

# MUSIC PERFORMANCE GRADES



third edition – valid for exams from 1 January 2025



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

**6 June 2024**

# Qualification Specification: Performance Grades

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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](http://www.abrsm.org).

## About this qualification specification

### What it covers

This specification provides the 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)

For ease of reading, 'Performance Grade(s)' is used in place of the full qualification titles throughout the remainder of this document. Similarly, when referring to our other, long-standing, suite of graded practical exams, 'Practical Grade(s)' is used in place of the full qualification titles.

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

### Document structure

This specification contains five sections. Sections 1, 2, 4 and 5 apply to all subjects (instruments) included in the Music Performance suite of graded exams. Section 3 is the syllabus, which contains requirements and repertoire lists specific to individual subjects. The syllabuses (Section 3s) for all subjects can be found at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

### **Validity of this specification**

This specification is valid from 1 January 2025. The repertoire lists contained within each instrumental/singing syllabus (Section 3) have specific validity periods, confirmed in the respective syllabus.

We may update this specification from time to time, but we will not make changes to the relevant syllabus (Section 3) during its period of validity, other than in exceptional circumstances. In such cases, advance notice of any changes will be posted on our website, as will advance notice of any planned syllabus refreshes. The latest version of this specification will be available from [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

## **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 (or singing) 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.

### **Who the qualifications are for**

Learners may be entered at any age for these qualifications, but those entering for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 must fulfil the prerequisite entry requirements detailed on page 6.

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/song 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. Music Performance qualifications 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. In these respects, they may be more accessible than our Practical Music qualifications.

### **Progression route**

ABRSM Music Performance qualifications are available from Grade 1 to Grade 8, and in some subjects from Initial Grade. Each grade progresses from the previous in their level of demand. The syllabuses that form Section 3 of this specification detail the subjects covered and the grades available for each. Candidates do not need 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 6).

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

Music Performance candidates may wish to focus on their all-round musical skills and take a Practical Music qualification. These long-standing qualifications are designed for learners to demonstrate a combination of performance and other all-round musical skills and knowledge. Each grade is progressive and represents a new challenge for the learner, providing motivation and structure to develop and hone their musical skills. Practical Music qualifications further allow

learners to be rewarded and recognised for their skills in performing pieces/songs as well as technique, notation, listening and musical perception.

The nature of both sets of qualifications makes them an ideal platform from which to progress to ABRSM's diploma offer, beginning with the performance-only ARSM. ARSM gives candidates greater flexibility and responsibility in programme building as well as providing further opportunity to develop performance technique and interpretative skills while extending their repertoire.

The LRSM and FRSM Diplomas are progressive from the ARSM. Through a combination of live performance and written or spoken components, learners at LRSM and FRSM level demonstrate an advanced level of musicianship, evaluation skills and provide contextual evidence to support the performance decisions made.

Irrespective of a learner's personal motivation to achieve one of ABRSM's Performance diplomas, each qualification can provide a pathway to higher learning or employment.

Further details of our diploma suite of qualifications can be found at: [www.abrsm.org/other-assessments/diplomas](http://www.abrsm.org/other-assessments/diplomas).

### **Entry requirements**

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](http://www.abrsm.org/prerequisite).

## **Regulation and UCAS points (UK)**

### **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](http://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>.

### **Entry to higher education**

In the UK, ABRSM's Grades 6 to 8 in Music Performance and Practical Music are afforded UCAS points; the table below shows the UCAS Tariff value of these grades. For further information visit [wwwucas.com](http://wwwucas.com).

Qualification/Level	UCAS points		
	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Grade 6	8	10	12
Grade 7	12	14	16
Grade 8	18	24	30

## 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 Music Performance qualifications 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).

Level	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



Level	Guided Learning Hours* (GLH)	Total Qualification Time* (TQT)	Credits
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 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](http://www.abrsm.org/regulation).

## 2. Performance Grades

### Performance Grades at a glance

#### What is assessed?

- Three set pieces
- One own-choice piece

#### How is it assessed?

- Digital exam
- Information on how marks are allocated is given on page 15

### Qualification Specification

When preparing for an exam, it is important to read the relevant syllabus, which makes up Section 3 of this specification. Syllabuses (Section 3s) for each Performance Grades subject (instrument) are available at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

#### Syllabus repertoire validity

The repertoire lists for each subject are updated periodically. Validity periods vary from subject to subject and are confirmed in the relevant syllabus (Section 3). The current repertoire lists for each subject are available at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

#### Syllabus 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](http://www.abrsm.org/syllabuscorrections).

#### Overlap

In the first year of any revised Performance Grades syllabus repertoire lists, we offer an overlap period where candidates may choose repertoire from the preceding lists. Information on the length of the overlap period is given at [www.abrsm.org/overlap](http://www.abrsm.org/overlap).

#### The next syllabus

Advance notice of any planned changes to syllabus repertoire lists will be posted at [www.abrsm.org/syllabusupdates](http://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](http://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](http://www.abrsm.org/policies).

## Exam venues

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 a suitable piano or 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](http://www.abrsm.org/exambooking).

## 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](http://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 Access Co-ordinator ([accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk](mailto:accesscoordinator@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. This will not result in an adjustment to marks and will not change the assessment criteria applied by the examiner for the exam. Please refer to our Special Consideration Policy at [www.abrsm.org/policies](http://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](http://www.abrsm.org/diversity-statement).

## How the exam works

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/song, 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/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

## 3. Performance Grades Qualification Specification

### Introducing the qualification

Performance Grades, introduced by ABRSM in 2020, run alongside and provide an alternative pathway to our long-standing Practical Grades. They allow learners to focus on and showcase their performance skills if that is their preference. This additional suite of qualifications has been designed to allow learners to play to their strengths and interests and still have their level of achievement formally recognised with a regulated qualification that attracts UCAS points (in the UK) at Grades 6 to 8. 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/songs, 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/songs at each grade.

ABRSM Performance Grades draw on the same repertoire set for our Practical Grades. This syllabus repertoire is organised into lists, which explore different traditions and styles, dating from the Renaissance period to the present day. Choosing repertoire from different lists gives candidates the opportunity to perform a balanced selection and demonstrate a range of skills.

Since Performance Grades focus on performance alone, the choice of repertoire is important, and attention should be given to the way pieces/songs 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/songs. Credit for this is given through the performance as a whole assessment criteria that are applied (see page 16).

### Performance Grades: requirements and information

*Individual Performance Grades syllabuses (i.e. Section 3s), with relevant requirements and information, are available at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades) for the following subjects:*

- Piano
- Bowed Strings – Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass
- Woodwind – Descant Recorder, Treble Recorder, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Soprano Saxophone, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone
- Brass – Horn, Trumpet, B♭ Cornet, E♭ Soprano Cornet, Flugelhorn, E♭ Horn, Trombone, Bass Trombone, Baritone, Euphonium, Tuba
- Percussion – Snare Drum, Timpani, Tuned Percussion, Percussion (Combined)
- Guitar
- Harp – Harp (Pedal), Harp (Non-Pedal)
- Harpsichord
- Organ
- Singing
- Singing for Musical Theatre

## 4. Assessment, marking & infringements

### Assessment objectives

The following tables describe the level of knowledge and skills required of candidates taking 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 17–18.

#### Initial Grade (RQF Entry Level 3)

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

#### 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/songs in a mixture of styles. <b>80%</b>	Perform elementary pieces/songs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reliable pitch and intonation</li><li>• Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo</li><li>• Reliable tonal control and awareness</li><li>• Musical shape and detail</li><li>• Communication of character and style</li></ul>
Demonstrate skills in musical communication, interpretation and delivery by applying them with a degree of consistency across the whole programme. <b>20%</b>	Perform a short programme of elementary pieces/songs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Projection and involvement</li><li>• Performance awareness and control</li><li>• Stylistic realisation</li><li>• Awareness and control of textures and ensemble</li><li>• Technical control and instrument management</li></ul>

## 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/songs in a mixture of styles. <b>80%</b>	Perform intermediate pieces/songs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliable pitch and intonation</li> <li>• Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo</li> <li>• Reliable tonal control and awareness</li> <li>• Musical shape and detail</li> <li>• Communication of character and style</li> </ul>
Demonstrate skills in musical communication, interpretation and delivery by applying them with a degree of consistency across the whole programme. <b>20%</b>	Perform a moderately-long programme of intermediate pieces/songs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projection and involvement</li> <li>• Performance awareness and control</li> <li>• Stylistic realisation</li> <li>• Awareness and control of textures and ensemble</li> <li>• Technical control and instrument management</li> </ul>

## Grades 6 to 8 (RQF Level 3)

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

## Mark allocation

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

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

## Result categories

The result categories for 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. 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 or song 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 or songs will not be taken into account for the qualification, nor will marking appeals be accepted on that basis. The transfer of marks, at any grade, between Performance Grades and Practical Grades is not permitted.

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 relevant 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/song.
- Presenting an own-choice piece/song that is too short or a programme that is too long.
- Presenting a programme containing fewer than four pieces/songs or with fewer than three pieces/songs from the ABRSM repertoire lists for the grade.
- Presenting syllabus-listed repertoire, but not as specified (e.g. incorrect number of movements).
- 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/songs 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 (e.g. an own-choice piece/song of an inappropriate standard) 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/songs 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 17–18 show the marking criteria used by examiners for Performance Grades. Each piece/song 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 page 19.

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/songs presented				
	<i>Pitch</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Tone</i>	<i>Shape</i>	<i>Performance</i>
<b>Distinction 27-30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highly accurate notes and intonation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fluent, with flexibility where appropriate</li> <li>● Rhythmic character well conveyed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Well projected</li> <li>● Sensitive use of tonal qualities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expressive, idiomatic musical shaping and detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assured</li> <li>● Fully committed</li> <li>● Vivid communication of character and style</li> </ul>
<b>Merit 24-26</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Largely accurate notes and intonation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sustained, effective tempo</li> <li>● Good sense of rhythm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mainly controlled and consistent</li> <li>● Good tonal awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear musical shaping, well-realised detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Positive</li> <li>● Carrying musical conviction</li> <li>● Character and style communicated</li> </ul>
<b>Pass 20-23</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally correct notes</li> <li>● Sufficiently reliable intonation to maintain tonality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suitable tempo</li> <li>● Generally stable pulse</li> <li>● Overall rhythmic accuracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally reliable</li> <li>● Adequate tonal awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some realisation of musical shape and/or detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally secure, prompt recovery from slips</li> <li>● Some musical involvement</li> </ul>
<b>Below Pass 17-19</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frequent note errors</li> <li>● Insufficiently reliable intonation to maintain tonality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unsuitable and/or uncontrolled tempo</li> <li>● Irregular pulse</li> <li>● Inaccurate rhythm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Uneven and/or unreliable</li> <li>● Inadequate tonal awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Musical shape and detail insufficiently conveyed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Insecure, inadequate recovery from slips</li> <li>● Insufficient musical involvement</li> </ul>
<b>13-16</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Largely inaccurate notes and/or intonation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Erratic tempo and/or pulse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Serious lack of tonal control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Musical shape and detail largely unrealised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lacking continuity</li> <li>● No musical involvement</li> </ul>
<b>10-12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highly inaccurate notes and/or intonation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Incoherent tempo and/or pulse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No tonal control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No shape or detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unable to continue for more than a short section</li> </ul>
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No work offered</li> </ul>

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

## 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 or voice. Candidates should also be aware of the ensemble skills needed whilst performing with an accompanist or duet partner, 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/songs. 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/songs, 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/voice 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/songs. 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/songs, 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/voice 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/songs. Through the course of an extensive programme of music, candidates show commitment to performance and create a sense of musical occasion.
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- I** Candidates convey the different character and mood appropriate to each of the chosen pieces/songs, 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.
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- D** Candidates have the command and control of their instrument/voice 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.
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## 5. After the exam

### Results

All candidates receive a digital mark form. Successful candidates also receive a digital certificate that shows the qualification title, subject and level. A paper copy of the certificate is available to order for a small fee. We aim to release results for Practical and Performance Grades in line with the schedules on our website at [www.abrsm.org/results](http://www.abrsm.org/results). However, some results may take longer. We issue mark forms and certificates to the applicant. If the candidate has an account, they can access their mark form and certificate no later than seven days after we have released them to the applicant. Examiners will not issue or discuss a candidate's result.

### Appeals and feedback

#### Appeals

If a candidate wants to appeal their exam result they can request a Results Review. Depending on the outcome of the review, we may amend the mark.

#### Feedback

We also welcome feedback about other matters, such as the overall exam experience or the mark form. All feedback 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](http://www.abrsm.org/send-exam-feedback).