

Guidance for online Music Theory exams

These guidelines are for teachers, parents and candidates involved in booking, preparing for or taking online Music Theory exams at Grades 1 to 5.

In addition to reading these guidelines, we advise you to check the information about updated exam questions and syllabus changes, our updated syllabus summary and the free Sample Papers and Model Answers available at www.abrsm.org/musictheoryupdates.

Before you book an exam you should also read the addendum to our Exam Regulations which covers online Music Theory exams, available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations.

Definitions

Applicant: The person who books the exam, who must be aged 18 or over. This could be a teacher, school administrator, parent or the candidate, if they are aged 18 or over. The applicant is also responsible for gaining parental consent, where relevant, for the videoing of the assessments.

Candidate: The learner who will be taking the exam.

Contact ID: Everyone using our online booking service is given a unique Contact ID that allows us to identify individuals in our system.

Responsible Adult: For candidates under 18 and vulnerable adults, a Responsible Adult must be present in the room at the beginning of the exam. For all candidates, they can also be present for the whole exam if desired. For any venues hosting multiple candidates a Responsible Adult must be present for the whole exam. The Responsible Adult must be aged 18 or over. They could be the applicant (who booked the exam), teacher or parent/carer.

Proctor: A person who views the video recording of the assessment and is responsible for alerting ABRSM to any suspicious activity. The exam is recorded and then reviewed at a later date. No ABRSM exams are proctored live. You can find more information in our guide to [Remote Proctoring in ABRSM Online Music Theory Exams \(pdf\)](#).

- You can find this guide and all our policies at www.abrsm.org/policies

Exam dates and booking periods

For up to date information on exam dates, please check our website: www.abrsm.org/datesandfees.

Updated questions and syllabus changes (Grades 1 to 5)

As part of our ongoing work to review and refresh our exams, we have updated some of the Grade 1 to 5 questions to bring them in line with a style of assessment commonly used across the education sector. In addition, there are a few small changes to the syllabus itself. We have also adapted the style of some questions so that they work in an online exam.

The updated questions and small syllabus changes will apply to all online exams at Grades 1 to 5 from 2020. We are not making any changes to the core musical understanding that candidates will need to demonstrate in exams at these grades.

You can find more information at www.abrsm.org/musictheoryupdates.

Exam preparation

We have produced free Sample Papers and Model Answers for Grades 1 to 5. These are available on our website now at www.abrsm.org/musictheoryupdates. Please note, these do not reflect how questions will be presented on screen during the exam – with one question per page. They are also only available in standard white format and therefore do not represent all options available in the exam. Please read our [Online Music Theory Pilot \(Grade 5\) Accessibility Statement \(pdf\)](#) for further information.

Two weeks before the exam, candidates with a booked exam will have the opportunity to log in to the online exam platform and try a selection of practice exam questions to help them understand what to expect on the exam day. These questions will be available until the day before the exam. It is not possible to provide answers to these and they are available only as a guide to understand the functionality of the system.

On the day of the exam the practice questions will not be accessible and the actual exam will only be displayed as an option a maximum of 30 minutes before the start time.

You can find additional resources to help candidates get ready at www.abrsm.org/musictheoryupdates:

- Our syllabus, detailed guidelines, accessibility arrangements and policies, as well as FAQs
- A step-by-step guide to taking the exam
- A video showing you how the exam platform works
- A Terms & Signs Quiz

Entry requirements

There are no prerequisites to sitting any ABRSM Music Theory exam. They are open to candidates of any age.

Booking an exam

All exams must be booked using our online booking service during the published booking period. If you have not used this service before you will need to register and create an account before you book an exam (www.abrsm.org/createaccount). The person making the booking (the applicant) must be aged 18 or over.

Before you book, please have the following candidate information ready:

- Contact ID (if known)
- Candidate email (if known)
- Name
- Date of birth
- Any access arrangements or reasonable adjustments needed for the candidate.
- Language translations will not be available for online Music Theory exams in 2020.

To book an Online Music Theory exam:

1. Log in to our exam booking service.
2. Click 'Public Venue'.
3. Choose 'Music Theory exams'.
4. Add the exams you want to book.
5. Click 'Show available booking options'. If you have location settings enabled on your device, the filters shown in the dark grey bar will automatically search for your nearest 'venues' (locations). You can remove these filters if you need to book a candidate into an alternative 'venue' (location).
6. Select a 'venue'. For exams in 2020 you will still need to select your nearest venue for your candidates, even though candidates taking Grades 1 to 5 will not attend the venue. This is a temporary measure while we update our systems to include online exams.
7. Enter your candidate details and book and pay for the exam(s).

For exams in November and December 2020 only you can enter candidates as part of a Private Visit booking if you are also running paper-based Grade 6 to 8 Music theory exams. All Grade 1 to 5 exams, whether entered at a Private Visit or Public Venue, will be processed in the same way. Please see below for important information about multiple candidates sitting online exams in a single venue.

Place of exam

Candidates can take their exam in their own home or in any other suitable location that meets our requirements.

It is also possible for multiple candidates to take an exam at a single venue, for instance an educational institution, that has previously hosted exams. Further information is provided below.

Requirements

- Candidate access to an email address. For candidates under 18 or vulnerable adults this should be the Responsible Adult's email address.
- Use of a quiet and well-lit room for the duration of the exam.
- The room must be free from notes, books of any kind, any depiction of musical notes or any representation of a piano keyboard. If this is not possible then all books should remain closed and out of reach and any depiction of musical notation or representation of a piano keyboard, including an actual piano, should be covered so it is not visible.
- The desk, table or surface the candidate uses when taking the exam should be as clear as possible. The only items on it should be the ones they need to take the exam.
- Candidates can use their own blank paper in the exam to work out their answers. This can be any type of paper (manuscript or plain) as long as it is blank and does not show any musical notation or any representation of the piano keyboard. Candidates must show any paper to the camera at the start of the exam to confirm that it is blank. At the end of the exam they must hold up the paper to the camera and destroy it, ideally by tearing it into pieces.
- Laptop or desktop computer per candidate with webcam facility, internet access and the following:
 - Operating system: Windows 8, 8.1, 10, 32bit (x86) and 64bit (x64) / Mac OS 10.13, 10.14 and 10.15. RAM: Recommended + 2 GB
 - Free Disk Space: 1 GB
 - Screen resolution: 1368 X 769 or higher
 - Bandwidth: 300 Kbps upload and download
 - Minimum web camera resolution: 640 X 480
 - Download: ability to download and install software (admin rights required)
 - Webcam that allows for a 360 degree scan of the exam room. If this is not possible on your computer you are able to use a mobile phone or digital camera - guidance on this can be found below in the 'Setting up the exam' section
 - Monitor: only one monitor is allowed. An additional monitor cannot be attached to a laptop.
- It is **not** possible to take the exam on a tablet or phone, and it cannot be run on a Chromebook.

Candidate ID

All candidates sitting an online Music Theory exam will be required to show a form of ID when prompted. We can accept the following:

- Passport
- UK Driver's License
- College or University ID card
- Rail or transport card
- National ID card
- A completed ABRSM Candidate Identification Form (a blank form for completing will be available in advance of the exam)

The role of the Responsible Adult

For candidates under 18 and vulnerable adults a Responsible Adult must be present in the room at the beginning of the exam to help with the initial set up and can be present in the room for the whole exam, if desired. Candidates aged 18 and over also have the option to have a Responsible Adult available but this is not compulsory.

For any venues hosting multiple candidates the Responsible Adult must be present for the whole exam.

At the start of the exam, candidates will need to launch the exam secure browser (RP Now Proctoring software) and the candidate (or 'Test Taker') will be asked for their name, email address and telephone number (optional). For candidates under 18 or vulnerable adults, this should be the candidate's name, but the email address and telephone number (optional) should be the Responsible Adult's.

The Responsible Adult is only able to assist with the following:

- Launching the exam secure browser
- Completing the Candidate ID check on screen
- Facilitating a room scan using the webcam on the device being used for the exam
- Ensuring the candidate has read and understands the exam content page including that the exam is recorded
- Ensuring that the exam takes place in a suitable location
- Assisting if there is a problem with the candidate's computer. This does not include advising candidates how to answer a question.

The Responsible Adult should not:

- Communicate with the candidate once the exam has started unless technical assistance is required
- Assist the candidate in answering the questions or remind the candidate to check their answers at the end of the exam.
- Attempt to copy or reproduce any exam content they see as a result of being in the exam room.

The Responsible Adult must have read and understood our [Online Safeguarding Policy Statement \(pdf\)](#) before the exam.

- You can find all our policies at www.abrsm.org/policies

Venues hosting multiple candidates

A Responsible Adult must be present during the exam, as stated above, and candidates must sit back to back, face to face or a sufficient distance away from each other to make sure they cannot see each other's screens.

Once the necessary ID checks and room scans are complete and the exam has started, the candidate needs to say to the microphone: "I am sitting with other candidates and the Responsible Adult is present". This is so that the proctor is aware of the exam conditions for these candidates.

The exam

Access to the online exam platform will be provided to the applicant by email two weeks before the exam. They will receive a link, with a password following separately. It is the applicant's responsibility to forward the link and the password to their candidates.

The exam platform, proctoring and test delivery are provided by a third party supplier called PSI who deliver over 15 million assessments every year.

The candidate will be filmed for the duration of the exam via the webcam and exam software, and each exam will be reviewed by trained proctors. No ABRSM exams are proctored live and all are recorded and then reviewed at a later date. You can find more information in our guide to [Remote Proctoring in ABRSM Online Music Theory Exams](#) and our [Online Safeguarding Policy Statement \(pdf\)](#).

- You can find this guide and all our policies at www.abrsm.org/policies

At the start of the exam, the candidate will be required to display their Candidate ID, take a photo of themselves using the exam software and film a scan of the room. If they are using blank paper (manuscript or plain) for working out answers, they must also hold this up to the camera to show that it is blank. The candidate will then be able to sit their exam.

If the candidate used any paper during the exam to work out their answers, they must hold it up to the camera at the end of the exam and destroy it, ideally by tearing it into pieces.

The exam will be marked automatically but results will only be available once the videos of the assessments have been reviewed.

Toilet breaks during the exam

We encourage candidates to use the toilet before their exam. However, if it is essential, candidates are permitted to have one toilet break lasting no more than five minutes. Candidates should let the proctor know they are having a toilet break by speaking or holding up a written note to the camera. Candidates will not receive any additional time to complete their exam. If a candidate needs additional toilet breaks as part of alternative arrangements for their exam, they should contact our Access Coordinator to discuss this.

Trouble shooting on the day of the exam

Candidates will be able to request support from PSI on the exam day via the online exam delivery platform and a direct telephone number will be provided to applicants in advance of the exam.

After the exam

After the exam ABRSM will be supplied with the candidates' results and be informed of any concerns raised by the exam proctors. We will investigate any potential infringements in line with our [Malpractice and Maladministration Policy \(pdf\)](#).

- You can find all our policies at www.abrsm.org/policies

Results and certificates

We aim to publish exam results four weeks after the exam date and provide certificates and mark forms within two weeks of releasing results, subject to any checks we may need to make. We will release results to the applicant via our online service. Candidates with an account will also be able to log in to view their results seven days after we have released them to the applicant.

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

The test delivery platform is WCAG 2.1 compliant and provides accessibility to accommodate ABRSM's previous range of offers. However, we appreciate there are currently limitations to this. Please read our [Online Music Theory Pilot \(Grade 5\) Accessibility Statement \(pdf\)](#) for further information.

- You can find our full specific needs policy and guidelines at www.abrsm.org/specificneeds

If a candidate needs a paper-based exam for accessibility reasons, please make this clear when you book the exam by choosing the necessary 'access arrangement' or by sending an email to accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk. You will need to do this before the booking period closes.

Safeguarding

All of PSI's proctors have the required training and the videos are stored for 60 days. Only a limited number of ABRSM staff will have access to the videos and they will have received appropriate Safeguarding training. They will only review videos where there are suspicions of malpractice. For information on safeguarding, please read our [Online Safeguarding Policy Statement \(pdf\)](#).

- You can find all our policies at www.abrsm.org/policies

Malpractice and maladministration

Failure to comply with our [Exam Regulations](#) or guidelines may be considered malpractice. Incidents of suspected malpractice will be investigated in line with our [Malpractice and Maladministration Policy \(pdf\)](#). If we find that malpractice has been committed, the candidate may be disqualified.

- Our Exam Regulations are available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations
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