

Fair access guidelines for blind or partially sighted candidates

These guidelines refer to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments that ABRSM offer for our face to face instrumental and singing exams including diplomas.

Separate fair access guidelines are available for our digital instrumental and vocal exams and our theory exams.

We use the terms 'blind' and 'partially sighted' where it is helpful to distinguish from the generic term 'visual impairment'. These terms are interchangeable with the terms 'sight impaired' and 'severely sight impaired'.

Before reading these guidelines or making a booking, we recommend you also read our Specific Needs Policy, which can be found at www.abrsm.org/specificneeds.

ABRSM established these provisions for blind and partially sighted candidates in consultation with RNIB.

How we support candidates who are blind or partially sighted

All ABRSM examiners are provided with basic information relating to visual impairment and how this might affect a candidate taking an exam. In addition, you are welcome to supply any further information you think would be helpful for the examiner to know in advance.

It is important to understand that while we are able to make provisions for the administration of the exam, e.g. additional time or alternative tests, we are not able to make any concessions in the marking – all candidates will be treated equally.

On the day

Extra time: We add two or three minutes extra time before your exam starts in order that you have some time to familiarise yourself with the layout of the exam room, including where the examiner is seated.

Accessing the exam room: You are welcome to attend your exam with a guide who may assist you into the exam room if needed. Alternatively, our stewards and examiners are provided with basic information about sighted guiding and will be happy to assist you in and out of the exam room.

Lighting: We are aware that you may experience photophobia (sensitivity to light) or that you may need additional light. We will do our best to accommodate your needs if you let us know in advance. Examiners will be happy to close blinds to avoid sunlight, for example.

Written comments: Marks will always reflect the standard of your performance. However, examiners will aim to avoid comments that may draw undue attention to your specific needs and any access arrangements.

Order of the exam: You may notify the examiner on the day of your preferred order, provided that it is logistically feasible – for example, it is better that elements requiring an accompanist are adjacent to cause minimum disruption.

Access options for candidates who are blind or partially sighted

The following options are available for candidates who are blind or partially sighted. You can see further details about each option in the sections below.

- Sight difficulties requiring no alternative tests or extra time
- Braille memory test required in place of Sight-reading
- Large print and extra time for sight-reading required
- Modified print and extra time for sight-reading required
- Large print memory test required in place of Sight-reading
- Modified print memory test required in place of Sight-reading
- Aural repetition test required in place of Sight-reading
- Autism requiring large print and extra time for Sight-reading test
- Autism requiring modified print and extra time for Sight-reading test
- Autism requiring aural repetition test in place of Sight-reading

Sight-reading for blind candidates

You may choose between a braille memory test or an aural repetition test in place of the regular sight-reading. Further details about both these options are given in the sections below.

Braille memory test - overview

This test consists of a short passage transcribed into Braille. You will have a set amount of time to prepare the braille before the examiner will ask you to play or sing the test from memory.

Further details

The preparation times are as follows:

- Grades 1 to 3: 5 minutes
- Grades 4 and 5: 10 minutes
- Grades 6 and 7: 15 minutes
- Grade 8: 20 minutes
- Specimen braille memory tests

Specimen Braille tests are available from RNIB and their contact details can be found at the end of these guidelines.

Singing candidates

If you use braille music, you may opt to attempt this section either as a memory test or by performing directly from the Braille, and you should inform the examiner which option you have chosen at the start of the exam. At Grades 1 to 5, you will be given two versions of the Braille score: a full Braille score and a version with just pitch and rhythm, with all performance directions removed. At Grades 6 to 8, in addition to the two versions of the Braille score, you will also be given a copy of the lyrics on their own.

The tests for Grades 1 to 5 do not have lyrics and may be sung to any vowel sound (with or without a consonant) or to sol-fa. The tests for Grades 6 to 8 have clear, simple and singable texts in English. You may use these or sing to any vowel sound or sol-fa, if you prefer.

Organ candidates

At Grades 6 to 8, you will be required to repeat the test transposed up or down a tone or semitone, as requested by the examiner.

Horn and Trumpet candidates

You will not be required to do any transposition tests at Grades 6 to 8.

Harpichord: You will not be required to complete a figured bass realisation test at Grades 1 to 8.

Aural tests

If you request a braille memory test, the following arrangements apply to Test B:

Grades 4 and 5: You will receive a braille copy, including the key signature, tonic and key chord, followed by the notes you are to sing.

Grades 6 to 8: This is presented in Braille music giving the melody line only, including tempo markings, dynamics and phrasing. A brief description of the relevant features of the accompaniment will be given in literary Braille. You will be given approximately 1 minute to study the test.

Aural repetition test - overview

This test consists of a short passage played three times on the piano by the examiner. They will first play and name the key-chord and starting note, and then indicate the tempo. After two playings, the examiner will give you approximately 15 seconds to try out the test yourself. After a third and final playing, the examiner will ask you to play or sing the test from memory.

Further details

Singing candidates

If you choose the aural Repetition test, this will be accompanied by the examiner who will play the vocal line, together with its own accompaniment, three times. You can sing the vocal line to 'la' or to any other vowel sound.

Specimen aural repetition tests

Specimen aural repetition tests are available from ABRSM.

Aural tests

If you request the aural repetition test in place of Sight-reading, the following arrangements apply to test B:

Grades 4 and 5: this is conducted as a 'Talking Score'. The examiner will first play and name the key-chord and tonic and will then read out each note in turn, indicating whether the pitch rises or falls, for you to sing back.

Grade 6: The examiner will play the single line melody 3 times with a 30 second break in between the first two playings. During this time you may try out any part of the test.

After the third and final playing, you will be asked to sing the melody with the piano accompaniment played by the examiner.

Grade 7: The examiner will play the upper part of a two-part phrase 3 times with a 30 second break in between the first two playings. During this time you may try out any part of the test.

After the third and final playing, you will be asked to sing the melody with the lower part played by the examiner.

Grade 8: The examiner will play the lower part of a two-part phrase 3 times with a 30 second break in between the first two playings. During this time you may try out any part of the test.

After the third and final playing, you will be asked to sing the melody with the upper part played by the examiner.

Sight-reading for partially sighted candidates

You may request Sight-reading tests in large or modified print. You may read and play the test at the same time (with up to three minutes to prepare), or memorise the test. The preparation times for memorising the test are as follows:

- Grades 1 to 3: 5 minutes
- Grades 4 and 5: 10 minutes
- Grades 6 and 7: 15 minutes
- Grade 8: 20 minutes

ABRSM's default for large print tests is a 14mm stave on white paper. Tests may be printed on A4 or A3.

If you request a large print sight-reading test, you will receive a large print copy of aural test B at Grades 4 to 8.

Specimen large and modified print tests

You may request Sight-reading tests in large or modified print. You may read and play the test at the same time (with up to three minutes to prepare), or memorise the test. The preparation times for memorising the test are as follows:

Grades 1 to 3: 5 minutes
Grades 4 and 5: 10 minutes
Grades 6 and 7: 15 minutes
Grade 8: 20 minutes

ABRSM's default for large print tests is a 14mm stave on white paper. Tests may be printed on A4 or A3.

If you request a large print sight-reading test, you will receive a large print copy of aural test B at Grades 4 to 8.

Modified print tests

Rather than a straightforward enlargement, ABRSM can make further modifications based on your preferences, for example, larger note-heads and beaming, or a larger font for performance directions.

If you request a modified print sight-reading test, you will receive a modified print copy of aural test B at Grades 4 to 8.

If you require modified print, you should send a covering letter at the time of entry along with a sample of the notation required. Please include details of all typographical specifications. You can email musical examples written in Sibelius or MuseScore to accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk.

Further information on modified stave notation (MSN) is published by the UK Association for Accessible formats (UKAAF) and their contact details can be found at the end of these guidelines.

Sight-reading tests on coloured paper

If you require tests on coloured paper you should indicate this by contacting the access coordinator before the published entry deadline. You will need to post three sheets of the required paper to ABRSM at the time of entry.

Jazz exams

As Jazz exams are designed to be accessible for candidates to attempt entirely by ear, it is assumed that blind candidates will attempt the exam in this way unless we are specifically informed otherwise. However, you may still request the quick study test to be provided in either large notation, modified staff notation or Braille.

Use of large print or modified scores in exams

You are welcomed to use your own large print or modified print copies in the exam provided you bring the original with you. This provision is made under the Code of Fair Practice published by the [MPA](#), which allows you to make an accessible copy for your own use. No prior permission is required.

Practical Musicianship for partially sighted candidates

We can provide relevant tests in large or modified print if you select this on the entry form. You should email the Access Coordinator at the time of entry with details of which instrument you will use and which options you will take. Please also include details of your preferred layout. You can email musical examples written in Sibelius or MuseScore to accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk.

ARSM

ARSM involves no supporting tests or anything that requires candidates to respond to questions from the examiner, so alternative tests or extra-time allowances for candidates who are blind or partially sighted are not normally needed. However, if you have access requirements that the examiner should be aware of, please contact the access coordinator at the time of entry with the relevant details.

Diplomas

You may request a Quick Study test in large or modified print.

You may choose to take this test as either a Quick Study or as a memory test with the relevant extra time allowance indicated below.

Large print Quick Study

ABRSM's default for large print tests is a 14mm stave on cream paper.

Modified print Quick Study

Rather than a straightforward enlargement, ABRSM can make further modifications based on your preferences, for example, larger note-heads and beaming, or a larger font for performance directions.

If you require modified stave notation, you should send a covering letter at the time of entry along with a sample of the notation required. Please include details of all typographical specifications. You can email musical examples written in Sibelius or MuseScore to accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk.

We can produce tests on either A4 or A3, but you will need to consider how the font and staff size will impact on the paper size needed. Further information on modified stave notation (MSN) is published by the UK Association for Accessible formats (UKAAF) and their contact details can be found at the end of these guidelines.

Contact details

Access Coordinator
ABRSM
4 London Wall Place
London
EC2Y 5AU

T +44 (0)20 7467 7342
E accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk

RNIB
T 0303 123 9999
E helpline@rnib.org.uk
W www.rnib.org.uk

A full list of ABRSM braille titles available via RNIB can be found by searching rniblibrary.com.

To purchase braille copies, please contact RNIB on the details above.

UK Association for Accessible formats (UKAAF)
W www.ukaaf.org/music

Braille publications available from ABRSM

ABRSM provides braille scores of the piano and flute exam pieces as well as exemplar Music Theory papers and the new Discovering Music Theory books. These are available to download from the links below. You will need a Braille printer to emboss them onto paper, or an electronic braille display to read them on a computer.

Hard copies of these publications may be purchased from:

Connect Design

T +44 (0)1270 449165 Option 5
E goldenchorde@iwanttoconnect.co.uk

[Flute Exam Pieces 2018 & 2021](#)

[Piano Exam Pieces 2019 & 2020](#)

[Piano Exam Pieces 2021 & 2022](#)

[ABRSM Theory Papers Grades 1-5](#)

[Rushby: Discovering Music Theory, Grades 1 to 5](#)