

PERCUSSION REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

Subject Code: 44

This syllabus is valid from 1990 until further notice.

This section provides a summary of the most important points that teachers and candidates need to know when taking ABRSM Percussion exams. Further details, as well as administrative information relating to the exams, are given in ABRSM's Information & Regulations (available at www.abrsm.org/regulations) which should be read before an exam booking is made.

Entering for an exam

Eligibility: There are eight grades for Percussion and candidates may be entered in any grade irrespective of age and without previously having taken any other grade in Percussion. Candidates for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 exam must already have passed ABRSM Grade 5 (or above) in Music Theory, Practical Musicianship or a solo Jazz subject; for full details, including a list of accepted alternatives, see Regulation 1d at www.abrsm.org/regulations.

Access: ABRSM endeavours to make its exams as accessible as possible to all candidates, regardless of sensory impairments, learning difficulties or particular physical needs. There is a range of alternative tests and formats as well as sets of guidelines for candidates with particular access needs (see www.abrsm.org/specificneeds). Where a candidate's needs are not covered by the guidelines, each case is considered on an individual basis. Further information is available from the Access Co-ordinator (accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk).

Venues: Percussion exams are held at Visits (i.e. premises provided by the Applicant and visited by the examiner). They may be held independently of other exams or as part of a larger Visit that includes other subjects/grades. The percussion instruments must be set up in advance so that each exam can begin at the scheduled time. For full details about Visits, see Regulation 7 at www.abrsm.org/regulations, in particular the requirement to provide a suitable piano for the Aural tests.

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

Instruments

Candidates are required to perform on one tuned percussion instrument *and*, at their choice, either timpani or snare drum.

Tuned percussion: Candidates may play the requirements on one of the following:

- xylophone
- marimba
- vibraphone (*with motor off*)
- glockenspiel (*Grades 1 and 2 only; the instrument's range must be sufficient to cover the range of the scale requirements and the chosen piece*)

Timpani: Hand- or pedal-tuned drums may be used. The different roll notations should be played according to the guidelines contained in the exam books published by ABRSM. Candidates may, if they wish, omit damping crotchet and quaver rests in Grades 1–3, although they should damp the longer rests and at the end of a piece or study. From Grade 4, rests should be damped whenever feasible. 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.

Snare drum: Candidates may use either traditional or matched grip. The different roll notations should be played according to the guidelines contained in the exam books published by ABRSM.

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

Elements of the exam

All ABRSM graded Percussion exams comprise the following elements: Scales and arpeggios; two Pieces; one Study; Sight-reading; and Aural tests. In all grades, marks are allocated as follows:

Tuned percussion

Scales and arpeggios	21
Piece 1	30

Timpani or Snare drum

Study	30
Piece 2	30
Sight-reading	21
Aural tests	18
Total	150

Marking scheme: 100 marks are required for a Pass, 120 for a Merit and 130 for a Distinction. A Pass in each individual section is not required to pass overall. See pp. 114–115 for the marking criteria used by examiners.

Pieces

Programme planning: At each grade, candidates must present two pieces and one study. The first piece (or set combination) must be chosen from the Tuned Percussion list. The second piece and the study must be from the set items for their *other* chosen instrument (i.e. Timpani or Snare Drum). In the exam, candidates should inform the examiner which pieces they are performing, and they are welcome to use the form on p. 117 for this purpose.

Accompaniment (Tuned percussion): In all grades, a selection of the tuned percussion exam pieces published by ABRSM are provided with optional piano accompaniments. If choosing to play these pieces accompanied, candidates must provide their own accompanist, who may remain in the exam room only while accompanying. The candidate's teacher may act as accompanist (examiners will not). 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.

Exam music & editions: All the exam music has been specially composed or arranged and is published by ABRSM in four exam 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 and exercises that are *not* set for the exams.

Interpreting the score: Printed editorial suggestions such as hand indications, metronome marks etc. need not be strictly observed. Whether the piece contains musical indications or not, candidates are always encouraged to interpret the score in a stylistically appropriate manner. Ultimately, examiners' marking will be determined by consideration of pitch, time, tone, shape and performance, and how control of these contributes to the overall musical outcome.

Repeats: All da capo and dal segno indications should be observed but all other repeats (including first-time bars) should be omitted unless they are very brief (i.e. of a few bars) or unless the syllabus specifies otherwise.

Performing from memory: Candidates are free to perform any of their pieces from memory; in such cases they must ensure that a copy of the music is available for the examiner to refer to if necessary. No additional marks are awarded for playing from memory.

Page-turns: Examiners will be understanding if a page-turn causes a lack of continuity during a piece, and this will not affect the marking. A variety of solutions for awkward page-turns exists, including the use of an additional copy of the music or a photocopy of a section of the piece (but see 'Photocopies' below). In cases where candidates believe there is no solution to a particularly awkward page-turn, they may apply to bring a page-turner to the exam. The request must be made to the Syllabus Department (syllabus@abrs.ac.uk) no later than the closing date for entry, and details of the piece, edition and nature of the difficulty should be given. If permission is granted, a confirmation letter will be issued which must be taken to the exam as verification. Examiners are unable to help with page-turning. In a Grade 8 exam, a candidate's accompanist is permitted to bring a page-turner to assist with page-turns in the piano part (prior permission is not required).

Photocopies: Performing from unauthorized photocopies (or other kinds of copies) of copyright editions is not allowed. ABRSM may withhold the exam result where it has 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, and evidence of permission received should be brought to the exam.

Scales and arpeggios (*Tuned percussion*)

Examiners will usually ask for at least one of each type of scale/arpeggio etc. required at each grade. When asking for requirements, examiners will specify only:

- the key or starting note
- the pattern for scales and arpeggios (e.g. crotchet beat on tonic, even notes, even notes with repeated tonic)

All scales and arpeggios should:

- be played from memory
- ascend and descend according to the specified range (and pattern)
- be played with the repeat indications (as printed in the syllabus) duly noted and observed
- be played without undue accentuation and at a pace that is consistent with accuracy and distinctness

Candidates are free to start at any octave, provided the required ranges are covered. Arpeggios and dominant sevenths are required in root position only.

Sight-reading

Candidates will be asked to play a short piece of music which they have not previously seen. The examiner will choose a test for *either* tuned percussion *or* the other instrument being used in the exam. Candidates will be given up to half a minute in which to look through and, if they wish, try out all or any part of the test before they are required to play it for assessment. For practice purposes, specimen sight-reading tests are included in the exam books published by ABRSM.

Aural tests

The requirements are the same for all subjects. Full details of the Aural tests are given on pp. 94–99. If they prefer, candidates may choose to *play* (instead of clap) the pulse-clapping test (Grades 1–3).

In the exam

Examiners: Generally, there will be one examiner in the exam room; however, for training and quality assurance purposes, a second examiner may sometimes be present. Examiners may ask to look at the music before or after the performance of a piece. They may also decide to stop the performance of a piece when they have heard enough to form a judgment. Examiners will not issue, or comment on, a candidate's result; instead, the mark form (and certificate for successful candidates) will be issued by ABRSM after the exam.

Tuning (Timpani): In Grades 1 and 2, the teacher may tune the timpani (or advise on tuning). In all other grades candidates must tune the timpani themselves. Candidates should also provide their own tuning forks or other pitch sources, and these may be used only before the beginning of each piece. Examiners are unable to help with tuning.

Order of the exam: The individual sections of the exam may be undertaken in any order, at the candidate's choice.

(continued overleaf)

Assessment

The tables on pp. 114–115 show the marking criteria used by examiners. These criteria (newly revised and amended) have been in use in exams from January 2014. In each element of the exam, ABRSM operates the principle of marking from the required pass mark positively or negatively, rather than awarding marks by deduction from the maximum or addition from zero. In awarding marks, examiners balance the extent to which the qualities and skills listed on pp. 114–115 (broadly categorized by pitch, time, tone, shape and performance) are demonstrated and contribute towards the overall musical outcome.

Obtaining exam music

ABRSM's Percussion exam books are available from music retailers as well as online, including at the ABRSM music shop: www.abrsm.org/shop. Candidates are advised to obtain their music well in advance of the exam in case of any delays with items not kept in stock by retailers.