

MUSIC PERFORMANCE GRADES



HARPSICHORD Syllabus (Section 3)

This syllabus is specific to Harpsichord 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 and should be read when preparing for an exam.

Qualification Specification: Performance Grades

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3. Harpsichord 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 4–8: 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 Harpsichord. Further details, as well as administrative information about the exams, are given in ABRSM's Exam Regulations (available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations) which should be read before making an exam booking.

Instruments

The harpsichord should be in a state of tuning and regulation appropriate for the exam. The majority of the pieces listed in this syllabus require an instrument with a range extending up to d⁷. The few pieces with a range above this note are indicated in the repertoire lists by an asterisk (*). Any notes lower than C (i.e. two octaves below middle C) may be transposed up an octave or omitted, as appropriate, if they are not available on the instrument used for the exam.

Candidates are required to perform on an acoustic instrument (a digital keyboard on a harpsichord setting is not allowed).

Selecting repertoire

Number of pieces: Candidates present four pieces in one continuous performance. They choose at least one piece from each of List B and List C, with the third piece chosen from *either* List A or List D. The fourth piece can be from the repertoire lists (any list) 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
- at Grades 6–8, the piece may be performed on a related instrument (see 'Related instrument option')
- 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
Minimum duration (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
Maximum programme time (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.

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: Editions are listed in the syllabus for guidance only and candidates may use any edition of their choice. This includes facsimilies or editions that are downloaded. Any indications that are only appropriate to the piano may be disregarded. 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').

Related instrument option: At Grades 6–8, candidates may choose to play their own-choice piece on a spinet or virginal as appropriate. No extra marks are awarded for playing a related instrument.

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 2009) of the syllabus repertoire lists that the pieces have been chosen from.
- Where applicable, any related instrument to be used.

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.

Registration: Candidates may use reasonable discretion in the choice of registration and manual allocation in the pieces performed, according to the specific nature of the instrument they are using and the extent of its ability to equate to any prescribed registration indications (see 'Instruments' on page 2).

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).

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. 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. 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.

Harpsichord 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/harpsichord

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)

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