

ARSM

(Associate of the Royal Schools of Music)

Qualification Specification: ARSM

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This September 2020 edition contains updated information to cover the introduction of a remotely-assessed option for taking the ARSM exam. There are no changes to the existing exam content and requirements.

Throughout this document, the term 'instrument' is used to include 'voice' and 'piece' is used to include song.

1. Introduction

About ABRSM

At ABRSM we aim to support learners and teachers in every way we can. One way we do this is through the provision of high quality and respected music qualifications. These exams provide clear goals, reliable and consistent marking, and guidance for future learning. They are a tried and tested way to inspire musical achievement and, with backing from four Royal Schools of Music in the UK, are valued and trusted around the world.

We offer a comprehensive portfolio of qualifications and assessments for a range of instruments (including singing) and genres, as well as for Music Theory and Practical Musicianship. Our syllabuses are based on core musical skills – listening, performing, reading, writing, musical knowledge and understanding, and improvising. Together these skills give learners a good foundation for their musical development and a range of different musical activities.

Taking an exam is an exciting challenge with many benefits for learners. There's the boost to motivation which comes from working towards an exam. There's an opportunity to discover and perform some fantastic music and to build new skills. And there's the sense of achievement which comes from successfully reaching a musical goal.

We do everything we can to make the exam experience positive and rewarding. We work closely with specialists, teachers and examiners to provide syllabuses of the highest quality with a wide variety of pieces and songs to choose from. We train our friendly, expert examiners to ensure that all candidates are rewarded and recognised for their musical achievements during the assessment. Using our clear, easy-to-understand marking criteria examiners can assess all candidates reliably, objectively and consistently. Finally, candidates receive a mark form containing valuable feedback, with a celebratory certificate for everyone who passes.

Whether you're a learner or teacher, we hope our syllabuses inspire and support your music learning or teaching. We wish you every success for your musical journey!

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.

Who we are

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

Find out more at www.abrsm.org.

About this qualification specification

What it covers

This specification provides all the relevant requirements and information teachers, candidates, parents and organisations need in order to prepare for the following qualification – ABRSM Level 4 Diploma in Music Performance (ARSM). 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.

Document structure

This specification applies to all subjects (instruments) the ARSM diploma is available for. Section 3 is the syllabus, which contains the detailed exam requirements and the list of subjects available. Repertoire lists specific to individual subjects can be found separately at www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma.

Validity of this specification

This specification is valid from September 2020. The separate repertoire lists for each subject have been in use since 2017 and remain unchanged.

We may update this specification from time to time, but we 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. The latest version of this specification will be available from www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma.

About this qualification

Qualification objectives

ARSM (Associate of the Royal Schools of Music) is a performance-focussed diploma and is 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. It provides motivation and structure to learners wishing to hone and refine their performance skills.

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

Who the qualification is for

This qualification is intended for learners who have already passed Grade 8 and are interested in developing their performance skills holistically. Candidates may be entered at any age, but those entering must fulfil the prerequisite detailed on page 10.

The syllabus has been designed to suit and appeal to candidates of different ages and interests. In order to provide flexibility when creating a musical programme, candidates are able to include some repertoire of their own choice (of an appropriate standard).

We are committed to providing all candidates with fair access to our assessments by putting in place access arrangements and reasonable adjustments where required. The ARSM qualification is particularly accessible as there are no written or spoken elements and no supporting tests.

Structure

ARSM 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 diplomas and other qualifications in the creative arts sector.

Candidates present a 30-minute performance of a balanced and varied programme, where at least 20 minutes of music is chosen from the ARSM repertoire list and up to 10 minutes of music can be own-choice repertoire (of Grade 8 standard or above). For certain instruments, one work can be performed on a related instrument. The performance of the pieces receives one overall mark and an additional mark is awarded for the performance as a whole.

Progression route

The ARSM diploma is progressive, in level of demand, from ABRSM's two suites of graded music exams – Practical Music and Music Performance. When progressing from either route, 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.

After ARSM, learners may wish to progress to the DipABRSM (Music Performance) and the higher Licentiate (LRSM) and Fellowship (FRSM) levels. For these qualifications, candidates demonstrate their performance, communication and research skills, as well as their musical knowledge and understanding, through a combination of live and written components. As candidates move through the higher diplomas they will find that the repertoire becomes more demanding, the exam time lengthens, and the challenge of the requirements, and the scope and length of the written work, increase. DipABRSM progresses to LRSM level and LRSM to FRSM. Further details of these qualifications can be found at www.abrsm.org/diplomas.

Prerequisite

A pass at ABRSM Grade 8 is required in either Music Performance or Practical Music before learners can enter for an ARSM exam. The Grade 8 must be in the instrument being presented, or one that is closely related to it.

Regulation (UK)

Our regulators

ARSM and our other higher-level qualifications (diplomas), as well as ABRSM's Music Performance, Practical Music and Music Theory grades 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 <https://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

Regulated qualification details

Qualification titles

The table below shows the regulated title and qualification number of the ARSM diploma. Further information can be found at <https://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

| Qualification Number | Qualification Title | ABRSM title* |
|----------------------|---|--------------|
| 603/0677/4 | ABRSM Level 4 Diploma in Music Performance (ARSM) | ARSM |

* Throughout this document, 'ARSM' is used in place of the full qualification title

Qualification size

The table below describes the size of the ARSM qualification by showing the amount of time that a candidate would typically need to spend preparing for it:

- 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).

| Guided Learning Hours* (GLH) | Total Qualification Time* (TQT) | Credits |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| 54 | 900 | 90 |

* 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 this qualification, 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 the ARSM qualification on the RQF and the EQF.

| Qualification | RQF Level | EQF Level |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| ARSM | Level 4 | Level 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 qualification covered by this specification is 'ABRSM Level 4 Diploma in Music Performance (ARSM)'. For ease of reading, 'ARSM' is used in place of the full qualification title throughout the remainder of this document.

2. ARSM diploma

Syllabuses

Syllabus repertoire validity

The repertoire lists for each subject are valid for ARSM diplomas from 2017 until further notice. The current repertoire lists for each subject are available at www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma.

Syllabus amendments

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

The next syllabus

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

Exam Regulations

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

Malpractice and maladministration

We 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 take any form of malpractice or maladministration very seriously.

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

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

Entry requirements

There are no lower or upper age limits. Candidates must already have passed ABRSM Grade 8 (Performance or Practical) in the instrument being presented. We accept a number of alternative qualifications in place of an ABRSM Grade 8, as shown in the first table below. We also accept Grade 8 on an instrument closely related to that being presented for ARSM, as shown in the second table below.

| Alternatives to ABRSM Grade 8 | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Grade 8 (practical) from | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trinity College London • London College of Music • Music Teachers' Board • Guildhall School of Music & Drama • Royal Irish Academy of Music • Dublin Institute of Technology Conservatory of Music & Drama • Australian Music Examinations Board • University of South Africa |
| Grade 9 (practical) from | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Royal Conservatory of Music [Canada] |

Please note that:

- We will only accept qualifications in classical music performance.
- We will only accept the qualifications listed above; it will not be possible to substitute qualifications or experience that may be at the same or a higher level.
- Candidates presenting one of the above alternative qualifications do not need to have a theory qualification.

Related instruments accepted

Piano – Harpsichord – Organ

Violin – Viola

Soprano Saxophone – Alto Saxophone – Tenor Saxophone – Baritone Saxophone

Trumpet – Cornet (B♭ Cornet or E♭ Soprano Cornet) – Flugelhorn

Trombone – Bass Trombone

Baritone – Euphonium – Tuba

Harp (Pedal) – Harp (Non-pedal)

Supporting documentation

We may request a copy of the certificate or other supporting documentation. If documentation cannot be provided when requested, or if a candidate is found to not have one of the specific qualifications listed above, the exam entry will be rejected without refund of the fee.

Exam booking

Details of exam dates, locations (for Public Venues and Private Visits), 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 putting in place access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. Guidelines for candidates with specific needs are available at www.abrsm.org/specificneeds. Where a candidate's needs are not covered by the guidelines, each case is considered individually.

ARSM has no supporting tests, or anything that requires candidates to respond to questions from an examiner, so extra-time allowances are not normally needed. However, if a candidate has access requirements that we or the examiner should be aware of, please contact our Access Co-ordinator (accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk) before booking the exam with the relevant details. We will then liaise with the Applicant, the examiner and the exam venue (where applicable) to ensure that all appropriate arrangements are made.

Applicants are also welcome to contact the Access Co-ordinator before booking an exam, for further information or to discuss arrangements.

Deaf and hearing-impaired candidates are welcome to bring a sign-language interpreter. We do not need prior notification of this.

Exam content

ARSM is a performance-only exam and consists of two components – a performance of a programme of repertoire and an assessment of the performance as a whole. Information on how marks are allocated is given on page 19.

How the exam works

ARSM exams are delivered in two ways:

- *In-person exams*, where the candidate performs to one of our examiners.
- *Remotely-assessed exams*, where a video recording of the candidate's performance is assessed by one of our examiners.

In-person exams

Venues, instruments & equipment

At ABRSM Public Venues:

- A suitable upright or grand piano will be provided.
 - We can't arrange for candidates to practise before the exam, but examiners will recognise that candidates may be unfamiliar with the instrument.
 - Candidates are encouraged to take a few moments to try out the piano before beginning their performance.
- A music stand will be provided, although candidates are welcome to bring their own if they prefer.
- A chair/stool will be provided, e.g. for cellists (double bassists should provide their own stool if required).
- Candidates must provide any other equipment they need.

At Private Visits (i.e. premises provided by the Visit Organiser):

- A suitable piano must be provided, if needed.
 - A digital piano may be used, provided it has a clearly recognisable piano tone (a single piano 'voice' should be used throughout), a touch-sensitive keyboard with full-size weighted keys and an action, compass and facilities that match those of a conventional acoustic piano, including a sustaining pedal.
- A music stand must be provided, if needed.
- A chair/stool must be provided, if needed, e.g. for cellists (double bassists should provide their own stool if required).

Candidates, other than pianists, must provide their own instrument(s) and any other equipment they need.

Examiners

Generally, there will be one examiner in the exam room; however a second examiner may be present for training or quality-assurance purposes.

Before beginning

Candidates should hand a written programme to the examiner at the start of the exam.

Candidates are welcome to test the acoustic of the room by briefly playing or singing before beginning their performance. Pianists, in particular, are encouraged to take a few moments to get used to the piano.

Exam timing

The candidate's programme should last 30 minutes. The overall exam time is 40 minutes, which allows for the candidate's entry and exit, any tuning time and time for the examiner to complete the mark form between exams. Examiners may take more or less time than the given timing.

Overlong performances

The examiner may stop the performance if a candidate goes over the time limit.

Remotely-assessed exams

Venues, instruments & equipment

Candidates' performances are video recorded and submitted to ABRSM for assessment. The recording is made at a venue of the candidate's/Applicant's choosing. This can be the candidate's home, school, their teacher's studio, or any other location where appropriate space and instruments are available (including a suitable piano for any accompaniments). The candidate/Applicant is responsible for organising the venue and any other equipment needed to run the exam (e.g. music stand, recording device).

Pianos: A suitable piano should be used so that the repertoire chosen can be realised in full. This can be upright, grand or digital. A digital piano should have a clearly recognisable piano tone (a single piano 'voice' should be used throughout), a touch-sensitive keyboard with full-size weighted keys, and an action, compass and facilities that match those of a conventional acoustic piano, including pedals as needed for the chosen repertoire. Pieces may not be altered to suit an instrument, e.g. a reduced-sized keyboard, and care should be taken in choosing repertoire as certain effects cannot be achieved on all digital pianos. While examiners may be aware of particular attributes of the instrument itself, the exam assessment will be based on the overall musical outcome, according to the marking criteria that take into account control of pitch, time, tone, shape and performance.

Making the recording

The repertoire must be performed and recorded in one continuous take. Candidates should show a written programme and the opening of their own-choice piece(s), 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.

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/guardian.

Detailed instructions on how to record and submit the exam are available at www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma.

Overlong performances

The examiner may stop listening to the recording if a candidate's performance goes over the time limit.

3. ARSM syllabus

Introducing the qualification

ARSM (Associate of the Royal Schools of Music) is a performance-focused diploma. It is designed to showcase performance skills after Grade 8, and provides learners with greater flexibility and responsibility in programme building. It also provides further opportunity for learners to develop their performance technique and interpretative skills, while extending their repertoire. Candidates awarded the diploma can use the letters ARSM after their name.

Candidates present a 30-minute performance of a balanced and varied programme where at least 20 minutes of music is chosen from the ARSM repertoire list and up to 10 minutes of music can be own-choice (of Grade 8 standard or above). There are no written or spoken elements and no other tests, making it a very accessible assessment.

The ARSM diploma syllabus has been available since 2017. This September 2020 update has no changes to the existing exam requirements and repertoire lists, but includes additional information covering the new remote-assessment option introduced in late 2020. Candidates now have the option to take their exam live, performing to an ABRSM examiner, or to video record their performance (in one continuous take) and submit it to ABRSM for assessment.

Exam requirements and information

This section provides a summary of the most important points that teachers and candidates need to know when preparing for the ARSM diploma. Further details, as well as administrative information about the exam, are given in ABRSM's Exam Regulations (available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations) which should be read before making an exam booking. Additional support materials are also available at www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma.

Subjects available

The ARSM diploma is available for the following subjects. Repertoire lists for each can be found at www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma.

- **Keyboard:** Piano, Harpsichord, Organ
- **Strings:** Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, Guitar, Harp (pedal only)
- **Woodwind:** Recorder, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Saxophone
- **Brass:** Horn, Trumpet, Cornet, Flugelhorn, E♭ Horn, Trombone, Bass Trombone, Baritone, Euphonium, Tuba
- Percussion
- Singing

Selecting repertoire

Performance duration: The performance should last 30 minutes.

- It may be up to two minutes shorter or longer.
- The 30 minutes includes any breaks between items.
- Woodwind, brass and singing candidates may take one longer break of up to three minutes (within the 30 minutes).

Programme requirements: The following programme requirements apply to the 30-minute performance:

- The programme should include at least 20 minutes of music chosen from the ARSM repertoire list. Separate lists for each instrument are available at www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma.
- Candidates may perform up to 10 minutes of own-choice music. Please note that:
 - own-choice repertoire should be at, or above, ABRSM Grade 8 standard
 - prior approval from ABRSM is not needed (and can't be given) for any own-choice repertoire
 - woodwind, brass and singing candidates taking a break must take the time from this 10-minute allowance
 - performing a full programme chosen from the ARSM repertoire lists gives no advantage over choosing to include some own-choice repertoire.
- The programme should be balanced and varied, containing:
 - a variety of moods, keys and tempi
 - at least two contrasting (by period or style) pieces, or movements from larger works
 - no more than one work by any single composer (except for vocal items or where a combination of movements or pieces from a composer's collection is indicated in the ARSM repertoire lists).
- Where a combination of movements or pieces from a larger work is set on the ARSM repertoire lists under a single number, they should all be performed.
- Candidates should perform all works/movements complete, although discretion may be used in matters such as the omission of tutti sections or the inclusion of cadenzas in concerto movements or other works.
- Candidates should follow any additional instructions shown at the start of the relevant repertoire list.

Accompanists: Candidates should provide their own piano accompanist, where appropriate. The candidate's teacher may act as accompanist. Pre-recorded accompaniments are not allowed and the examiner cannot act as the accompanist.

Exam music & editions: Where the repertoire lists include an arrangement or transcription, candidates should use the edition listed; in all such cases the abbreviation 'arr.' or 'trans.' appears in the entry. For all other pieces, the editions quoted in the repertoire lists are recommendations only and candidates can use any edition of their choice. This includes editions that are downloaded.

All own-choice repertoire should exist in a published edition (either in print or downloadable), which candidates should indicate on the programme form (see page 17).

The repertoire lists are the same as for the DipABRSM (Music Performance) diploma. Candidates may not present the same repertoire (in full or individual pieces) for both qualifications, irrespective of when the exams are taken.

Related-instrument option: For certain instruments, candidates have the option to play one work on a related instrument, while ensuring that the majority of the programme is performed on their main instrument. See the following table for details of the accepted instruments. There are different related-instrument options for **Recorder**, **Saxophone** and **Trombone**, which are given at the start of their repertoire lists.

| Main instrument | Related instrument(s) |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Violin | Viola |
| Viola | Violin |
| Cello | Viola da Gamba |
| Flute | Piccolo, Alto Flute |
| Oboe | Cor Anglais |
| Clarinet | E♭ Clarinet, Bass Clarinet |
| Bassoon | Contrabassoon |
| Trumpet | Cornet, Flugelhorn |
| Cornet | Trumpet, Flugelhorn |
| Flugelhorn | Cornet, Trumpet |
| Baritone | Euphonium |
| Euphonium | Baritone |
| Tuba | Sousaphone, Euphonium |
| Harp (pedal) | Non-pedal Harp |
| Harpsichord | Spinnet, Virginal |

Please note that:

- If the repertoire played on a related instrument is set on an ARSM repertoire list, it can count towards the 20-minute programming requirement; it is not necessary to meet this requirement on the main instrument.
- There is no advantage to be gained by offering a work on a related instrument.

Infringements: Where the ARSM exam requirements are not adequately fulfilled, this could lead to mark deductions or disqualification, at ABRSM's discretion. Examples include:

- Offering an inappropriate standard of own-choice repertoire.
- Presenting a programme that is too short or too long.
- Presenting a programme containing less than 20 minutes of music from the ARSM repertoire lists.
- Presenting ARSM-listed repertoire, but not as specified, e.g. incorrect number of movements.

Candidates who present a performance that is more than two minutes shorter, or which contains less than 20 minutes of repertoire from the ARSM syllabus, may be subject to a penalty. This could range from a one-mark deduction to disqualification from the exam, depending on the length of the performance.

Preparing for the exam

Programme form: Candidates are required to complete a programme form.

For *in-person* exams, they should give it to the examiner at the start of the exam. For *remotely-assessed* exams, they should show it to the camera at the start of the video recording. A blank form that can be printed and completed is provided on page 25. Alternatively, the required information can be written on a blank piece of paper.

The following information is needed, presented in programme order:

- The candidate's name and instrument.
- The list number, for items chosen from the ARSM repertoire list. Own-choice repertoire can be marked with a dash (—).
- The composer's name and, where applicable, the arranger's/transcriber's name.
- Full information on each piece to be performed, including:
 - the name of the piece/larger work
 - the catalogue number, where available – Opus number, BWV for Bach, K. for Mozart, etc.
 - details of individual movements/sections
 - for own-choice repertoire, the edition used.
- For woodwind, brass and singing candidates, where the break (if planned) will be taken and its length.
- Where applicable, any related instrument(s) to be used.
- An approximate timing for each piece (broken down for individual movements/sections of larger works).
- The overall programme length, which should include gaps between items and, where applicable, a longer break.

In cases where there isn't enough room on the form, the programme information can be continued on a second form.

A sample completed programme form is provided on page 26 as a guide.

Introductory announcements (remotely-assessed exams only): As well as showing the programme form to the camera, candidates should show the opening of any own-choice pieces and announce the following information before beginning their performance:

- Name and subject (instrument)
- Title, composer name and list number (where applicable) for each piece, in the order they will be performed.

If preferred, a Responsible Adult present (see page 13) may show the form and any music to camera and make the introductory announcement, as this does not form part of the assessed performance.

For detailed guidance on these procedures in remotely-assessed exams, see www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma.

Interpreting the score: The observance of repeats and interpretative decisions such as phrasing, the realisation of ornaments and the use of vibrato or pedalling are matters in which candidates are expected to use their discretion to achieve a stylistically appropriate and musically satisfying performance.

For pieces in a jazz style, candidates may add slight embellishment, as stylistically appropriate, but significant improvisation is not allowed.

Performing from memory: There is no specific requirement to perform from memory. However, candidates are encouraged to do so if they believe it will enhance their performance. We advise singers to perform their programme from memory, with the exception of oratorio/sacred items and complex contemporary scores. No additional marks are directly awarded for performing from memory.

Page-turners: Candidates and accompanists may bring a page-turner to assist with awkward page-turns; prior permission is not needed. Examiners cannot help with page-turning. In the case of organ candidates, the page-turner may also act as registrant.

Music for the examiner: *For in-person exams:* Examiners may ask to look at the music before or after the performance of the whole programme. A separate copy of the music is not needed – examiners can use the candidate’s or accompanist’s copy. Candidates who are performing from memory must also bring copies of their music.

For remotely-assessed exams: Candidates should show the opening of any own-choice pieces to the camera before beginning their performance (see ‘Introductory announcements’). If an examiner has a query about any of the other pieces presented, they will refer to ABRSM’s library.

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 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.

Sourcing exam music: We have made every effort to make sure that the publications listed on the ARSM repertoire lists remain available for the duration of the syllabus. We advise candidates to buy their music well in advance of the exam in case of any delays with items temporarily out of print or not kept in stock by retailers. Non-exam related questions about the music (e.g. editorial, availability) should be addressed to the relevant publisher: contact details are listed at www.abrsm.org/publishers.

4. Assessment and marking

Assessment objectives

The following table describes the level of knowledge and skills required of candidates taking an ARSM diploma. It also shows the assessment objectives and corresponding marking criteria that examiners use to assess the performance. The full marking criteria used by examiners are available on pages 21–22.

ARSM (RQF Level 4)

| Assessment objectives | Marking criteria |
|---|--|
| Learners will: Perform a programme of music of prescribed length, with a variety of mood, key and tempo, and of which at least two-thirds will be at a level beyond Grade 8. 60% | Learners can: Perform a programme of musically and technically advanced repertoire with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reliable pitch and intonation• Stable rhythm at a suitable tempo• Reliable tonal control and awareness• Musical shape and detail• Communication of character and style |
| Demonstrate musical communication, interpretation and delivery across the performance as a whole, matching the demands of the performance context and programme. 40% | Perform a programme of musically and technically advanced repertoire with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Projection and involvement• Performance awareness and control• Stylistic realisation• Awareness and control of textures and ensemble• Technical control and instrument management |

Mark allocation

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

| Component | Maximum marks | % of total mark |
|------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Pieces/Songs presented | 30 | 60% |
| Performance as a whole | 20 | 40% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |

Result categories

The result categories for the ARSM diploma are set as follows. A Pass in each component of the assessment is not required to pass overall.

| Result category | Mark band |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Distinction | 45-50 |
| Merit | 40-44 |
| Pass | 34-39 |
| Below Pass | 17-33 |

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. The ARSM diploma allows 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.

Candidates may not perform the same repertoire (in full or individual pieces) for both an ARSM and a DipABRSM qualification. If choosing to enter for both qualifications, irrespective of when the exams are taken, the pieces presented must be different.

Marking criteria

The tables on pages 21–22 show the marking criteria used by examiners for the ARSM diploma.

Pieces are first marked out of 30 using the marking criteria on page 21. These criteria guide the examiner's approach to writing comments, piece by piece, while listening, and are used to award a single mark to cover all works presented.

After the full programme has been completed, a mark out of 20 is awarded for the performance as a whole using the second set of criteria, on page 22. Here the examiner assesses the entirety of the performance in terms of overall musical communication, interpretation and delivery.

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

Criteria for the pieces/songs presented

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

Criteria for the performance as a whole

| | <i>Communication</i> | <i>Interpretation</i> | <i>Delivery</i> |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Distinction 19-20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistently well-projected and involved, showing strong performance commitment and conviction ● Effective sequence and pacing of chosen programme; consistently good performance awareness and control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistently effective stylistic characterisation; interpretative demands of the programme well met ● Consistently good awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with effective blending and balancing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistently assured and controlled; technical challenges of the programme well met ● Consistently effective instrument management, fully responsive to the performance situation |
| Merit 17-18 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mainly well-projected and involved, showing positive performance commitment ● Largely effective sequence and pacing of chosen programme; mainly good performance awareness and control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mostly effective stylistic realisation; interpretative demands of the programme largely well met ● Mainly good awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with appropriate blending and balancing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Effectively controlled; most technical challenges of the programme well met ● Mostly effective instrument management, mainly responsive to the performance situation |
| Pass 14-16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Projection and involvement sufficient to maintain an overall sense of performance ● Sequence and pacing of chosen programme shows adequate performance awareness and control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sufficient stylistic realisation to meet the interpretative demands of the programme ● Adequate awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with sufficient blending and balancing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generally controlled; technical challenges of the programme securely met overall ● Sufficiently reliable instrument management to meet the demands of the performance situation |
| Below Pass 10-13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Insufficient projection or sense of involvement to maintain a sense of performance ● Sequence and/or pacing of chosen programme shows inadequate performance awareness or control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stylistic realisation not equal to the interpretative demands of the programme ● Insufficient awareness or control of textures and ensemble, and/or unsuitable blending and balancing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistency of control insufficient to meet the technical challenges of the programme ● Insufficiently reliable instrument management to meet the demands of the performance situation |
| 7-9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sense of performance largely absent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stylistic realisation and/or control of textures and ensemble largely absent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Very insecure technical control and/or instrument management |

5. After the exam

Results

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

Postnominals

Candidates awarded the diploma can use the letters ARSM after their name.

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 other practical assessments for instrumentalists and singers:

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

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

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 qualification 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.

ARSM programme form



Please complete this form, including full details of your programme in the order you are presenting it.

For in-person exams: Bring it with you to your exam and hand it to the examiner before you begin.

For remote exams: Show it and your own-choice repertoire to the camera, and announce yourself (name, subject) and your repertoire for the whole programme in the order you will be performing it (titles, composers, list information), before beginning your performance.

Name _____

Subject _____ Related instrument(s) _____
(instrument) (if used)

| ARSM list no. | Composer (and arranger if applicable) | Piece/Song to be performed (include work title, Opus or other catalogue number, detail of individual movements/sections, as applicable) | Approx. timing (0' 00") |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|
| | | | |
| <i>For examiner's use:</i> Date of exam ____/____/____ Examiner code _____ | | | Overall programme length |

ARSM programme form — Sample



Please complete this form, including full details of your programme in the order you are presenting it.

For in-person exams: Bring it with you to your exam and hand it to the examiner before you begin.

For remote exams: Show it and your own-choice repertoire to the camera, and announce yourself (name, subject) and your repertoire for the whole programme in the order you will be performing it (titles, composers, list information), before beginning your performance.

Name Victoria Smith

Subject Claret Related instrument(s) —
 (instrument) (if used)

| ARSM list no. | Composer (and arranger if applicable) | Piece/Song to be performed (include work title, Opus or other catalogue number, detail of individual movements/sections, as applicable) | Approx. timing (0' 00") |
|---------------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| 14 | Donizetti | Studio No. 1 for solo clarinet | 4'35" |
| 47 | Weber | Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73 1st movt - Allegro 2nd movt - Adagio ma non troppo | 7'20" 6'30" |
| | | BREAK | 2'00" |
| — | Arnold | Scherzetto (Queen's Temple Publications) | 2'45" |
| 32 | Messager | Solo de Concours | 5'30" |
| | | | Overall programme length 30' 00" |

For examiner's use: Date of exam ___/___/___ Examiner code _____

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