ARSM
(Associate of the
Royal Schools of Music)

Qualification Specification: ARSM

Contents

Changes in this edition (March 2023)

- This edition includes reference to Singing for Musical Theatre ARSM, added in March 2023. SfMT ARSM can be taken from 1 September 2023 onwards.
- Candidates taking a digital exam from 8 March 2023 onwards should provide their programme information online when uploading their video. Written programme forms should still be completed for face-to-face exams.

Changes in the previous edition (June 2022)

These changes and updates continue to apply to this March 2023 edition.

- We included information about our Special Consideration policy [Section 2]
- We made a change to the own-choice repertoire requirements to allow unpublished repertoire, including candidates' own compositions [Section 3]
- We changed our policy on the use of the same piece(s) in more than one exam; this is now allowed [Section 3]
- We provided additional guidance for the performance as a whole component of the exam [Sections 3 & 4]
- We included clarification that, for digital exams, a recording may not be submitted for a qualification more than once [Section 4]
- We provided additional information on syllabus infringements, and how those are managed [Section 4]
- We updated the Programme form – the Candidate ID should now be provided

A range of updates were also made to the text, in particular in Section 3, to further clarify the existing requirements and information.

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 and, with backing from four Royal Schools of Music in the UK, are valued and trusted around the world.

We offer 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 and we do everything we can to make the 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 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.

We hope our syllabuses inspire and support your music learning or teaching and wish you every success for your musical journey!

Our mission
Our mission is to enrich lives by inspiring musical achievement around the world. 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.

We offer face-to-face and digital exams, sheet music, recordings, apps and courses for students and teachers across the world. As a charity our donations encompass a range of grants, scholarships, awards, prizes and bursaries for organisations and individuals. All promote music education and support achievement, progression, creativity, diversity, inclusion, sustainability and leadership in music education.

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 in the subjects covered in Section 3:

- 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 March 2023. The separate repertoire lists for each subject have been in use since 2017 (2023 for Singing for Musical Theatre) 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 11.

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 fair access to our assessments by putting in place access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for candidates with specific needs. The ARSM qualification includes no requirements for the candidate to respond to an examiner or to any previously unseen/unheard music. The digital exam option can be taken at a time, and at a location, to suit the candidate. In these respects, ARSM is a particularly accessible qualification.

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 sustained 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 higher level diplomas, provided by ABRSM or other awarding organisations. For these types of qualifications, candidates typically demonstrate their performance skills, as well as their musical knowledge and understanding, through a combination of live and written or spoken components.

We are currently reviewing the diploma exams we offer and changes may be made during the lifetime of this specification. Please refer to www.abrsm.org/diplomas for up-to-date information.

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 (Music Performance or Practical Music) 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 in an instrument/subject closely related to that being presented for ARSM, as shown in the second table below.

Alternatives to ABRSM Grade 8	
Grade 8 from	- 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 from	The Royal Conservatory of Music [Canada]

Candidates presenting one of the above alternative qualifications do not need to have a theory qualification.

Related instruments/subjects accepted
Piano – Harpsichord – Organ
Violin – Viola
Harp (Pedal) – Harp (Non-pedal)
Soprano Saxophone – Alto Saxophone – Tenor Saxophone – Baritone Saxophone
Trumpet – Cornet (B♭ Cornet or E♭ Soprano Cornet) – Flugelhorn
Trombone – Bass Trombone
Baritone – Euphonium – Tuba
Percussion – Percussion (Combined) – Tuned Percussion – Timpani – Snare Drum
Singing – Singing for Musical Theatre

Supporting documentation

We may request a copy of the certificate or other supporting documentation. If documentation cannot be provided when requested, 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 fair access to our assessments, for candidates with specific needs, by putting in place access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. Guidelines for candidates with specific needs are available at www.abrsm.org/specificneeds. Where a candidate's needs are not covered by the guidelines, each case is considered individually.

ARSM does not include supporting tests, or any requirement for candidates to respond to questions from an examiner, or to any previously unseen/unheard music. Additional time for the performance itself is therefore not applicable. However, we offer candidates with a range of specific needs the option of taking rest breaks during their performance as required.

While we are not able to make allowances in the marking for candidates with specific needs, we are always happy to pass on relevant information to the exam venue and/or the examiner in order that they are aware of candidates' particular circumstances.

Please contact our Access Co-ordinator (accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk) before booking an exam with the relevant details.

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 20.

How the exam works

ARSM exams are delivered in two ways:
- *Face-to-face exams*, where the candidate performs to one of our examiners.
- *Digital exams*, where a video recording of the candidate's performance is assessed by one of our examiners.

Face-to-face 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, range 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.

Digital 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 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, range 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 and the recording must not be paused at any point during that take. Candidates should show the opening of any 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/carer.

Detailed instructions on how to record and submit the exam are given in the Guidance document 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.

Special consideration

Special consideration is given to candidates who suffer temporary illness, injury or indisposition, or adverse circumstances at or near the time of the assessment that are beyond the candidate's control. This will not result in an adjustment to marks and will not change the assessment criteria applied by the examiner for the exam. Please refer to our Special Consideration Policy at www.abrsm.org/policies.

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.

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 booking an exam. 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, Singing for Musical Theatre

Performance as a whole

Performance skills are at the heart of the ARSM diploma, and go beyond the preparation of individual pieces. Designing balanced and varied programmes that play to learners' strengths as performers, and then delivering them with a real sense of musical intent and communication, is central to musical development. This also builds stamina, and embeds the technical control required to play an extended programme of music, including managing the transitions from one piece to another. Finding ways to put across the mood and character, and really get inside the style of different types of repertoire, as well as arranging pieces into coherent and compelling programmes will in turn increase learners' knowledge and understanding of music more broadly.

For full details of how the performance as a whole component of the exam is assessed, see Section 4 of this Qualification Specification.

Selecting repertoire

Performance duration: The performance should last 30 minutes. This is the duration from the first note of the performance to the last.

- It may be up to two minutes shorter or longer.
- The 30 minutes includes the transitions between items.
- Woodwind, brass and singing (including singing for musical theatre) candidates may take one break of up to three minutes (within the 30 minutes). In digital exams, the exam recording must not be paused or stopped during the break.

The performance duration set is the time required in order to demonstrate the breadth and depth of skills required, including stamina.

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

- The programme must 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
  - own-choice repertoire may be a candidate's own composition or arrangement (see 'Own composition')
  - own-choice repertoire must exist in a legible and fully-notated score using standard music notation (e.g. not in tab, not a lead sheet if the candidate is playing a harmonic instrument etc.) and must be performed as notated in that score
  - prior approval from ABRSM cannot be given for any own-choice repertoire
  - in cases where there is a concern about the standard of any own-choice piece presented, ABRSM reserves the right to request a copy from the Applicant where we cannot readily access one ourselves – this may delay the issuing of the exam result
  - woodwind, brass and singing (including singing for musical theatre) 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 must all be performed.
- Unless otherwise indicated in the repertoire list, 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 must 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 must 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 may use any edition of their choice. This includes editions that are downloaded. Information on sourcing exam music is given on page 19.

All own-choice repertoire must exist in a published edition (either in print or downloadable), or a legible and fully-notated score (e.g. not in tab, not a lead sheet if the candidate is playing a harmonic instrument etc.) and must be performed as notated in the score. Details of the edition(s)/score(s) used should be included on the programme form (see page 18).

Own composition: ABRSM welcomes the inclusion of candidates' own compositions, or arrangements, to be performed as own-choice repertoire. We will not judge or provide feedback on the structure or quality of the composition, only the performance of it. However, as with all other own-choice repertoire, the technical demand of the composition must be at or above Grade 8 standard. See also 'Exam music & editions'.

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	Spinet, Virginal

Please note that:

- The work should be composed for the instrument used.
- If the work 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.

Preparing for the exam

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

For *face-to-face* exams, they should give it to the examiner at the start of the exam. A blank form that can be printed and completed is provided on page 28. Alternatively, the required information can be written on a blank piece of paper. For digital exams, candidates should provide their programme information online when they upload their video.

The following information is needed, presented in programme order:

- The candidate's name, ID number 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 woodwind, brass and singing candidates, where the break (if planned) will be taken and its length (face-to-face exams only).

Pre-performance procedures (digital exams only): 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(s) and list number (where applicable) for each piece, in the order they will be performed.

Candidates must additionally show a form of photographic identification to the camera, in accordance with our Candidate Identification Policy (www.abrsm.org/policies).

If preferred, a Responsible Adult present (see page 14) may show any music to camera (but not the ID) and make the introductory announcement, as this does not form part of the assessed performance. The assessment of the performance begins on the first note of music played.

For detailed guidance on these procedures in digital exams, see the Guidance document at 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 extra 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 face-to-face 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 digital exams: Candidates should show the opening of any own-choice pieces to the camera before beginning their performance (see 'Pre-performance procedures'). If an examiner has a query about any of the other pieces presented, they will refer to ABRSM's library.

Copyright: Performing from unauthorised photocopies (or other kinds of copies) or illegal downloads of copyright music is not allowed. 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/mpa-guidelines. 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. Care should also be taken when making arrangements, as permission will be required in the case of copyright music. Candidates and Applicants are expected to act within the law with regard to copyright. ABRSM may withhold the exam result where we have evidence that this is not the case.

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 before 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, marking & infringements

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 22–23.

ARSM (RQF Level 4)

Assessment objectives	Marking criteria
Learners will:	Learners can:
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%**	Perform a programme of musically and technically advanced repertoire with: • 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: • 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, nor will marking appeals be accepted on that basis.

For *digital exams*, a recording can only be submitted as evidence for any qualification once. It cannot be re-used for the same or a different qualification at any point in time. If a previously submitted video is uploaded as evidence a second time, this will be discounted and the candidate disqualified from that second assessment.

Marking criteria

The tables on pages 22–23 show the marking criteria used by examiners for the ARSM diploma.

Pieces are first marked out of 30 using the marking criteria on page 22. 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 23. Here the examiner assesses the entirety of the performance in terms of overall musical communication, interpretation and delivery. Additional guidance on how to interpret the performance as a whole criteria is provided on page 24.

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

	Pitch	Time	Tone	Shape	Performance
Distinction 27–30	● Highly accurate notes and intonation	● Fluent, with flexibility where appropriate ● Rhythmic character well conveyed	● Well projected ● Sensitive use of tonal qualities	● Expressive, idiomatic musical shaping and detail	● Assured ● Fully committed ● Vivid communication of character and style
Merit 24–26	● Largely accurate notes and intonation	● Sustained, effective tempo ● Good sense of rhythm	● Mainly controlled and consistent ● Good tonal awareness	● Clear musical shaping, well-realised detail	● Positive ● Carrying musical conviction ● Character and style communicated
Pass 20–23	● Generally correct notes ● Sufficiently reliable intonation to maintain tonality	● Suitable tempo ● Generally stable pulse ● Overall rhythmic accuracy	● Generally reliable ● Adequate tonal awareness	● Some realisation of musical shape and/or detail	● Generally secure, prompt recovery from slips ● Some musical involvement
Below Pass 17–19	● Frequent note errors ● Insufficiently reliable intonation to maintain tonality	● Unsuitable and/or uncontrolled tempo ● Irregular pulse ● Inaccurate rhythm	● Uneven and/or unreliable ● Inadequate tonal awareness	● Musical shape and detail insufficiently conveyed	● Insecure, inadequate recovery from slips ● Insufficient musical involvement
13–16	● Largely inaccurate notes and/or intonation	● Erratic tempo and/or pulse	● Serious lack of tonal control	● Musical shape and detail largely unrealised	● Lacking continuity ● No musical involvement
10–12	● Highly inaccurate notes and/or intonation	● Incoherent tempo and/or pulse	● No tonal control	● No shape or detail	● Unable to continue for more than a short section

Criteria for the performance as a whole

	Communication	Interpretation	Delivery
Distinction 19–20	• Consistently well-projected and involved, showing strong performance commitment and conviction • Effective sequence and pacing of chosen programme; consistently good performance awareness and control	• 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	• Consistently assured and controlled; technical challenges of the programme well met • Consistently effective instrument management, fully responsive to the performance situation
Merit 17–18	• Mainly well-projected and involved, showing positive performance commitment • Largely effective sequence and pacing of chosen programme; mainly good performance awareness and control	• 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	• Effectively controlled; most technical challenges of the programme well met • Mostly effective instrument management, mainly responsive to the performance situation
Pass 14–16	• Projection and involvement sufficient to maintain an overall sense of performance • Sequence and pacing of chosen programme shows adequate performance awareness and control	• Sufficient stylistic realisation to meet the interpretative demands of the programme • Adequate awareness and control of textures and ensemble, with sufficient blending and balancing	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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	• Sense of performance largely absent	• Stylistic realisation and/or control of textures and ensemble largely absent	• Very insecure technical control and/or instrument management

Performance as a whole – additional guidance

Successful candidates should be able to deliver performances that are broadly consistent across the entire programme of selected music. Repertoire choices need to be made that allow communication of personal involvement and musical characterisation, interpretation of musical elements, and effective technical control of the instrument. Candidates should also be aware of the ensemble skills needed whilst performing with an accompanist, and have the stamina to maintain and deliver a reliable performance.

Within three key areas of Communication (C), Interpretation (I) and Delivery (D), candidates need to show a broad range of musical and technical skills, which demonstrate their overall flair for performance throughout a continuous programme of music.

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C Candidates project a sense of musical communication, purpose and personal involvement throughout a balanced and varied programme of musically and technically advanced repertoire. They demonstrate sophisticated awareness of the performance context, both during and between the chosen pieces. Through the course of an extensive programme of music, candidates show commitment to performance and create a sense of musical occasion.

I Candidates characterise each of the chosen pieces, through realising the musical detail, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of style and of the different musical roles within a performance, and a seamless ability to blend and balance complex musical elements.

D Candidates have complete command and control of their instrument and seamlessly respond to the technical challenges of advanced repertoire with conviction. They demonstrate the focus and stamina to maintain technical assurance consistently through an extensive programme, from the first note to the last.

Infringements

It is important that candidates, and those preparing them for exams, read and follow the exam requirements as set out in the ARSM syllabus (Section 3). If the exam requirements are not met in any way, this could lead to a warning, mark deduction or disqualification, at ABRSM's discretion. Examples of infringements include:

- Offering an inappropriate standard of own-choice 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).
- For *digital* exams, submitting a video of the performance that has not been made in one single take or that has been edited in some other way.

The above list is not exhaustive.

Action is typically taken as follows:

- Warnings, in the form of written correspondence, are applied to minor infringements. Repeat cases in subsequent exams may result in more severe action being taken.
- Mark deductions from a component of the exam are applied to more serious cases (e.g. own-choice repertoire of an inappropriate standard) and may be two marks, or more, depending on the circumstances.
- Disqualification is applied to cases where requirements are not fulfilled in a fundamental way (e.g. programmes that are significantly too short or where the recording has been edited in some way).

Examiners report infringements to ABRSM who investigate and decide what action is to be taken. It should be noted that infringements identified in exams may delay the release of the exam result.

ABRSM's decision on any infringement is final. Prior acceptance of an infringement without penalty does not set a precedent and appeals will not be accepted on this basis.

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.

Appeals and feedback

Appeals
If a candidate has received an unexpected exam result, this can be appealed by requesting a Results Review. This process allows us to revisit the marks awarded by an examiner and, subject to the outcome of the review, may result in a mark amendment.

Feedback
In addition to a Results Review, we also welcome feedback about other matters, such as the overall exam experience or the mark form. All feedback is logged and plays a valuable part in our commitment to continuous improvement and quality assurance procedures.

For further information on our processes and deadlines for appealing a result, or submitting feedback, please visit www.abrsm.org/send-exam-feedback.

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 Assessment
- 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/syllabusupdates. 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.

We are currently reviewing the diploma exams we offer and changes may be made during the lifetime of this specification. Please refer to www.abrsm.org/diplomas for up-to-date information.

ARSM programme form

ABRSM

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

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

For digital exams: Candidates should provide their programme information online when they upload their video.

Name _____

Candidate/National ID _____

Subject _____
(instrument)

Related instrument(s) _____
(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)

Woodwind, brass and singing candidates should also indicate any planned break.

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