

ABRSM

Qualification Specification

**Online Music Theory
Grades 1-5**

**Level 1 Award in Music Theory
Level 2 Award in Music Theory**

Version 1.0: August 2020

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1. Introduction

About ABRSM

Our mission

ABRSM's mission is to inspire musical achievement. We do this in partnership with four Royal Schools of Music: Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music, Royal Northern College of Music and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

We are passionate about music, its value as an art form and the importance of music education. We believe that being involved with music gives people unique, positive experiences with life-long benefits.

Through our world-leading assessments, books and resources we provide people worldwide with the tools they need to teach, learn, make and enjoy music. Our scholarships, donations, sponsorship and partnerships create opportunities for people of all ages to discover music and fulfil their potential. Everything we do is designed to support learners and teachers on their musical journey. Find out more at www.abrsm.org.

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.

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 – ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Theory (Grades 1, 2 and 3) and ABRSM Level 2 Award in Music Theory (Grades 4 and 5). It also provides information on how the exams will be assessed, their learning outcomes, and regulated qualification details.

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 August 2020 until further notice.

We may change or add to this specification from time to time, but will not make changes to the syllabus (Section 3) 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/exams.

About our Music Theory qualifications

Qualification objectives

Music Theory exams are designed for learners developing their skills in musical literacy. Each grade represents a new challenge for the learner, providing motivation and structure to develop and hone skills in reading, understanding and interpreting staff notation. Exams allow learners to receive formal recognition of the level of mastery they have achieved and feedback to support their learning journey.

Developing musical literacy forms a key part of a rounded education for performers, composers and listeners of all kinds. An understanding of 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. Music Theory is a very practical subject that is completely entwined with performance and composition.

Who the qualifications are for

Learners may be entered for Music Theory exams at any age and without previously having taken any other grade, though the material for each assessment builds cumulatively on earlier grades. We aim to make our exams accessible to all candidates by providing access arrangements and reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

Progression route

The Music Theory syllabus for Grades 1–5 progressively covers the basic elements of music, including clefs, pitch, keys and rhythm. We believe that a thorough understanding of these basic elements is essential for a full and satisfying performance at the higher Music Performance grades, and require candidates to pass Grade 5 in Music Theory before they can enter for Grade 6, 7 or 8 exams in Music Performance.

Regulation (UK)

Our regulators

ABRSM Practical Music, Music Performance 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. There are nine qualification levels in the framework, labelled in order of difficulty from Entry Level to Level 8. For further information, visit <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

Regulated qualification details

Qualification titles

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

Qualification Number*	Qualification Title*
603/6414/2	ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Theory (Grade 1)
603/6415/4	ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Theory (Grade 2)
603/6416/6	ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Theory (Grade 3)
603/6417/8	ABRSM Level 2 Award in Music Theory (Grade 4)
603/6418/X	ABRSM Level 2 Award in Music Theory (Grade 5)

**For qualifications taken before 1 October 2020, please see www.abrsm.org/regulation for the relevant regulated qualification numbers and titles.*

Qualification size

The table below describes the size of the Music Theory 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).

Grade	Guided Learning Hours* (GLH)	Total Qualification Time* (TQT)	Credits
Grade 1	6	20	2
Grade 2	9	30	3
Grade 3	9	50	5
Grade 4	12	70	7
Grade 5	12	90	9

**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 following table shows the level of each of ABRSM's Music Theory qualifications on the RQF and the EQF.

Qualification	RQF Level	EQF Level
Grade 1		
Grade 2	Level 1	Level 2
Grade 3		
Grade 4	Level 2	Level 3
Grade 5		

Regulation (Rest of world)

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

Qualification title referencing

The qualifications covered by this specification are 'ABRSM Level 1 Award in Music Theory' (Grades 1, 2 and 3) and 'ABRSM Level 2 Award in Music Theory' (Grades 4 and 5). For ease of reading, 'Music Theory' is used in place of the full qualification titles throughout the remainder of this document.

2. Music Theory grades

Syllabus

When preparing for an exam, it is important to read the relevant syllabus. Syllabuses are available at www.abrsm.org/exams.

Syllabus amendments

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

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 are committed to inspiring achievement in music. Our qualifications are used by thousands of people to support their music learning or teaching. Many people also use them when applying to study at further and higher education institutions. It is therefore vital that our qualifications remain a valuable and reliable measure of a candidate's skills and knowledge. We therefore 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 the relevant 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 eight grades of Music Theory exam. Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age. They do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s), though the material for each grade builds cumulatively on earlier grades.

Exam booking

Details of exam dates, locations, 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 all candidates with fair access to our assessments by providing access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. We publish an Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy which is intended to be a helpful and clear guide for teachers, parents and candidates before booking an exam. Where a candidate's needs are not covered by the guidelines, each case is considered individually. Further information is available from the Access Co-ordinator (accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk) or from www.abrsm.org/specificneeds.

Exam content

The information on pages 11–13 of this specification shows in detail the content of the assessment at each grade. Information on how marks are allocated is given on page 16.

In the exam

Place of exam

Candidates can take their exam in their own home or in any other suitable location that meets ABRSM's requirements.

Supervision of the exam

For candidates under 18 and vulnerable adults, a Responsible Adult must be present in the room at the beginning of the exam to help with the initial set up. They are also permitted to remain in the exam room for the whole exam. Candidates aged 18 and over also have the option to have a Responsible Adult available but this is not compulsory. The Responsible Adult should not communicate with the candidate once the exam has started unless technical assistance is required.

Conduct of the exam

At the start of the exam, the candidate will be required to display a Photo ID document to confirm their identity, or take a photo of themselves using the exam software. ABRSM's Candidate Identification Policy can be found at www.abrsm.org/policies. Candidates are also required to film a scan of the room in order to confirm the environment in which the exam is taken.

The candidate will be filmed for the duration of the exam via the webcam and exam software, and each exam will be reviewed by trained proctors. ABRSM exams are not proctored live, but are all recorded and then reviewed after the assessment has taken place. Full information can be found at Remote Proctoring in ABRSM Online Music Theory Exams (www.abrsm.org/onlinetheory) and our Online Safeguarding Policy Statement (www.abrsm.org/policies).

Candidates must complete the online Music Theory exam without help or reference to notes or books of any kind. Any depiction of a piano keyboard, including an actual piano, must be covered. Candidates can use their own blank paper in the exam (manuscript or plain) to work out their answers. Candidates must show any paper to the camera at the start of the exam to confirm that it is blank. At the end of the exam they must hold up the paper to the camera and destroy it.

Marking of the exams

The exam will be marked automatically but results will only be available once the videos of the assessments have been reviewed.

Exam timings

The time allowed is printed at the top of each candidate's exam paper. The timings in the table below show the length of each Music Theory exam in minutes.

Grade	Timing
Grade 1	1.5 hours
Grade 2	1.5 hours
Grade 3	1.5 hours
Grade 4	2 hours
Grade 5	2 hours

Where English is not a candidate's first language, the candidate can request to bring a bilingual paper dictionary and receive 15 minutes extra time. Requests must be made at the time of booking.

Supporting publications

Examples of exam questions and model answers are given in *Music Theory Sample Papers for new format Theory exams* (Grades 1–5) and *Music Theory Sample Papers Model Answers for new format Theory exams* (Grades 1–5). We also publish *First Steps in Music Theory*, *The AB Guide to Music Theory* (Part 1), and *Discovering Music Theory Workbooks* (Grades 1–5), available at www.abrsm.org/shop. Purchasing these resources is not a requirement.

3. Music Theory syllabus

Music Theory syllabus

The Music Theory syllabus below shows the requirements for online exams from August 2020. The syllabus must be read in conjunction with the Exam Regulations, available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations.

GRADE 1

- 1 Note values of semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver and semiquaver, and their equivalent rests (candidates may use the terms 'whole note', 'half note', etc.). Tied notes. Single-dotted notes.
- 2 Simple time signatures of 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, bar-lines and the grouping of the notes listed above within these times.
- 3 The staff. Treble (G) and bass (F) clefs. Names of notes on the staff, including middle C in both clefs. Sharp, flat and natural signs, and their cancellation.
- 4 Construction of the major scale, including the position of the tones and semitones. Scales and key signatures of the major keys of C, G, D and F in both clefs, with their tonic triads (root position), degrees (number only), and intervals above the tonic (by number only).
- 5 Some frequently used terms and signs concerning tempo, dynamics, performance directions and articulation marks. Simple questions will be asked about a melody written in either treble or bass clef.

GRADE 2

As in Grade 1, with the addition of:

- 1 Simple time signatures of 2/2, 3/2, 4/2 and 3/8, and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. Triplets, and triplet note groups with rests.
- 2 Extension of the staff to include two ledger lines below and above each staff.
- 3 Relative major and minor keys. Construction of the minor scale (harmonic only). Scales and key signatures of the major keys of A, B \flat and E \flat , and the minor keys of A, E and D, with their tonic triads (root position), degrees (number only), and intervals above the tonic (by number only).
- 4 More terms and signs in common use.

GRADE 3

As in preceding grades, with the addition of:

- 1 Compound time signatures of 6/8, 9/8 and 12/8, and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. The demisemiquaver (32nd note) and its equivalent rest.
- 2 Extension of the staff beyond two ledger lines. Transposition at the octave from the treble clef to the bass clef, and vice versa.
- 3 Scales and key signatures of all major and minor keys up to and including four sharps and flats, including both harmonic and melodic forms of minor scales, with their tonic triads (root position), degrees (number only), and intervals above the tonic (number and type).
- 4 More terms and signs.

GRADE 4

As in preceding grades, with the addition of:

- 1 All simple and compound duple, triple and quadruple time signatures, and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. The breve and its equivalent rest. Double-dotted notes and rests. Duplets.
- 2 Alto clef (C clef centred on 3rd line). Notes in the alto clef in any of the keys set for this grade (see below). Notes of the same pitch written in different clefs (treble, alto, bass) and transposition at the octave from the treble or the bass clef to the alto clef, and vice versa. Double sharp and double flat signs, and their cancellation. Enharmonic equivalents.
- 3 Scales and key signatures of all major and minor keys up to and including five sharps and flats, with both forms of minor scales. Technical names for the notes of the diatonic scale (tonic, supertonic, etc.). Construction of the chromatic scale. All intervals, not exceeding an octave, between any two diatonic notes in any of the keys set for this grade.
- 4 Triads (root position) on the tonic, subdominant and dominant notes in any of the keys set for this grade. Chords in root position on the tonic, subdominant and dominant notes in any of the keys set for this grade (the harmonic form of the scale will be used in minor keys).
- 5 More terms and signs, including the recognition and naming of the trill, turn, upper and lower mordent, acciaccatura and appoggiatura. Questions about a passage of music will include simple related questions about standard orchestral instruments.

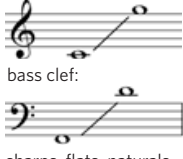
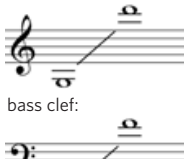
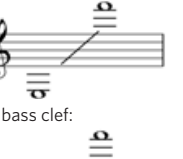
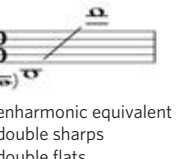
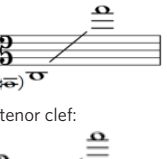
GRADE 5

As in preceding grades, with the addition of:

- 1 Irregular time signatures of 5/4, 7/4, 5/8 and 7/8, and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. Irregular divisions of simple time values.
- 2 Tenor clef (C clef centred on 4th line). The identification of notes in the four clefs in any of the keys set for this grade (see below), and the transposition at the octave of a simple melody from any clef to another. Transposition to concert pitch of a short melody notated for an instrument in B \flat , A or F, and vice versa (the interval of transposition up or down will be given).
- 3 Scales and key signatures of all major and minor keys up to and including six sharps and flats. All simple and compound intervals from any note.
- 4 The root position (a), 1st inversion (b) and 2nd inversion (c) forms of the tonic, supertonic, subdominant and dominant chords in any of the keys set for this grade. The choice of suitable chords at cadential points of a simple melody in the major key of C, G, D or F. Perfect, plagal and imperfect cadences in the major keys of C, G, D or F.
- 5 More terms and signs. The recognition of ornaments, including the replacement of written-out ornamentation with the appropriate signs, but not vice versa. Questions on the types of voice and names of instruments, the clefs they use, instrument family groups and the basic way by which they produce sound, as well as points of general musical observation designed to test the candidate's ability to apply theoretical knowledge to actual music.

Exam content

The following tables show the introduction of elements at each grade. These requirements are presented cumulatively, i.e. once introduced, they apply to all subsequent grades.

Topic	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Clef	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> treble bass 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tenor
Time signatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2/4 3/4 4/4 C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3/8 2/2 C 3/2 4/2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6/8 9/8 12/8 upbeat opening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4/8 6/4 9/4 6/16 9/16 12/16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5/4 7/4 5/8 7/8
Pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> treble clef: bass clef: sharps, flats, naturals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> treble clef: bass clef: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> treble clef: bass clef: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alto clef: enharmonic equivalent double sharps double flats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alto clef: tenor clef: 
Degrees of scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> degrees of scale within one octave and above the tonic: 1st-8th 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> degrees of scale beyond one octave, above the tonic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> degrees of scale above or below the tonic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> technical names: tonic, supertonic, mediant, subdominant, dominant, submediant, leading note 	
Keys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of C, F, G, D 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of B\flat, E\flat, A minor keys of A, E, D and their relative majors relative minors of C, F, G 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of E, A\flat minor keys of C\sharp, F, B, G, C, F\sharp relative majors/minors of all keys set for grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of B, D\flat minor keys of G\sharp, B\flat relative majors/minors of all keys set for this grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> major keys of F\sharp, G\flat minor keys of D\sharp, E\flat relative majors/minors of all keys set for this grade
Scales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all keys set for the grade ascending and descending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all keys set up to and including this grade harmonic minor only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all keys set up to and including this grade melodic and harmonic both required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chromatic scale all keys set up to and including this grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all keys set up to and including this grade
Time values <i>N.B. American equivalents will be shown in a table on the front cover of each paper</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> semiquaver; quaver; crotchet; minim; semibreve dotted quaver; dotted crotchet; dotted minim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dotted semibreve triplet semiquavers; triplet quavers; triplet crotchets; triplet minims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demisemiquavers triplet demisemiquavers dotted semiquaver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> breves double-dotted notes semiquaver, quaver and crotchet duplets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quintuplet; sextuplet
Rests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> semiquaver; quaver; crotchet; minim; semibreve whole-bar rest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dotted quaver; dotted crotchets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demisemiquavers simple or compound time dotted semiquaver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> breves dotted minim rests (6/4 or 9/4 time only) 	
Intervals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> melodic intervals 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8^{ve} in all keys set for the grade above the tonic only semitones and tones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8^{ve} in all keys set up to and including this grade above the tonic only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> major 2nd, minor and major 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th, minor and major 6th, minor and major 7th, perfect 8^{ve} in all keys set up to and including this grade above the tonic only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any diatonic interval: minor 2nd, augmented 2nd, augmented 4th, diminished 4th, augmented 5th, diminished 5th, diminished 7th in all keys set up to and including this grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chromatic intervals: augmented 3rd, diminished 3rd, augmented 6th, diminished 6th, augmented 7th, augmented 8^{ve}, diminished 8^{ve} compound intervals: 9th or compound 2nd, 10th or compound 3rd, 11th or compound 4th, 12th or compound 5th, 13th or compound 6th, 14th or compound 7th, 15th or compound 8^{ve}

Topic	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
Triads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tonic triads in all keys set for this grade with the tonic as the lowest note 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tonic triads in all keys set up to and including this grade with the tonic as the lowest note 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tonic triads in all keys set up to and including this grade with the tonic as the lowest note 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tonic, subdominant, dominant triads in all keys set up to and including this grade in root position 	
Chords				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> primary triads (I, IV, V) in root position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supertonic first and second inversions recognition of perfect, plagal and imperfect cadences
Transposition		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> notes written at the same pitch in treble and bass clefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> octave transposition between treble and bass clefs, up to three ledger lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> octave transposition between all clefs set up to and including this grade, up to four ledger lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> transposition between all clefs set up to and including this grade instruments in F, B\flat or A interval of transposition given with or without key signature
Grouping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grouping and beaming of all notes set for this grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grouping and beaming of all notes and rests set up to and including this grade in simple time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grouping and beaming of all notes and rests set up to and including this grade in simple or compound time 		
Ornaments				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognising signs for trill, (upper) turn, upper mordent, lower mordent, acciaccatura, grace note(s), appoggiatura 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognising written-out ornaments
Instruments				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> string: violin, viola cello, double bass woodwind: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon brass: trumpet, horn, trombone, tuba percussion: timpani, side drum, bass drum, cymbals knowledge of clefs used and broad understanding of range and family percussion: definite or indefinite pitch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> harp; piccolo; cor anglais triangle; tambourine; castanets; tam-tam; xylophone; marimba; glockenspiel; vibraphone; celesta; tubular bells (definite or indefinite pitch only) single reed; double reed transposing/non-transposing
Instrumental directions				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pizzicato (pizz.)/arco; up bow; down bow; slur; con/senza sord./sordini; avec/sans sourdines; sul G 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> una corda; tre corde; pedalling signs; con/senza pedale; mano sinistra (m.s.); mano destra (m.d.); arpeggiation
Voices					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> standard voice-types: soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass broad understanding of range

Topic	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
Terms	Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a tempo accelerando (or accel.) adagio allegretto allegro andante cantabile crescendo (or cresc.) da capo (or D.C.) decrecendo (or decresc.) diminuendo (or dim.) dolce <i>f</i> (forte) <i>ff</i> (fortissimo) fine, al fine legato <i>mf</i> (mezzo forte) moderato <i>mp</i> (mezzo piano) <i>p</i> (piano) <i>pp</i> (pianissimo) rallentando (or rall.) ritardando (or ritard. or rit.) staccato (or stacc.) 	Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> alla marcia allargando con moto con, col dal segno (or D.S.) e, ed espressivo (or espress.) <i>fp</i> (fortepiano) grave grazioso largo lento ma meno meno mosso molto non troppo più più mosso poco, poco a poco presto ritenuto (or riten. or rit.) senza vivace, vivo 	Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> agitato andantino animato ben con forza energico giocoso leggiero maestoso marcato, marc. pesante prestissimo prima, primo risoluto scherzando semplice sempre sforzando, sforzato, sfz, sf simile (or sim.) sostenuto, sost subito, sub. tranquillo triste, tristamente 	Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> affettuoso alla breve amabile appassionato assai come prima comodo, tempo comodo con brio deciso larghetto mesto misterioso ritmico rubato, tempo rubato stringendo French terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> animé douce lent modéré retenu vite 	Italian terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a niente ad libitum, ad lib. attacca cantando con dolore con spirito doloroso largamente morendo perdendosi quasi rinforzando, rf, rfz, rinf. smorzando, smorz. sonoro sotto voce German terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> langsam lebhaft mässig ruhig schnell traurig
Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> crescendo diminuendo slur tie staccato accent pause metronome indications repeat marks C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong accent semi-staccato staccatissimo tenuto 8^{va} C multiple-bar rests volta brackets 			

4. Assessment and marking

Assessment objectives

The following tables describe the level of knowledge and skills required of candidates taking Music Theory exams. They also show the assessment objectives and corresponding learning outcomes. The marking criteria are available on page 17.

Grades 1-3 (RQF Level 1)

Qualification aims

Our Level 1 qualifications in Music Theory are designed to provide learners with a solid foundation in fundamental elements of Western music notation, including pitches, rhythms, keys, time signatures, notational conventions, simple transpositions and common Italian terms. The exact scope of the material covered is laid out in the exam content listed on pages 11-13 of this specification.

Assessment objectives	Learning outcomes
Learners will:	Learners can:
Demonstrate basic factual knowledge of simple music notation within a defined set.	Identify basic elements of music notation, including pitches, key signatures, tonic triads, scales, degrees of the scale and intervals in treble and bass clefs, with a general degree of accuracy.
Demonstrate basic factual knowledge and understanding of commonly occurring musical signs and terms.	Identify, name and explain basic elements of music notation, including dynamics, other musical instructions, and Italian terms relating to tempo and expression, with a general degree of accuracy.
Demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of the processes involved in completing and/or amending musical examples to make them grammatically correct.	Complete musical extracts by adding time signatures, bar lines and rests, and amend them by grouping notes and rests, with a general degree of accuracy.
Demonstrate musical knowledge and understanding in analysing simple melodies and by transposing individual pitches or basic musical fragments.	Identify and describe the meaning of various features of a piece of simple music, and transfer pitches and short melodic fragments between clefs and octaves, with a general degree of accuracy.

Grades 4-5 (RQF Level 2)

Qualification aims

Our Level 2 qualifications in Music Theory are designed to provide learners with a solid foundation in more complex elements of Western music notation, including pitches, rhythms, keys, time signatures, notational conventions, transpositions and common Italian, French and German musical terms. The exact scope of the material covered is laid out in the exam content listed on pages 11-13 of this specification, and builds cumulatively on material learned at Level 1.

Assessment objectives	Learning outcomes
Learners will:	Learners can:
Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of moderately complex music notation within a defined set.	Identify, name and explain elements of more advanced music notation, including pitches, key signatures, scales, technical names of notes in diatonic scales, intervals and chords of I, IV V and (Grade 5 only) II in treble, bass, alto and (Grade 5 only) tenor clefs, with a general degree of accuracy.
Demonstrate factual knowledge and understanding of less commonly occurring musical signs, including ornaments, musical terms, and the ranges and characteristics of standard orchestral instruments.	Identify, name and explain more advanced elements of music notation, including dynamics, ornaments, other musical instructions, and Italian, French and German musical terms relating to tempo and expression, with a general degree of accuracy.
Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the processes involved in completing and/or amending incomplete musical examples of moderate difficulty to make them grammatically correct.	Complete musical extracts of moderate difficulty by adding time signatures, bar lines and rests; grouping notes and rests; and amending musical passages in notes of half or twice the value, or from compound to simple time and vice versa, with a general degree of accuracy.
Demonstrate musical knowledge and understanding in decoding moderately complex musical extracts, and by transposing more complex music.	Identify and describe the meaning of various features of a piece of moderately complex music, and transfer short melodic fragments between clefs, octaves and keys, with a general degree of accuracy.

Mark allocation

Marks are allocated for each section, as shown in the tables below. The marks allocated for each section are printed in brackets on the right hand side of each candidate's exam paper.

Grades 1-3		Grades 4-5	
Section number	Maximum marks	Section number	Maximum marks
1	15	1	10
2	15	2	10
3	15	3	15
4	10	4	10
5	10	5	10
6	5	6	10
7	5	7	10
Total	75 marks	Total	75 marks

Result categories

The result categories for Music Theory exams are set as follows. Music Theory exams are marked out of a total of 75.

Result category	Mark band
Distinction	65-75
Merit	60-64
Pass	50-59
Below Pass	0-49

Marking criteria

The following tables show the marking criteria for Music Theory grades.

Grades 1-3	Grades 4-5
Learners are assessed on:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rhythm ▪ Pitch ▪ Keys and scales ▪ Intervals ▪ Tonic triads ▪ Terms and signs ▪ Music in context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rhythm ▪ Pitch ▪ Keys and scales ▪ Intervals ▪ Triads and chords ▪ Terms, signs and instruments ▪ Music in context

Grades 1-5	Marking criteria
Distinction 65-75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highly accurate with excellent attention to detail ▪ The required basic elements of music are fully grasped ▪ Confident use of simple logical and mathematical concepts
Merit 60-64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Largely accurate with good attention to detail ▪ The required basic elements of music are mainly grasped ▪ Strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses
Pass 50-59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generally accurate but some lapses in attention to detail ▪ The required basic elements of music are generally grasped ▪ Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Below Pass 1-49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inaccuracies throughout with little attention to detail ▪ The required basic elements of music are not grasped ▪ Weaknesses outweigh strengths ▪ Some items incomplete
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No work offered

5. After the exam

Results

All candidates receive a mark form which gives a breakdown of the marks awarded for each question and the total number of marks; successful candidates also receive a certificate that shows the qualification title as well as the subject and level that they have been examined in. Assessments are not returned after marking. We aim to release results for Music Theory grades in line with the schedules on our website at www.abrsm.org/results; however, some results may take longer. 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.

Exam feedback

Specific guidance for questions about the administration of the exam or the results awarded is available on our website. We also welcome feedback about other matters. All feedback is logged and plays a valuable part in our quality assurance procedures. For further information on our processes and deadlines for submitting feedback, please visit www.abrsm.org/send-exam-feedback.

6. Other assessments

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

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

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

Practical Grades

ABRSM Practical Grades are our long-standing progressive qualifications that test all-round musical skills. They are available from Initial Grade to Grade 8 (nine grades). Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age and do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s) in the same subject. Full information is available at www.abrsm.org/exams and in the qualification specification, available at www.abrsm.org/specifications.

About Practical Grades

Each Practical Grade has been carefully designed to test all-round musical skills – technique, notation, listening and musical perception – as well as knowledge, understanding and creativity. These creative skills are demonstrated through the playing/singing of repertoire and completing supporting tests. Collectively, these skills enable candidates progress to higher grades, further education, employment and other qualifications in the creative arts sector.

The exams are made up of six components:

- three Pieces/Songs – selected by candidates from set lists and played/sung as separate items
- technical work – Scales and arpeggios/Unaccompanied song/Studies, as required for the individual subject
- Sight-reading* (Quick Study for Jazz subjects)
- Aural tests

The exams are held as face-to-face assessments and are led by an examiner. Examiners ask a selection of the technical work in the exam. Candidates can prepare for the Sight-reading and Aural test components, based on published parameters and sample materials, but they will not have seen or heard the tests given in the exam before.

Marks for each component are differently weighted and are awarded to each component individually.

Those entering for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 Practical Grades exam must first have passed ABRSM Grade 5 (or above) in Music Theory, Practical Musicianship or a Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument; for full details, including a list of accepted alternatives, see www.abrsm.org/prerequisite.

*This component includes a transposition test for Horn, Trumpet and Organ at Grades 6–8, and a figured bass realisation test for Harpsichord.

Performance Grades

ABRSM Performance Grades are our new progressive qualifications that allow learners to focus on and showcase their performance skills. They are available from Grade 1 to Grade 8. Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age and do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s) in the same subject. Full information, including the qualification specification, is available at www.abrsm.org/performancegrades.

About Performance Grades

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

The exams are made up of five components:

- four Pieces/Songs - three selected by candidates from set lists and one that is their own choice
- an assessment of the performance as a whole

Marks for each component are weighted evenly and are awarded to each component individually.

The exams are currently offered as remote assessments only. Candidates' performances are video recorded in one continuous take and submitted to ABRSM for assessment. The candidate/Applicant is responsible for organising a suitable venue and any equipment needed to run the exam.

Those entering for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 Performance Grades exam must first have passed ABRSM Grade 5 (or above) in Music Theory, Practical Musicianship or a Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument; for full details, including a list of accepted alternatives, see www.abrsm.org/prerequisite.

Practical Musicianship

ABRSM Practical Musicianship exams are available for Grades 1–8 and are open to singers and instrumentalists. Candidates may be entered for any grade at any age and do not need to have taken any earlier grade(s). The full syllabus is available at www.abrsm.org/practicalmusicianship.

About Practical Musicianship

Musicianship is a broad concept that covers a complex range of musical abilities. For the purposes of this syllabus, it is loosely defined as the ability to 'think in sound'. This occurs when a musician is able to produce music which they perceive internally and in the imagination, whether through playing by ear, singing, reading from notation, or through improvisation.

ABRSM's Practical Musicianship grades encourage learners to develop their ability to 'think in sound' and perform spontaneously. While Practical Grades and Performance Grades focus on aspects of performance and/or supporting tests that are prepared in detail in advance, here the playing (or singing) is in response to immediate challenges and stimuli, presented both aurally and via notation.

The exams also cover the following key skills:

- the ability to internalise music and to reproduce it
- interpreting written music with a minimum of preparation
- exploring the possibilities inherent in a short motif
- the ability to detect differences between what is heard and what is written.

In developing their musicianship skills, learners will be gaining the understanding as well as the expressive and interpretative skills needed to master the musical language of the repertoire they are learning.

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 Practical Musicianship, Music Theory or a Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument before they can enter for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 Practical Grades or Performance Grades exam.

ARSM

The ARSM diploma is available to instrumentalists and singers of any age. It is the first of our diploma qualifications and provides musicians with an opportunity to develop their performance technique and interpretative skills, while focusing on programme building and extending their repertoire.

Key features

- Candidates present a balanced and varied programme, as follows:
 - the programme lasts 30 minutes
 - at least 20 minutes of the music is chosen from the repertoire list
 - the remaining programme time may be made up of own-choice repertoire, of Grade 8 standard or above
- There are no additional supporting tests or other requirements
- There are two assessment methods available:
 - in person - held at the same venues during the same time periods as ABRSM's Practical Grades
 - remote - a video recorded performance submitted to ABRSM for assessment
- ARSM is a letter-bearing qualification. Candidates awarded the diploma can use the letters ARSM (Associate of the Royal Schools of Music) after their name.

Those entering for an ARSM diploma must first have passed ABRSM Grade 8 (or a listed alternative). Full details of the exam and entry requirements are available in the qualification specification at www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma.

We update our syllabuses from time to time. Advance notice of any changes will be given at www.abrsm.org/exams. Please refer to the website for the most recent version of the ARSM syllabus.

DipABRSM, LRSM, FRSM (Music Performance)

These diplomas are available to instrumentalists and singers of any age. Through a combination of live and written components, candidates demonstrate their performance, communication and research skills, as well as their musical knowledge and understanding. Each diploma serves as a stepping stone to the next level.

Key features

- Candidates:
 - present a recital programme
 - submit programme notes (DipABRSM & LRSM) or a written submission (FRSM)
 - undertake a viva voce, with questions covering the recital, programme notes/written submission as well as other aspects of performance
 - perform a short piece of unaccompanied and previously unseen music after five minutes' preparation time (quick study)
- These diploma exams take place at specific venues and times of the year
- Each diploma is a letter-bearing qualification. Candidates awarded a diploma can use the letters DipABRSM (Diploma of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music), LRSM (Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music) or FRSM (Fellowship of the Royal Schools of Music) after their name as appropriate.

Those entering for one of these diplomas must fulfil a specific ABRSM prerequisite (or a listed alternative). Full details of the exam and entry requirements are available at www.abrsm.org/diplomas and the qualifications specification is available at www.abrsm.org/specifications.

We update our syllabuses from time to time. Advance notice of any changes will be given at www.abrsm.org/exams. Please refer to the website for the most recent versions of the diploma syllabuses.

Further diploma exams

DipABRSM, LRSM and FRSM diplomas are also available for Instrumental/Vocal Teaching and Music Direction. Full details are available at www.abrsm.org/diplomas.