choice; for further programming requirements, see page 12.

All the pieces below are published by ABRSM in *Drum Kit Exam Pieces from 2024, Grade 7*.

	Composer/Artist	Piece
A	1 Jason Bowld	Cory's Funk Express
	2 Noam Lederman	Keep Moving
	3 Slipknot, arr. ABRSM	Before I Forget
B	1 Vicky O'Neon	Wave Rider
	2 Tony Robinson	Descent From Crib Goch
	3 Kaz Rodriguez	Sahara
C	1 Ben Twyford	7th Heaven
	2 Matt Arnold	How About A Tour?
	3 Dave Rowles	Dollan Bree (Drums Full Of Life)

GRADE 8

FOUR PIECES: at least one chosen by the candidate from each of the three Lists, **A**, **B** and **C**, and a fourth of the candidate's own choice; for further programming requirements, see page 12.

All the pieces below are published by ABRSM in *Drum Kit Exam Pieces from 2024, Grade 8*.

	Composer/Artist	Piece
A	1 Kaz Rodriguez	Movements
	2 Porcupine Tree, arr. ABRSM	The Sound of Muzak
	3 Tony Robinson	Seven Sins
B	1 Jason Bowld	Djently Does It
	2 Nate Smith, arr. ABRSM	Skip Step
	3 Richard Spaven, arr. ABRSM	The Self
C	1 Claire Brock	Step On
	2 Noam Lederman	Beleza
	3 Peter Dawson	Three Is The Magic Number

4. Assessment, marking & infringements

Assessment objectives

The following tables describe the level of knowledge and skills required of candidates taking Drum Kit Performance Grades. They also show the assessment objectives and corresponding marking criteria that examiners use to assess the performances at each level. The full marking criteria used by examiners are available on pages 25-26.

Initial Grade (RQF Entry Level 3)

Assessment objectives	Marking criteria
Learners will: Apply musical skill, knowledge and understanding to performances of basic pieces in a mixture of styles. 80%	Learners can: Perform basic pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reliable pattern• Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo• Reliable tonal control and awareness• Musical shape and detail• Communication of character and style
Demonstrate skills in musical communication, interpretation and delivery by applying them with a degree of consistency across the whole programme. 20%	Perform a short programme of basic pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Projection and involvement• Performance awareness and control• Stylistic realisation• Awareness and control of textures and ensemble• Technical control and instrument management

Grades 1 to 3 (RQF Level 1)

Assessment objectives	Marking criteria
Learners will:	Learners can:
Apply musical skill, knowledge and understanding to performances of elementary pieces in a mixture of styles. 80%	Perform elementary pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable pattern and fills • Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo • Reliable tonal control and awareness • Musical shape and detail • Communication of character and style, including continuation and development
Demonstrate skills in musical communication, interpretation and delivery by applying them with a degree of consistency across the whole programme. 20%	Perform a short programme of elementary pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projection and involvement • Performance awareness and control • Stylistic realisation • Awareness and control of textures and ensemble • Technical control and instrument management

Grades 4 & 5 (RQF Level 2)

Assessment objectives	Marking criteria
Learners will:	Learners can:
Apply musical skill, knowledge and understanding to performances of intermediate pieces in a mixture of styles. 80%	Perform intermediate pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable pattern and fills • Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo • Reliable tonal control and awareness • Musical shape and detail • Communication of character and style, including continuation, development and solos
Demonstrate skills in musical communication, interpretation and delivery by applying them with a degree of consistency across the whole programme. 20%	Perform a moderately-long programme of intermediate pieces with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projection and involvement • Performance awareness and control • Stylistic realisation • Awareness and control of textures and ensemble • Technical control and instrument management

Grades 6 to 8 (RQF Level 3)

Assessment objectives	Marking criteria
<p>Learners will:</p> <p>Apply musical skill, knowledge and understanding to performances of advanced pieces in a mixture of styles.</p> <p>80%</p>	<p>Learners can:</p> <p>Perform advanced pieces with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reliable pattern and fills ● Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo ● Reliable tonal control and awareness ● Musical shape and detail ● Communication of character and style, including continuation, development and solos
<p>Demonstrate skills in musical communication, interpretation and delivery by applying them with a degree of consistency across the whole programme.</p> <p>20%</p>	<p>Perform an extensive programme of advanced pieces with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Projection and involvement ● Performance awareness and control ● Stylistic realisation ● Awareness and control of textures and ensemble ● Technical control and instrument management

Mark allocation

Marks are allocated for each component of the assessment, as shown in the table below:

Component	Maximum marks	% of total mark
Piece 1	30	20%
Piece 2	30	20%
Piece 3	30	20%
Piece 4	30	20%
Performance as a whole	30	20%
Total	150	100%

Result categories

The result categories for Drum Kit Performance Grades are set as follows. A Pass in each component of the assessment is not required to pass overall.

Result category	Mark band
Distinction	130-150
Merit	120-129
Pass	100-119
Below Pass	50-99

Synoptic assessment

Synoptic assessment is a form of assessment that requires candidates to demonstrate that they can identify and effectively use a selection of skills, techniques, concepts and knowledge to carry out a key task. Drum Kit Performance Grades allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to draw together different skills, knowledge and understanding – theory, notation, instrument control, listening skills, creative interpretation – and apply these collectively during the performance of a sustained programme of music.

Awarding

An examiner's assessment of a piece will be based on the performance given at that time towards the qualification for which the candidate has been entered. Prior performances of the same pieces will not be taken into account for the qualification, nor will marking appeals be accepted on that basis.

A recording can only be submitted as evidence for any qualification once. It cannot be re-used for the same or a different qualification at any point in time. If a previously submitted video is uploaded as evidence a second time, this will be discounted and the candidate disqualified from that second assessment.

Infringements

It is important that candidates, and those preparing them for exams, read and follow the exam requirements as set out in the Drum Kit Performance Grades syllabus. If the exam requirements are not met in any way, this could lead to a warning, mark deduction or disqualification, at ABRSM's discretion. Examples of infringements include:

- Offering an inappropriate standard of own-choice piece.
- Performing an unaccompanied piece to a click.
- Presenting an own-choice piece that is too short or a programme that is too long.
- Presenting a programme containing fewer than four pieces or with fewer than three pieces from the ABRSM repertoire lists for the grade.
- Presenting syllabus-listed repertoire, but not as specified.
- Taking an unpermitted break.
- Submitting a video of the performance that has not been made in one single take or that has been edited in some other way.

The above list is not exhaustive.

Action is typically taken as follows:

- Warnings, in the form of written correspondence, are applied to minor infringements (e.g. wrong combination of pieces from the lists). Repeat cases in subsequent exams may result in more severe action being taken.
- Mark deductions from a component of the exam are applied to more serious cases and may range from three marks to the full marks available for the component.
- Disqualification is applied to cases where requirements are not fulfilled in a fundamental way (e.g. none of the pieces performed have been selected from the ABRSM repertoire lists for the grade or the recording has been edited in some way).

Examiners report infringements to ABRSM who investigate and decide what action is to be taken. It should be noted that infringements identified in exams may delay the release of the exam result.

ABRSM's decision on any infringement is final. Prior acceptance of an infringement without penalty does not set a precedent and appeals will not be accepted on this basis.

Marking criteria

The tables on pages 25–26 show the marking criteria used by examiners for Drum Kit Performance Grades. Each piece is marked out of 30 using the first set of criteria. After the full programme has been completed, a mark out of 30 is awarded for the performance as a whole using the second set of criteria. Additional guidance on how to interpret the performance as a whole criteria is provided on pages 27–28.

Examiners mark up or down from the pass mark for each component by balancing the extent to which the qualities and skills listed in the criteria are demonstrated and contribute towards the overall musical outcome.

Marking criteria

Grades Initial to 8	Criteria for each of the pieces presented				
	Pattern	Time	Tone	Shape	Performance
Distinction 27-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly accurate pattern Fills have stylish and inventive note choices* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhythmic character and feel well conveyed Convincing groove Fluent, with flexibility in fills where appropriate* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well projected Confident use of tonal qualities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressive, idiomatic musical shaping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assured Fully committed Vivid communication of character and style Idiomatic continuation, development and solos*
Merit 24-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely accurate pattern Fills have controlled note choices* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good sense of rhythm and feel throughout Sustained, effective pulse and groove Controlled rhythmic placement within fills* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainly controlled and consistent Good use of tonal qualities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear musical shaping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Carrying musical conviction Character and style communicated Effective continuation, development and solos*
Pass 20-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally correct pattern Fills have some contour* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall rhythmic accuracy and correct feel Suitable pulse Generally stable rhythmic placement in fills* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally reliable Adequate use of tonal qualities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some realisation of musical shape and/or detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally secure, prompt recovery from any slips Some musical involvement Continuation, development and solos attempted*
Below Pass 17-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent pattern errors Fills lack contour* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inaccurate rhythms and/or feel Pulse not sustained Unsuitable rhythmic placement in fills* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uneven and/or unreliable Inadequate use of tonal qualities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient musical shaping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insecure, inadequate recovery from any slips Insufficient musical involvement Ineffective or no continuation, development and solos*
13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely inaccurate pattern Fills lack coherence* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unstable rhythms and/or no sense of feel Pulse not established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serious lack of tonal control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Musical shaping largely unrealised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacking continuity No musical involvement
10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly inaccurate pattern Fills very incoherent or absent* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncontrolled rhythms and/or feel Incoherent pulse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No tonal control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No shape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to continue for more than a short section
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No work offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No work offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No work offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No work offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No work offered

* where applicable

Grades Initial to 8	Criteria for the performance as a whole <i>Communication</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Delivery</i>
Distinction 27-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistently well-projected and involved, showing strong performance commitment and conviction ● Effective sequence and pacing of chosen programme; consistently good performance awareness and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistently effective stylistic characterisation; interpretative demands of the programme well met ● Consistently good awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with effective blending and balancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistently assured and controlled; technical challenges of the programme well met ● Consistently effective instrument management, fully responsive to the performance situation
Merit 24-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mainly well-projected and involved, showing positive performance commitment ● Largely effective sequence and pacing of chosen programme; mainly good performance awareness and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mostly effective stylistic realisation; interpretative demands of the programme largely well met ● Mainly good awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with appropriate blending and balancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Effectively controlled; most technical challenges of the programme well met ● Mostly effective instrument management, mainly responsive to the performance situation
Pass 20-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Projection and involvement sufficient to maintain an overall sense of performance ● Sequence and pacing of chosen programme shows adequate performance awareness and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sufficient stylistic realisation to meet the interpretative demands of the programme ● Adequate awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with sufficient blending and balancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generally controlled; technical challenges of the programme securely met overall ● Sufficiently reliable instrument management to meet the demands of the performance situation
Below Pass 15-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Insufficient projection or sense of involvement to maintain a sense of performance ● Sequence and/or pacing of chosen programme shows inadequate performance awareness or control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stylistic realisation not equal to the interpretative demands of the programme ● Insufficient awareness or control of textures and ensemble, and/or unsuitable blending and balancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistency of control insufficient to meet the technical challenges of the programme ● Insufficiently reliable instrument management to meet the demands of the performance situation
10-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sense of performance largely absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stylistic realisation and/or control of textures and ensemble largely absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Very insecure technical control and/or instrument management

Performance as a whole – additional guidance

Successful candidates at all levels should be able to deliver performances that are broadly consistent across the entire programme of selected music. Repertoire choices need to be made that allow communication of personal involvement and musical characterisation, interpretation of musical elements, and effective technical control of the instrument. Candidates should also be aware of the ensemble skills needed whilst performing with a backing track, and have the stamina to maintain and deliver a reliable performance.

Within three key areas of **Communication (C)**, **Interpretation (I)** and **Delivery (D)**, candidates need to show a broad range of musical and technical skills, which demonstrate their overall flair for performance throughout a continuous programme of music.

Initial Grade to Grade 3 (RQF Entry Level 3 & Level 1)

- C** Candidates project a sense of musical communication, purpose and personal involvement throughout a programme of basic repertoire. They demonstrate an elementary level of awareness of the performance context, both during and between the four chosen pieces. Through the course of a short programme, candidates show commitment to performance and are able to create a sense of musical occasion.
- I** Candidates convey character and mood appropriate to each of the chosen pieces, through an elementary understanding of musical detail and style. They show awareness of musical roles within simple textures and highlight points of similarity and difference. They are also able to blend and balance straightforward musical elements, demonstrating ensemble awareness where appropriate.
- D** Candidates have sufficient control of their instrument to meet and respond to the technical challenges of basic repertoire with conviction. They have the focus and stamina to maintain technical assurance consistently through a short programme, from the first note to the last.

Grades 4 & 5 (RQF Level 2)

- C** Candidates project a sense of musical communication, purpose and personal involvement throughout a programme of intermediate repertoire. They demonstrate a developing awareness of the performance context, both during and between the four chosen pieces. Through the course of a programme of moderate duration, candidates show commitment to performance and are able to create a sense of musical occasion.
- I** Candidates convey character and mood appropriate to each of the chosen pieces, through a developing understanding of musical detail and style. They show awareness of differences in texture, timbre, articulation and mood, blending and balancing diverse musical elements as appropriate, and demonstrate ensemble awareness when accompanied.
- D** Candidates have sufficient control of their instrument to meet and respond to the technical challenges of intermediate repertoire with conviction. They have the focus and stamina to maintain technical assurance consistently through a programme of moderate duration, from the first note to the last.

Grades 6 to 8 (RQF Level 3)

- C** Candidates project a sense of musical communication, purpose and personal involvement throughout a programme of advanced repertoire. They demonstrate sophisticated awareness of the performance context, both during and between the four chosen pieces. Through the course of an extensive programme of music, candidates show commitment to performance and create a sense of musical occasion.
- I** Candidates convey the different character and mood appropriate to each of the chosen pieces, through effective realisation of musical detail and sophisticated understanding of style. They show awareness of musical roles within complex textures, blending and balancing complex musical elements as appropriate, and demonstrate ensemble awareness when accompanied.
- D** Candidates have the command and control of their instrument in order to meet and respond to the technical challenges of advanced repertoire with conviction. They demonstrate the focus and stamina to maintain technical assurance consistently through an extensive programme, from the first note to the last.

5. After the exam

Results

All candidates receive a mark form; successful candidates also receive a certificate that shows the qualification title, the subject and level that they have been examined in. We aim to release results for Drum Kit Performance Grades in line with the schedules on our website at www.abrsm.org/results; however, some results may take longer. Examiners will not issue or discuss a candidate's result; the mark form (and certificate for successful candidates) will be issued by ABRSM after the exam. Unless otherwise requested at the time of booking, mark forms and certificates are issued to the Applicant, whose responsibility it is to pass them on to candidates.

Appeals and feedback

Appeals

If a candidate has received an unexpected exam result, this can be appealed by requesting a Results Review. This process allows us to revisit the marks awarded by an examiner and, subject to the outcome of the review, may result in a mark amendment.

Feedback

We welcome feedback about any aspect of the overall exam experience including the mark form. All feedback is logged and plays a valuable part in our commitment to continuous improvement and quality assurance procedures.

For further information on our processes and deadlines for appealing a result, or submitting feedback, please visit www.abrsm.org/send-exam-feedback.

6. Other assessments

ABRSM offers a range of other practical assessments for instrumentalists and singers:

- Music Medals
- Prep Test
- Practical Grades (including Jazz for selected instruments)
- Open Music Assessment
- Ensembles
- Choral Singing
- diplomas

Full information is available at www.abrsm.org/exams.

Music Theory

ABRSM Music Theory exams are available for Grades 1 to 8. Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age and do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s). Further information is available at www.abrsm.org/theory.

About Music Theory

Developing musical literacy forms a key part of a rounded education for performers, composers and listeners of all kinds. Understanding how written symbols relate to the elements of music, and having the skills to interpret and translate them into sounds, empowers us to communicate and experience music in a meaningful way.

ABRSM's Music Theory grades give learners:

- a knowledge of the notation of western music, including commonly used signs and terminology
- an understanding of fundamental musical elements such as intervals, keys, scales and chords
- an ability to apply theoretical knowledge and understanding to score analysis
- skills in harmonic completion of extracts and melody writing (at Grades 6 to 8).

Candidates are assessed on their ability to identify, use and manipulate musical symbols, to study extracts and to answer questions about the elements of music according to the parameters detailed in the full syllabus at www.abrsm.org/theory.

The exams are available as online assessments at Grades 1 to 5 and paper-based assessments at Grades 6 to 8.

Grade 5 as a prerequisite

We believe that a thorough understanding of the elements of music is essential for a full and satisfying performance at the higher grades.

It is therefore an ABRSM requirement that candidates must provide evidence of a pass at ABRSM Grade 5 or above in Music Theory, Practical Musicianship or a Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument before they can enter for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 Practical Grades or Performance Grades exam.

ABRSM reviews its portfolio of qualifications from time to time. Changes may be made to any of the above assessments during the lifetime of this specification. Please refer to www.abrsm.org for up-to-date information.