

# MUSIC PERFORMANCE GRADES



## ORGAN

### Syllabus (Section 3)

This syllabus is specific to Organ 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.

# Qualification Specification: Performance Grades

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## 3. Organ Performance Grades syllabus

### Introducing the qualification

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

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

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

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

### Grades 1–8: requirements and information

***The syllabus repertoire is valid until further notice.***

This section provides a summary of the most important points that teachers and candidates need to know when taking ABRSM Performance Grades for Organ. 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

Other than the Grades 1–3 exceptions described on page 3, the instrument used for the exam should be a pipe (or electronic) organ with:

- an orthodox console having at least two manuals covering a minimum range of C–f<sup>'''</sup>
- a pedal-board covering a minimum range of C–f<sup>'</sup>
- a swell pedal (if essential for the pieces chosen)
- the usual couplers

C two octaves below middle C

f<sup>'</sup>/f<sup>'''</sup> a fourth/two octaves and a fourth above middle C (*pieces with a range extending above f<sup>'''</sup> are indicated in the syllabus by the symbol S*)

At Grades 1–3, the exam may be taken on an instrument without pedals as the majority of the pieces are for manuals only. Pieces at Grades 1–3 requiring pedals, or where pedalling is optional, are indicated in the syllabus by the symbols † and ‡, respectively. In addition, at Grades 1 and 2, the exam may be taken on an instrument with only one manual. Consequently, at Grades 1–3, some notes may be transposed or omitted, provided the result is musical.

## Selecting repertoire

**Number of pieces:** Candidates present four pieces in one continuous performance. They choose at least one piece from each of the three lists (A, B and C). The fourth piece can be from the repertoire lists or a piece of the candidate's choice. The pieces can be performed in any order. See further programming requirements within this 'Selecting repertoire' section.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Composers:** Up to two pieces by the same composer may be performed. Where two or more pieces/movements by a composer are required by the syllabus (i.e. under one list number and indicated with an 'and'), these are considered as one 'piece'.

**Repertoire lists:** Every effort has been made to feature a broad range of repertoire to suit and appeal to candidates of different ages, backgrounds and interests. Certain pieces may not be suitable for every candidate for technical reasons (e.g. hand size) or because of wider context (historical, cultural, subject matter, etc.). Pieces should be considered carefully for their appropriateness to each individual, which may need consultation between teachers and parents/guardians. Teachers

and parents/guardians should also exercise caution when allowing younger candidates to research pieces online: [www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety).

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

**Exam music & editions:** Wherever the syllabus includes an arrangement or transcription (appearing as 'arr.' or 'trans.' in the repertoire lists), the edition listed in the syllabus must be used. For all other pieces, editions are listed for guidance only and candidates may use any edition of their choice. This includes editions that are downloaded. A small number of editions for keyboard instruments other than organ are listed in the lower grades; candidates are free to adapt or disregard any indications such as dynamics or articulation in these editions which are not suitable for organ. Information on sourcing exam music is given on page 5.

**Repeats:** In most cases, da capo and dal segno indications should be followed but other repeats may or may not be included at candidates' discretion (in order to achieve a musically satisfying performance). If the syllabus specifies that a repeat should be included, this instruction should be followed. If the syllabus indicates that a da capo/dal segno should be omitted, candidates have the option to include or not. The maximum programme time should also be taken into consideration when deciding whether to include repeats (see 'Programme times').

## Preparing for the exam

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

- Full piece information, including title and, as applicable, larger work title, movement/section number and catalogue number (e.g. Opus, BWV etc.).
- The composers' names.
- The list and number for each of the three pieces chosen from the syllabus repertoire lists (and for the own-choice piece if also chosen from the lists).
- For own-choice repertoire, the following additional information is needed unless the piece is chosen from the syllabus repertoire lists:
  - the arranger's/transcriber's name, where applicable
  - details of the edition used (title and publisher)
- The validity period (e.g. from 2011) of the syllabus repertoire lists that the pieces have been chosen from.

A form that can be printed and completed is provided on page 6. Alternatively, the required information can be written on a blank piece of paper.

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

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

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

**Interpreting the score:** Printed editorial suggestions such as fingering, metronome marks, realisation of ornaments, 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.

**Ossias:** Where an ossia (alternative musical line or note) occurs in the music, candidates may choose either option unless the repertoire list specifies differently.

**Ornaments:** At Grades 1–4, only essential ornaments (such as cadential trills) are required. All other ornaments at these grades may be regarded as optional.

**Registration:** Registration is left to candidates' discretion. Candidates at any grade may use a registrant, who may also act as page-turner.

**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 may use an extra copy of the music or a photocopy of a section of the piece (but see 'Photocopies' below) to help with page-turns. They may also use a page-turner (prior permission is not required; the turner may be the teacher and/or may also act as registrant).

**Photocopies & downloads:** Performing from unauthorised photocopies (or other kinds of copies) or illegal downloads of copyright editions is not allowed. ABRSM may withhold the exam result where we have evidence of an illegal copy (or copies) being used. In the UK, copies may be used in certain limited circumstances – for full details, see the MPA's *Code of Fair Practice* at [www.mpaonline.org.uk](http://www.mpaonline.org.uk). In all other cases, application should be made to the copyright holder before any copy is made.

**Sourcing exam music:** Exam music is available from music retailers and online, including at the ABRSM music shop: [www.abrsm.org/shop](http://www.abrsm.org/shop). Every effort has been made to make sure that the publications listed will be available for the duration of the syllabus. We advise candidates to get their music well before the exam in case items are 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](http://www.abrsm.org/publishers).

## Organ repertoire lists

The repertoire lists will be included here soon. Until then, they can be found in the Practical Grades syllabus at [www.abrsm.org/organ](http://www.abrsm.org/organ)

# Programme form – Performance Grades

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



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

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

Year of syllabus repertoire lists \_\_\_\_\_ Break (if taking) between pieces \_\_\_ and \_\_\_

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Year of syllabus repertoire lists \_\_\_\_\_ Break (if taking) between pieces \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_

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

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

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