

MUSIC PERFORMANCE GRADES



PERCUSSION 1990–2019 Syllabus (Section 3)

valid to 31 December 2021 only

This syllabus is specific to Percussion and is part of the main *Qualification Specification: Music Performance Grades*. The remainder of that specification provides other relevant information for those preparing for Performance Grades exams and applies to all subjects (instruments). It can be found at www.abrsm.org/performancegrades and should be read when preparing for an exam.

Qualification Specification: Performance Grades

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3. Percussion Performance Grades syllabus

Introducing the qualification

Performance Grades are new qualifications from ABRSM, introduced in 2020 to run alongside our long-standing and respected 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 6–8. 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, 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.

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 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.

Grades 1–8: requirements and information

This syllabus, and the repertoire lists within it, is valid for exams until 31 December 2021 only. No extension or overlap period applies beyond this date.

The syllabus is made available for candidates who were expecting to take an ABRSM Practical Grades exam in Percussion during 2020 using the expiring 1990–2019 syllabus. As exams were disrupted due to COVID-19, and the situation for 2021 remains uncertain, the provision of this syllabus now allows a candidate to take a Performance Grades exam using the repertoire they have prepared from the old Practical syllabus. The Performance Grades exam using this syllabus should be taken at the earliest opportunity available in 2021.

Any Performance Grades candidates who have not previously been preparing for a Practical Grades exam (1990–2019 syllabus) should follow the new [Percussion syllabus](#), available for four subjects – Snare Drum, Timpani, Tuned Percussion and Percussion (Combined).

This section provides a summary of the most important points that teachers and candidates need to know when taking ABRSM Performance Grades for Percussion (1990–2019 syllabus). 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 making an exam booking.

Instruments

Candidates are required to perform on one tuned percussion instrument and, at their choice, either timpani or snare drum. See further programming requirements within the 'Selecting repertoire' section on pages 4-5.

The instruments used should be acoustic (digital instruments are not allowed). Examiners apply the marking criteria (which include the assessment of pitch, tone, and musical shaping) to assess musical outcomes without reference to the specific attributes of the instrument.

Sticks/mallets: Candidates are expected to use the correct sticks and mallets for the instruments they have chosen to play.

Tuned Percussion

Instruments: Any one of the following instruments may be used in exams:

- xylophone
- marimba
- vibraphone (with motor off)
- glockenspiel (Grades 1 and 2 only)

Candidates should not alter a piece at any grade to suit the range of an instrument.

Snare Drum

Grip: Candidates may use either traditional or matched grip.

Rolls: The different roll notations should be played according to the guidelines contained in the exam books published by ABRSM.

Timpani

Number of drums: The minimum number of drums required are two at Grades 1-4 and three at Grades 5-8. Some pieces from Grade 4 require more drums. The minimum and maximum number of drums required for each grade are shown in the table below.

	Minimum no. of drums	Maximum no. of drums
Grades 1-3	2	2
Grade 4	2	3
Grade 5	3	3
Grades 6-8	3	4

Types of drums: Hand- or pedal-tuned drums may be used. In order to accommodate hand-tuned drums, tuning changes in the studies and pieces have been arranged to occur at pauses so they can be negotiated as smoothly as possible.

Rolls: The different roll notations should be played according to the guidelines contained in the exam books published by ABRSM.

Damping: At Grades 1–3, candidates may omit damping crotchet and quaver rests; longer rests and any rests at the end of a piece or study should be damped. From Grade 4, rests should be damped wherever feasible.

Tuning: Tuning should be completed before the exam recording is started. Once the performance of the programme has begun, the candidate is responsible for any tuning adjustments that may be needed (all grades). Timpanists should provide their own fixed-pitch sources, and these may only be used before the beginning of each piece.

Selecting repertoire

Number of pieces: Candidates present four pieces in one continuous performance. As shown in the table below, they choose three pieces from the syllabus – one piece (or set combination) from the Tuned Percussion list as well as the Study and a piece from the set items for their *other* chosen instrument (i.e. Snare Drum or Timpani). The fourth piece is for Tuned Percussion and can be from the repertoire list or a piece of the candidate’s choice. Overall, two instruments are played with two pieces performed on each. The pieces can be performed in any order. See further programming requirements within this ‘Selecting repertoire’ section.

Instrument	Piece choice
Tuned Percussion	Piece (or set combination) from list for the grade
Snare Drum or Timpani (at candidate’s choice)	Study for the grade Piece from list for the grade
Tuned Percussion	Own-choice piece (may be from list for the grade)

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

- the piece should be at the same standard, or above, as repertoire set for the grade being taken (prior approval from ABRSM is not needed, and can’t be given)
- the piece may be chosen from the repertoire list set for the grade (performing all four pieces from the lists gives no advantage)
- the piece should exist in a published edition (either in print or downloadable), which candidates should indicate on the programme form
- the piece should not last less than the following timings for each grade (unless the overall programme time would be exceeded; see ‘Programme times’):

	Grade							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Minimum duration (mm:ss)	00:25	00:30	00:35	00:45	01:00	01:30	02:00	03:00

The other programming requirements described in this ‘Selecting repertoire’ section should also be met.

Programme times: The overall performance, including breaks between pieces, should not exceed the maximum programme time set for the grade, as follows:

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

Accompaniment (Tuned percussion)*: In all grades, a selection of the tuned percussion exam pieces published by ABRSM are provided with optional piano accompaniments. For any of the tuned percussion pieces, candidates are free to use a piano accompaniment contained in any other published edition, provided it matches the main features and extent of the solo part. The own-choice piece for tuned percussion may also be accompanied.

Candidates provide their own accompanist(s) who may be their teacher. If necessary, an accompanist may simplify any part of the accompaniment, as long as the result is musical.

Composers: Up to two pieces by the same composer may be performed.

Repertoire lists: The repertoire lists are the same as for ABRSM Practical Grades (1990–2019 syllabus). Candidates may not present the same repertoire (in full or individual pieces) for the same grade of both qualifications, irrespective of when the exams are taken.

Exam music & editions: All the exam music has been specially composed or arranged and is published by ABRSM in four books for each instrument (Tuned Percussion, Timpani, Snare Drum: Grades 1–2, 3–4, 5–6 and 7–8). No other editions of any of the set pieces may be used. NB the ABRSM books contain some additional pieces that are *not* set for the exams.

Repeats: Da capo and dal segno indications should be followed but other repeats may or may not be included at candidates' discretion (in order to achieve a musically satisfying performance). The maximum programme time should also be taken into consideration when deciding whether to include repeats (see 'Programme times').

Preparing for the exam

Programme form & announcement: Candidates should complete a programme form and show it to the camera at the start of the exam recording. The following information is required and should be given in the order the pieces will be performed:

- Full piece information, including title and, as applicable, larger work title, movement/section number and catalogue number (e.g. Opus, BWV etc.).
- The composers' names, where applicable.
- The list number for the tuned percussion and snare drum/timpani pieces chosen from the syllabus repertoire lists (and for the own-choice piece if also chosen from the lists).
- For own-choice repertoire, the following additional information is needed unless the piece is chosen from the syllabus repertoire lists:
 - the arranger's/transcriber's name, where applicable
 - details of the edition used (title and publisher)
- The validity period (i.e. 1990–2019) of the syllabus repertoire lists that the pieces have been chosen from.

* Given COVID-19 social-distancing requirements, we are temporarily relaxing the live accompaniment requirement for exams. Details of the options available can be found at www.abrsm.org/performancegrades.

A form that can be printed and completed is provided on page 7. Alternatively, the required information can be written on a blank piece of paper.

As well as showing the form to the camera, candidates should show the opening of their own-choice piece and announce the following information before beginning their performance:

- Name, subject (instrument) and grade.
- Piece title, composer name and list information (as applicable) for each piece, in the order they will be performed.

If preferred, a Responsible Adult present may show the form and music to camera and make the introductory announcement, as this does not form part of the performance.

Interpreting the score: Printed editorial suggestions such as hand indications, metronome marks, etc. do not need to be strictly observed. Whether the piece contains musical indications or not, candidates are encouraged to interpret the score in a musical and stylistic way. For pieces in a jazz style, candidates may add slight embellishment, as stylistically appropriate, but not include extensive improvisation. Examiners' marking will be determined by how candidates' decisions contribute to the musical outcome of each individual piece and to the performance as a whole.

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.

Page-turns: Candidates need to manage any page-turns appropriately to avoid any adverse effect on the performance as a whole, which examiners will be assessing. Candidates (and accompanists) may use an extra copy of the music or a photocopy of a section of the piece (but see 'Photocopies' below) to help with page-turns. They may also use a page-turner (prior permission is not required; the turner may be the teacher).

Photocopies & downloads: Performing from unauthorised photocopies (or other kinds of copies) or illegal downloads of copyright editions is not allowed. ABRSM may withhold the exam result where we have evidence of an illegal copy (or copies) being used. 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. In all other cases, application should be made to the copyright holder before any copy is made.

Percussion repertoire lists

The repertoire lists can be found in the Practical Grades Percussion (1990–2019) syllabus at www.abrsm.org/media/63003/percussionsyllabuscomplete15.pdf

Programme form – Performance Grades

Please show this completed form and your own-choice piece/song to the camera, and announce yourself (name, subject, grade) and your pieces/songs (titles, composers, list information) in the order you will be performing them, before beginning your performance.



Candidate name _____ Subject (instrument) _____ Grade _____

Piece/Song	Title	Composer	List*	Number*
1				
2				
3				
4				

Year of syllabus repertoire lists _____ Break (if taking) between pieces ___ and ___

Related instrument(s) (if used) _____

** Write 'OC' for your own-choice piece/song (unless from the repertoire lists); leave 'List' blank if a Snare Drum, Timpani or Tuned Percussion candidate*

Additional information for own-choice piece/song (unless chosen from the repertoire lists)

Piece/ Song no.	Arranger (if applicable)	Book title	Publisher
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Programme form – Performance Grades



Please show this completed form and your own-choice piece/song to the camera, and announce yourself (name, subject, grade) and your pieces/songs (titles, composers, list information) in the order you will be performing them, before beginning your performance.

Candidate name _____

Subject (instrument) _____ Grade _____

Piece/Song	Title	Composer	List*	Number*
1				
<hr/>				
2				
<hr/>				
3				
<hr/>				
4				
<hr/>				

Year of syllabus repertoire lists _____ Break (if taking) between pieces ____ and ____

Related instrument(s) (if used) _____

Additional information for own-choice piece/song (unless chosen from the repertoire lists)

Piece/ Song no.	Arranger (if applicable)	Book title	Publisher
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