

# MUSIC PERFORMANCE GRADES



## PERCUSSION 1990–2019 Syllabus (Section 3)

valid to 31 December 2021 only

second edition – valid for exams from 6 September 2021

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

22 July 2021

# Qualification Specification: Performance Grades

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### Changes in this edition

This second edition, first published July 2021, includes several significant changes and updates to the exam requirements and information. There are no changes to the repertoire lists.

- We have provided additional guidance for the performance as a whole component of the exam
- We have made a change to the own-choice piece requirements to allow unpublished repertoire, including candidates' own compositions
- We have changed our policy on the use of the same piece(s) in more than one exam; this is now allowed
- We have updated the Programme form – in particular, the Candidate ID should now be provided
- We have introduced a new Adapted Instruments policy; instruments adapted for beginners can be used in exams at any grade, as long as all the exam requirements can be met.

A range of updates have also been made to the text to further clarify the existing requirements and information, based on queries and feedback received since the Performance Grades qualification was launched in summer 2020.

The overarching *Qualification Specification: Music Performance Grades* document, which has other important and relevant information for those preparing for Performance Grades, has also been significantly updated.

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## 3. Percussion Performance Grades syllabus

### Introducing the qualification

Performance Grades are new qualifications from ABRSM, introduced in 2020 to run alongside our long-standing and respected Practical Grades. They allow learners to focus on and showcase their performance skills if that is their preference. This additional suite of qualifications has been designed to allow learners to play to their strengths and interests and still have their level of achievement formally recognised with a regulated qualification that attracts UCAS points (in the UK) at Grades 6 to 8. Performance Grades are accessible exams given their sole focus on performance, without the assessment of any supporting tests. Instead they encourage the selection of appropriate repertoire to be delivered in a sustained performance, even at the earliest levels.

Musicians learn to play an instrument to explore and perform repertoire, which is why pieces, and the way they can be combined to create a convincing and sustained performance, are the focus of the exam. For Performance Grades, candidates are asked to present four pieces at each grade.

ABRSM Performance Grades draw on the same repertoire set for our Practical Grades. This syllabus repertoire is organised into lists, which explore different traditions and styles, dating from the Renaissance period to the present day. Choosing repertoire from different lists gives candidates the opportunity to perform a balanced selection and demonstrate a range of skills.

Since Performance Grades focus on performance alone, the choice of repertoire is important, and attention should be given to the way pieces are contrasted, the order in which they are presented, and the different moods and characters they inhabit. This will enable candidates to demonstrate their ability to deliver a coherent and convincing performance event, not just a series of individual pieces. Credit for this is given through the performance as a whole assessment criteria that are applied.

### Performance Grades: requirements and information

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

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

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

This section provides a summary of the most important points that teachers and candidates need to know when taking ABRSM Performance Grades for Percussion (1990–2019 syllabus). Further details, as well as administrative information about the exams, are given in ABRSM's Exam Regulations (available at [www.abrsm.org/examregulations](http://www.abrsm.org/examregulations)) which should be read before making an exam booking.

## Instruments

Candidates are required to perform on one tuned percussion instrument and, at their choice, either timpani or snare drum. See further programming requirements within the 'Selecting repertoire' section on pages 4-6.

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

ABRSM welcomes the use of instruments adapted for younger/smaller beginners in our graded exams in accordance with the details set out in our Adapted Instruments Policy, available at [www.abrsm.org/policies](http://www.abrsm.org/policies).

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

## Tuned Percussion

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

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

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

## Snare Drum

**Grip:** Candidates may use either traditional or matched grip.

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

## Timpani

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Performance as a whole

Performance skills are at the heart of Performance Grades, and go beyond the preparation of individual pieces. Designing 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 a whole programme through, 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 the *Qualification Specification: Music Performance Grades*.

## Selecting repertoire

**Number of pieces:** Candidates present four pieces in one continuous performance (without a break). As shown in the table below, they choose three pieces from the syllabus – one piece (or set combination) from the Tuned Percussion list as well as the Study and a piece from the set items for their *other* chosen instrument (i.e. Snare Drum or Timpani). The fourth piece is for Tuned Percussion and can be from the repertoire list or a piece of the candidate's choice. Overall, two instruments are played with two pieces performed on each. The pieces can be performed in any order. See further programming requirements within this 'Selecting repertoire' section before finalising choices.

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

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

- The piece must be broadly the same standard, or above, as repertoire set for the grade being taken (prior approval from ABRSM is not needed, and can't be given).
- The piece may be chosen from the repertoire list set for the grade, as long as all other requirements within this 'Selecting repertoire' section are also met, including the minimum duration. Performing all four pieces from the lists gives no advantage.
- The piece may be a candidate's own composition or arrangement (see 'Own composition').
- The piece must exist in a legible and fully-notated score using standard music notation (e.g. not in tab, not a lead sheet if candidate is playing a harmonic instrument etc.) and must be performed as notated in that score.

In cases where there is a concern about the standard of an 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.

- The piece must not last less than the following timings for each grade (unless the overall programme time would be exceeded; see 'Programme times'):

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

The duration for each grade is the minimum time required in order to demonstrate the breadth and depth of skills required, including stamina.

The other programming requirements described in this 'Selecting repertoire' section must also be met.

**Programme times:** The overall performance, including transitions between pieces, should not exceed the maximum programme time set for the grade, as shown in the following table. The programme time is the duration from the first note of the performance to the last. The examiner may stop listening to the recording if the candidate's performance goes over the maximum programme time.

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

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

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

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

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

**Repertoire lists:** The repertoire lists are the same as for ABRSM Practical Grades (1990–2019 syllabus). Candidates intending on taking both qualifications at the same grade may find their musical development benefits from preparing different pieces for each.

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

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

## Preparing for the exam

**Programme form & pre-performance procedures:** Candidates should complete a programme form and show it to the camera, for approximately five seconds, at the start of the exam recording. A form that can be printed and completed is provided on page 8. Alternatively, the required information can be written on a blank piece of paper. The piece information required should be given in the order the pieces will be performed.

As well as showing the form to camera, candidates should show the opening of their own-choice piece and announce themselves and their pieces before beginning their performance. Candidates taking a Grade 6, 7 or 8 must additionally show a form of photographic identification to the camera. This is because these qualifications can be used either as a prerequisite for higher grades and diplomas, or as part of a university application.

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

More information on all of the above is given in the Guidance for Music Performance Grades available at [www.abrsm.org/performancegrades](http://www.abrsm.org/performancegrades).

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

**Performing from memory:** There is no requirement to perform from memory although candidates are encouraged to do so, if they believe it will enhance their performance. No extra marks are directly awarded for performing from memory.

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

**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](http://www.mpaonline.org.uk/mpa-guidelines). In all other cases, application should be made to the copyright holder before any copy is made. 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.

## **Percussion repertoire lists**

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



# Programme form – Performance Grades



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

Candidate name \_\_\_\_\_ Subject (instrument) \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate/National ID \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

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

Year of syllabus repertoire lists \_\_\_\_\_

Related instrument(s) (if used) \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Arranger (if applicable)	Book/publication title (if applicable)	Publisher/available from
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# Programme form – Performance Grades



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Candidate name \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate/National ID \_\_\_\_\_

Subject (instrument) \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

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

Year of syllabus repertoire lists \_\_\_\_\_

Related instrument(s) (if used) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Arranger (if applicable)	Book/publication title (if applicable)	Publisher/available from
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\* Write 'OC' for your own-choice piece/song (unless from the repertoire lists);  
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