

HARPSICHORD REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

Subject Code: 41

This syllabus is valid from 2009 until further notice.

This section provides a summary of the most important points that teachers and candidates need to know when taking ABRSM Harpsichord exams. Further details, as well as administrative information relating to the exams, are given in ABRSM's Information & Regulations (available at www.abrsm.org/regulations) which should be read before an exam booking is made.

Entering for an exam

Eligibility: This syllabus is available at Grades 4–8 only and candidates may be entered in any of these grades irrespective of age and without previously having taken any other grade in Harpsichord. Candidates for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 exam must already have passed ABRSM Grade 5 (or above) in Music Theory, Practical Musicianship or a solo Jazz subject; for full details, including a list of accepted alternatives, see Regulation 1d at www.abrsm.org/regulations.

Access: ABRSM endeavours to make its exams as accessible as possible to all candidates, regardless of sensory impairments, learning difficulties or particular physical needs. There is a range of alternative tests and formats as well as sets of guidelines for candidates with particular access needs (see www.abrsm.org/specificneeds). Where a candidate's needs are not covered by the guidelines, each case is considered on an individual basis. Further information is available from the Access Co-ordinator (accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk).

Venues: Harpsichord exams are held at Visits (i.e. premises provided by the Applicant and visited by the examiner). They may be held independently of other exams or as part of a larger Visit that includes other subjects/grades. For full details about Visits, see Regulation 7 at www.abrsm.org/regulations, in particular the requirement to provide a suitable piano for the Aural tests.

Exam booking: Details of exam dates, venues, fees and how to book an exam are available online at www.abrsm.org/exambooking.

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 *d'''*. The few pieces with a range above this note are indicated in the syllabus 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, should they be unavailable on the instrument used for the exam.

Elements of the exam

All ABRSM graded Harpsichord exams comprise the following elements: three Pieces; Scales and arpeggios; Sight-reading and figured bass realization; and Aural tests. In all grades, marks are allocated as follows:

Pieces: 1	30	
2	30	
3	30	
Scales and arpeggios	21	
Sight-reading	12	} <i>one combined mark will be recorded</i>
Figured bass realization	9	
Aural tests	18	
Total	<u>150</u>	

Marking scheme: 100 marks are required for a Pass, 120 for a Merit and 130 for a Distinction. A Pass in each individual section is not required to pass overall. See pp. 114–115 for the marking criteria used by examiners.

Pieces

Programme planning: Candidates must choose three pieces – one from List B and one from List C, with the third piece chosen from *either* List A *or* List D. In the exam, they should inform the examiner which pieces they are performing, and they are welcome to use the form on p. 117 for this purpose.

Exam music & editions: The editions quoted in the syllabus are given for guidance only and candidates may use any edition of their choice (in- or out-of-print or downloadable or a facsimile). Any indications that are only appropriate to the piano may be disregarded. Information on obtaining exam music is given on p. 47.

Interpreting the score: Printed editorial suggestions such as fingering, metronome marks, realization of ornaments etc. need not be strictly observed. Whether the piece contains musical indications or not, candidates are always encouraged to interpret the score in a stylistically appropriate manner. Ultimately, examiners' marking will be determined by consideration of pitch, time, tone, shape and performance, and how control of these contributes to the overall musical outcome.

Repeats: All da capo and dal segno indications should be observed but all other repeats (including first-time bars) should be omitted unless they are very brief (i.e. of a few bars) or unless the syllabus specifies otherwise.

Registration: Candidates may exercise reasonable discretion in the choice of registration and manual allocation in the pieces selected for the exam, 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 p. 44).

Performing from memory: Candidates are free to perform any of their pieces from memory; in such cases they must ensure that a copy of the music is available for the examiner to refer to if necessary. No additional marks are awarded for playing from memory.

Page-turns: Examiners will be understanding if a page-turn causes a lack of continuity during a piece, and this will not affect the marking. A variety of solutions for awkward page-turns exists, including the use of an additional copy of the music or a photocopy of a section of the piece (but see ‘Photocopies’ below). In cases where candidates believe there is no solution to a particularly awkward page-turn, they may apply to bring a page-turner to the exam. The request must be made to the Syllabus Department (syllabus@abrsm.ac.uk) no later than the closing date for entry, and details of the piece, edition and nature of the difficulty should be given. If permission is granted, a confirmation letter will be issued which must be taken to the exam as verification. Examiners are unable to help with page-turning.

Photocopies: Performing from unauthorized photocopies (or other kinds of copies) of copyright editions is not allowed. ABRSM may withhold the exam result where it has 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, and evidence of permission received should be brought to the exam.

Scales and arpeggios

Examiners will usually ask for at least one of each type of scale/arpeggio etc. required at each grade, as well as aiming to hear, in Grade 8, a balance of the specified articulations. When asking for requirements, examiners will specify only:

- the key (including minor form – harmonic *or* melodic – in the Grade 6–8 scales) or the starting note
- left hand *or* right hand, *or* hands together
- the articulation (Grade 8)

All scales and arpeggios should:

- be played from memory
- ascend and descend according to the specified range
- be prepared legato, unless the syllabus specifies staccato (or both)
- be played with evenness of touch and articulation and at a pace that is consistent with accuracy and distinctness

Candidates are free to use any fingering that produces a successful musical outcome.

Candidates are free to start at any octave, provided the required ranges are covered. Where the keyboard compass of an instrument happens to be restricted, the range of any affected scale and arpeggio requirements may be reduced accordingly by an octave.

Scales in thirds or a third apart should begin with the tonic as the lower note, while scales a sixth apart should begin with the tonic as the upper note.

Sight-reading and figured bass realization

Sight-reading: Candidates will be asked to play a short piece of music which they have not previously seen. They will be given up to half a minute in which to look through and, if they wish, try out all or any part of the test before they are required to play it for assessment. For

practice purposes, a book of specimen sight-reading tests is published for Harpichord by ABRSM.

Figured bass realization: Candidates will be asked to play a short figured bass realization test which they have not previously seen. They will be given up to half a minute in which to look through and, if they wish, try out all or any part of the test before they are required to play it for assessment. The main technical parameters are outlined on pp. 49, 51, 53, 55 and 57.

Aural tests

The requirements are the same for all subjects. Full details of the Aural tests are given on pp. 94–99.

In the exam

Examiners: Generally, there will be one examiner in the exam room; however, for training and quality assurance purposes, a second examiner may sometimes be present. Examiners may ask to look at the music before or after the performance of a piece. They may also decide to stop the performance of a piece when they have heard enough to form a judgment. Examiners will not issue, or comment on, a candidate's result; instead, the mark form (and certificate for successful candidates) will be issued by ABRSM after the exam.

Order of the exam: The individual sections of the exam may be undertaken in any order, at the candidate's choice.

Assessment

The tables on pp. 114–115 show the marking criteria used by examiners. These criteria (newly revised and amended) have been in use in exams from January 2014. In each element of the exam, ABRSM operates the principle of marking from the required pass mark positively or negatively, rather than awarding marks by deduction from the maximum or addition from zero. In awarding marks, examiners balance the extent to which the qualities and skills listed on pp. 114–115 (broadly categorized by pitch, time, tone, shape and performance) are demonstrated and contribute towards the overall musical outcome.

Obtaining exam music

Exam music is available from music retailers as well as online, including at the ABRSM music shop: www.abrsm.org/shop. Every effort has been made to ensure that all the publications listed will remain available for the duration of the syllabus. Candidates are advised to obtain their music well in advance of the exam in case of any delays with items not kept in stock by retailers. Apart from queries relating to exams, all enquiries about the music (e.g. editorial, availability) should be addressed to the relevant publisher: contact details are listed at www.abrsm.org/publishers.