

MUSIC THEORY: from 1 January 2018

ABRSM Music Theory exams are available for Grades 1–8. Candidates may be entered for any grade irrespective of age and without previously having taken any other grade. The full syllabus is available at www.abrsm.org/theory.

About Music Theory

Developing musical literacy forms a key part of a rounded education for performers, composers and listeners of all kinds. An understanding of how written symbols relate to the elements of music, and having the skills to interpret and translate them into sounds, empowers us to communicate and experience music in a meaningful way. Music theory is a very practical subject that is completely entwined with performance and composition.

ABRSM's Music Theory exams give students:

- a knowledge of the notation of western music, including commonly used signs and terminology
- an understanding of fundamental musical elements such as intervals, keys, scales and chords
- an ability to apply theoretical knowledge and understanding to score analysis
- skills in harmonic completion of extracts and melody writing (at Grades 6–8)

Candidates are assessed on their ability to identify, use and manipulate musical symbols, to complete extracts and to answer questions relating to the elements of music according to the parameters detailed in the full syllabus at www.abrsm.org/theory.

Grade 5 as a prerequisite

We believe that a thorough understanding of the elements of music is essential for a full and satisfying performance at the higher grades.

A longstanding ABRSM requirement is that candidates must pass Grade 5 or above in Music Theory (or in Practical Musicianship or any solo Jazz instrument) before they can enter for Grades 6, 7 or 8 Practical exams.

Marking scheme

Theory exams are marked out of a total of 100, with 66 marks required for a Pass, 80 for a Merit and 90 for a Distinction. The marking criteria for Theory exams are available at www.abrsm.org/theorymarkingcriteria.

Theory GRADE 4

As in preceding grades, with the addition of:

- 1 All simple and compound duple, triple and quadruple time signatures, and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. The breve and its equivalent rest. Double-dotted notes and rests. Duplets.
- 2 Alto clef (C clef centred on 3rd line). The identification of notes in the alto clef in any of the keys set for this grade (see below), and the transcription at the same pitch of a simple melody from the treble or the bass clef to the alto clef, and vice versa. Double sharp and double flat signs, and their cancellation. Enharmonic equivalents.
- 3 Scales and key signatures of all major and minor keys up to and including five sharps and flats, with both forms of minor scales. Technical names for the notes of the diatonic scale (tonic, supertonic, etc.). Construction of the chromatic scale. All intervals, not exceeding an octave, between any two diatonic notes in any of the keys set for this grade.
- 4 The identification and writing of triads (root position) on the tonic, subdominant and dominant notes in any of the keys set for this grade. The recognition of $\frac{5}{3}$ (root position) chords on the tonic, subdominant and dominant notes in any of the keys set for this grade (the harmonic form of the scale will be used in minor keys).
- 5 More terms and signs, including the recognition and naming (but not writing out) of the trill, turn, upper and lower mordent, acciaccatura and appoggiatura. Questions about a passage of music will include simple related questions about standard orchestral instruments.