

Fair access information for blind and partially sighted candidates

Our policy

We endeavour to make our exams as accessible as possible to all candidates, regardless of sensory impairments, learning difficulties or particular physical needs. Special arrangements, including extra time and alternative tests are put in place as appropriate. In addition to the specific provisions described below, we are happy to consider each person individually if his or her needs are not covered by our standard arrangements. It's important to understand, however, that whilst we are able to make provisions for the administration of the exam, e.g. extra time or alternative tests, we are not able to make any concessions in the marking – all candidates will be treated equally.

Preparing for the exam

Using the information below, decide which tests and provisions will work best for you and note the code, which you will need when submitting your entry. If you need further information or advice, please refer to page 10 for relevant contact information. Please note that all candidates entered under a code which indicates a visual impairment are entitled to three minutes at the start of their exam to allow for orientation in the exam room; the timings below include this three minutes.

	Provision	Practical: extra time	Theory: extra time
B	Braille Memory test	Grades 1–3: 8 minutes Grades 4–5: 13 minutes Grades 6–7: 18 minutes Grade 8: 23 minutes	n/a
	Braille Theory paper	n/a	Grades 1–3: 30 minutes Grades 4–5: 40 minutes Grades 6–8: 60 minutes
R	Aural repetition test	Grades 1–8: 5 minutes	n/a
L	Large notation sight-reading test	Grades 1–8: 5 minutes	n/a
	Large notation Theory paper	n/a	n/a
M	Large staff notation memory test	Grades 1–3: 8 minutes Grades 4–5: 13 minutes Grades 6–7: 18 minutes Grade 8: 23 minutes	n/a

	Provision	Practical: extra time	Theory: extra time
P	Modified staff notation sight-reading test	Grades 1–8: 5 minutes	n/a
	Modified staff notation and text Theory paper	n/a	n/a
T	Modified staff notation memory test	Grades 1–3: 8 minutes	n/a
		Grades 4–5: 13 minutes	
		Grades 6–7: 18 minutes	
		Grade 8: 23 minutes	
A	Extra time and an amanuensis	n/a	Grades 1–3: 30 minutes
			Grades 4–5: 40 minutes
			Grades 6–8: 60 minutes

Diploma exams:

Large/Modified staff notation Quick Study test	5 minutes extra
Braille, Large/Modified staff notation Quick Study test from memory	30 minutes extra
Singing candidates reading directly from Braille score	10 minutes extra
Aural Repetition test	15 minutes extra

Entering for the exam

- Once you are sure of what's needed for the exam, select the correct specific needs code when you make your exam entry. In order for the correct provisions to be made, it is important that the correct code is used each time a candidate is entered for an exam. Where additional arrangements are needed, these must be discussed and agreed with ABRSM before entry.
- On occasions, none of the specific needs codes will be relevant, in which case you should include a covering letter with your entry form or send an email to accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk once you have submitted your online entry. Alternatively, you may wish to use one of the codes and send a covering letter or email to give us more specific information. The more information you can provide, the better.
- We provide all examiners who are scheduled to examine blind or partially sighted candidates with general guidance about best practice when examining candidates in this situation. If there is any particular information you feel it would be useful for the examiner to be aware of, please let us know at the time of entry, in order for us to inform the examiner in advance of the exam.

Practical exams: sight-reading

Blind candidates (with the exception of singers)

Blind candidates may choose between one of the following two options:

Braille memory test: This test consists of a short passage transcribed into Braille which will be given to the candidate to study, with a time allowance as indicated on page 1. The candidate will then be asked to perform the test from memory immediately following the preparation time.

Aural repetition test: This test consists of a short passage played three times on the piano by the examiner, who will first play and name the key-chord and starting note, and indicate the tempo before asking the candidate to repeat the passage on his/her instrument. Candidates will be given a short amount of time to try out the test following the second and final playing.

Subject specific information

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

Horn and Trumpet: Candidates will not be required to do any transposition tests at Grades 6–8.

Harpsichord: Candidates will not be required to complete a figured bass realisation test at Grades 1–8.

Singing:

Aural repetition test: This test will be accompanied by the examiner who will play the vocal line, together with its own accompaniment, three times. Candidates can sing the vocal line to 'la' or to any other vowel sound.

Braille memory test: Candidates may opt to attempt this section either as a memory test or by performing directly from the Braille, and the examiner should be informed which option they have chosen at the start of the exam. At Grades 4–5, candidates 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 1–8, in addition to the two versions of the Braille score, candidates will also be given a copy of the lyrics on their own.

The tests for Grades 4–5 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 6–8 have clear, simple and singable texts in English; candidates may use these or they may sing to any vowel sound or sol-fa, if they prefer.

Partially sighted candidates

Partially sighted candidates may request sight-reading tests in large notation or modified staff notation. They may read and play the test at the same time, or alternatively they may opt to memorize the test before performing it. Please note that exam tests will be provided on cream paper as standard. Additional time is also given – see page 1 for details.

Large notation sight-reading test The standard enlargement of tests is twice as large as regular notation. In the exam, the test will be produced with 14mm staff size. Standard large notation specimen tests are produced to order and available from Allegro Music (see page 10).

Large notation memory test: The standard enlargement of tests is twice as large as regular notation. In the exam, the test will be produced with 14mm staff size and will be given to the candidate to study, with a time allowance as indicated on page 1. The candidate will then be asked to perform the test from memory immediately following the preparation time.

Modified staff notation sight-reading test: These tests are available on request. Rather than a straightforward enlargement, the test can be precisely modified, e.g. with larger note-heads and beaming, or a larger font for performance directions. Candidates who require modified staff notation should send a covering letter at the time of entry along with a sample of the notation required, as in the example on page 11). Please include details of all typographical specifications required. Musical examples written in Sibelius can be emailed to us at: accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk. Please do consider how the font and staff size you require will impact on the paper size needed and the practicalities in the exam room.

Modified staff notation memory test: Please send a letter and sample as above. The modified test will be given to the candidate to study, with a time allowance as indicated on page 1. The candidate will then be asked to perform the test from memory immediately following the preparation time.

Practical exams: Aural tests

All candidates

Replays: Candidates who have requested a large or modified staff notation sight-reading test will receive an enlarged or modified copy of aural test B at Grades 4–8.

For candidates who have opted for a Braille memory test or an Aural repetition test, the Aural tests will be administered as follows:

Grades 4 and 5

Test B, requiring candidates to sing from score in free time (five notes at Grade 4 and six notes at Grade 5), 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 the candidate to sing back.

Grades 6, 7 and 8

Test B, requiring candidates to sing a short melody from score with an accompaniment played by the examiner, 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. Candidates will be given approximately 1 minute to study the test. It is recognised that some candidates may not have the necessary Braille music reading skills required for this test. If this is the case, please contact the Access Coordinator to discuss suitable alternative arrangements (see page 10 for contact details).

Written exams

Blind candidates

Braille paper: Exam papers will be supplied in Braille and answers will be accepted in Braille. Candidates are responsible for producing answers in Braille or in standard file format using their own equipment that does not require mains electricity.

Amanuensis: Candidates who are unable to access printed material, or are unable to write down their answers may use an amanuensis to act as a reader, a scribe or both. Candidates must make their own arrangements. If an amanuensis is required, this person may not be their music theory teacher or a close relative. However, anyone acting as an amanuensis needs to be musically literate to the level of the demands of the grade. Candidates who require an amanuensis must contact the Theory team (+44 (0)20 7467 8270; theory@abrsm.ac.uk) prior to entry. A covering letter or email must also be submitted with every exam entry.

Partially sighted candidates

Large-print paper: The standard enlargement of Theory exam papers is A4 – A3.

Modified paper: If modified staff notation and text is required for an exam paper, please include details of all relevant specifications required, as in the example on page 11. Musical examples written in Sibelius can be emailed to us at: accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk.

Please do consider how the font and staff size will impact on the paper size needed and the practicalities of working the paper in the exam.

All requests for modified papers to match exact specifications should be made at the time of entry to ensure we are able to produce a test in a suitable format by the exam.

Other exams

Jazz exams

As ABRSM's Jazz exams are designed to be accessible for candidates to attempt entirely by ear, it is assumed that blind and partially sighted candidates will attempt the exam in this way unless we are specifically informed otherwise. However, we are able to provide the Quick Study test in large notation, modified staff notation or Braille if requested at the time of entry.

Practical Musicianship

Blind candidates: Tests requiring the candidate to read from the score will be provided in Braille. A covering letter, stating which instruments the candidate will use and which options they will take, should be included at the time of entry. However, it is recognised that some candidates may not have the necessary Braille music reading skills required for this test. If this is the case, please contact the Access Coordinator to discuss suitable alternative arrangements (see page 10 for contact details).

Partially sighted candidates: Tests will be provided in enlarged or modified staff notation as requested at the time of entry. A covering letter together with a sample of the of the staff notation layout required must be submitted with the entry form for candidates requiring modified staff notation. Musical examples written in Sibelius can be emailed to us at: accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk.

The additional time allowances given for practical grades also apply here. Please see page 1 for further details.

Performance Assessment: Blind or partially sighted candidates, whose needs cannot be met within the graded exam system, may take the Performance Assessment. In this assessment candidates can play their own choice of repertoire and will receive a written report containing constructive comments and advice from a member of the examining panel; there is no pass or fail for neither this assessment, nor any assessment criteria. A written statement should accompany the entry detailing the specific needs of the candidate (this is essential if the candidate is under 18) so that the information can be passed on to the examiner.

For further information, please contact the Access Coordinator for a leaflet or visit our website: www.abrsm.org/performanceassessment

Diploma exams

Quick Study test

Blind candidates may choose between a Braille or Aural repetition Quick Study test. This test can be taken at any time during the exam.

Braille Quick Study memory test: This test consists of a short piece of music transcribed into Braille which will be given to the candidate to study, with a time allowance as indicated on page 2. Candidates may, if they wish, use the piano during their preparation time, as well as their own instrument. Candidates will be given a full Braille score and a second version with just pitch and rhythm.

Singing candidates may opt to take the Quick Study either as a memory test including lyrics, or reading directly from the Braille, without lyrics. If lyrics are chosen, the usual choice of English or Italian lyrics will be offered. Candidates will be given a full Braille score, including the lyrics and accompaniment, a copy of the lyrics only and a copy of the melody only. Please note that candidates who opt to read directly from the Braille will not be required to incorporate the lyrics and can sing the vocal line to 'la' or to any other vowel sound if they prefer.

Aural repetition Quick Study test: This test consists of a short piece of music recorded onto CD, which will be given to the candidate to study, with a time allowance as indicated on page 2. The test will be recorded on the instrument being assessed. After the preparation time, candidates will be required to perform the test from memory.

Singing candidates opting to take an Aural repetition Quick Study test will be required to incorporate the lyrics in their performance of the test and will be given the usual choice of singing in either Italian or English. Language preferences should be stated at the time of entry, so that the appropriate test can be recorded. Candidates will be provided with a full recording of the score, a recording of the lyrics only, a recording of the melody sung to 'la' with the accompaniment and a recording of the melody including the lyrics. Please note that candidates are responsible for providing their own CD player, which they are familiar with and should be reliable, reasonably portable, have a sufficiently long mains lead and be quick to set up. Further information and indicative tests can be provided on request from the Access Coordinator (see page 8).

Partially sighted candidates may request Quick Study tests in enlarged or modified staff notation, and should tick the relevant box on the entry form. The standard enlargement of tests is normally 141%. The test can be done as either a Quick Study or as a memory test with the relevant extra time allowance indicated on page 2.

Those requiring modified staff notation must include details of all relevant specifications required, as in the example on page 10. Musical examples written in Sibelius can be emailed to us at: accesscoordinator@abrs.ac.uk. Please do consider how the font and staff size will impact on the paper size needed and the practicalities of reading it in the exam room.

As there are no specimen tests at Diploma level, candidates should use ABRSM syllabus material at Grade 6 for DipABRSM, Grade 7 for LRSM or Grade 8 for FRSM. Candidates should contact the RNIB for Braille music at the relevant level, Allegro Music for large notation copies, or, depending on the copyright, may be able to produce specimen material themselves.

Additional general information

Certificates

In addition to the standard printed copy, a Braille certificate is automatically issued to all successful candidates who requested a Braille memory test, Braille Theory paper or Aural repetition at Grades 6–8. Braille certificates are also available to successful candidates who opted to do Aural repetition tests at Grades 4–5 and for jazz exams however these are not issued automatically and a request must be included with the original entry to ensure this request is processed.

Our certificates are produced by RNIB, and will be forwarded to applicants a few weeks after the exam session has ended. We do our utmost to produce Braille certificates in the shortest time possible, but please be aware that there may be a slight delay in getting these to you.

Specimen tests

The following materials are available in Braille from RNIB Customer Services:

- **Specimen Braille Memory tests**
- **Specimen Aural tests in Braille (Three volumes: Grades 4–5, 6, 7 and 8)** The RNIB has also issued two volumes of specimen Aural tests in Braille, primarily for the use of blind teachers with sighted candidates. In the appendix of the Grade 1–8 volume, the examples are rewritten for blind candidates. Print copies of ABRSM's Aural tests can be ordered from any music shop which stocks ABRSM publications or from our website: www.abrsm.org/shop
- **Specimen Braille Theory papers** A selection of past papers which have previously been Brailled are available. Please note that not all past exam papers will be available.
- **The AB Guide to Music Theory (Part 1: Grades 4–5, Part 2: Grades 1–8)** These volumes include tactile diagrams of staff notation alongside Braille descriptions.

The following materials are available to order from Allegro Music:

- **Specimen Aural repetition tests**
- **Specimen large notation Sight-reading tests**

Other publications

ABRSM Publications

Large-print copies of all ABRSM's publications (not including syllabuses and regulations) may be purchased from Allegro Music. The RNIB produce Braille transcriptions of all the pieces set each year for Piano Grades 1–8. To obtain copies of these, please contact RNIB Customer Services.

Syllabuses and regulations

ABRSM's website, containing all the syllabus lists and regulations information, is accessible to most screen-reading and enlargement software packages. For syllabuses, regulations or copies of these guidelines in alternative format, please contact the Access Coordinator. Relevant extracts from ABRSM's syllabuses and regulations can be requested in Braille from the RNIB.

Copyright

The copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002 provides an exception for making individual copies of printed material for the benefit of visually impaired people, where such copies are not commercially available. Authorised photocopies of ABRSM works are available in standardised large print format from Allegro Music (see page 10). These will meet the needs of many visually impaired candidates, but, if not, individual large print copies can be made without application to ABRSM. For items not published by ABRSM, it is your responsibility to contact the relevant publisher to enquire whether suitable large print copies are available. Only where such copies are not available may an individual large print copy be made. Any copy made under this exception must include certain information.

Organisations wishing to make two or more large print or otherwise accessible copies (e.g. Braille) should contact the Music Publishers Association (MPA) for details of their VIP Licensing Scheme.

For further information relating to copyright issues, please contact ABRSM's Copyright Department at email copyright@abrsm.ac.uk

Modified staff notation example – see page 5

Moderato ritmico

The image displays four staves of musical notation for a piece titled "Moderato ritmico". Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff is marked *f* (forte) and includes the tempo marking *f* *leggiero*. The second staff is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). The third staff is marked *p* (piano). The fourth staff is marked *f* (forte). The notation includes various note values, rests, and slurs, with some notes connected by thick stems and beams.

- 1 Made into landscape
- 2 Staff changed from 7 to 10
- 3 Beams 0.5 to 0.7 thick
- 4 Stems 0.1 to 0.2 thick
- 5 Leger lines 0.16 to 0.25 thick

- 6 Barlines 0.16 to 0.2 thick
- 7 Leggiero – Arial Bold
- 8 Tempo marking – Arial Bold
- 9 Moved four systems closer together
- 10 Altered length of some bars to make similar bars approximately the same size.

Candidates requiring modified staff notation theory papers must also specify any modifications required for the text, for example: size, font and spacing.

Further information

If you require any further information, please contact the Access Coordinator in one of the following ways:

Access Coordinator

ABRSM
24 Portland Place
London W1B 1LU
T: +44 (0)20 7467 8298
T: +44 (0)20 7637 2582 (textphone)
E: accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk
W: www.abrsm.org/specificneeds

Fair access information is also available for deaf and hearing impaired candidates, candidates with dyslexia, dyspraxia or other learning difficulties, candidates with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and candidates with other access requirements. Candidates with a dual sensory impairment should make sure they have a copy of both sets of relevant guidelines.

Updates will be posted on ABRSM's website: www.abrsm.org/specificneeds

For specimen tests contact:

RNIB Customer Services

T: +44 (0)303 123 9999
E: cservices@rnib.org.uk

Allegro Music

T: +44 (0)1885 490375
E: sales@allegro.co.uk
W: www.allegro.co.uk

For general information for children and adults interested in music who are blind or partially sighted, contact:

Music Officer

Royal National Institute of Blind People

105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
T: +44 (0)20 7391 2273
E: mas@rnib.org.uk
W: www.rnib.org.uk/music

All tests used in current exams use Braille music conforming to standards in the *New International Manual of Braille Music Notation*.

This information has been produced in consultation with the RNIB and is correct at the time of publication.