

Guidance for digital Performance Grades

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Introduction

ABRSM's Music Performance Grades (www.abrsm.org/performancegrades) are assessed remotely, by a member of our highly-trained examiner panel, using a video recording of the candidate's performance. This document provides detailed guidance on the procedures you need to follow when booking, recording and submitting a remotely-assessed exam.

You can find full details of the exam content and requirements in the Qualification Specification (syllabus) available at www.abrsm.org/performancegrades.

The rules set out for completing exams are given in our Exam Regulations, available at www.abrsm.org/examregulations.

It is very important that you read both of these documents if you are preparing candidates for a Performance Grade exam.

Definitions

Applicant:	Anyone who is 18 or over and submits a booking for an ABRSM exam (often the school, music teacher, parent of a candidate or the candidate, if he or she is 18 or over).
Candidate:	The person taking the exam. Where a candidate is 18 or over and books their own exam, he or she will also be the applicant.
Contact ID:	Everyone using our online booking service is given a unique Contact ID that allows us to identify individuals in our system. A Candidate's Contact ID is also used on submitted materials.
Responsible adult:	The person who oversees the exam for candidates under 18. The responsible adult must be aged 18 or over and may be the applicant, teacher or parent/ carer.

Assessment requirements

For candidates taking a digital Performance Grade exam, we require the following:

1. A video recording, which includes:
 - a continuous, unedited, performance of the four pieces/songs
 - the opening of the own-choice piece/song shown to the camera before the performance begins
 - announcements to the camera before the performance begins
 - candidate identification shown to the camera before the performance begins
2. An online programme form and a declaration completed during the upload process by the candidate or responsible adult (where the candidate is under 18).

Candidate identification

We require all candidates taking a Performance Grade to provide a form of photographic identification (photo ID) in accordance with our Candidate Identification Policy (www.abrsm.org/policies). The photo ID should be shown to the camera at the beginning of the exam.

Place of exam

The candidate and/or applicant can choose where the exam performance takes place. This can be the candidate's school, their teacher's studio, or any other location where appropriate space and instruments are available (including a suitable piano for any accompaniments). The exam can also take place in the candidate's home.

Booking and submitting an exam

Visit our website exam booking pages for help with booking - www.abrsm.org/en/exam-booking/how-to-book

Once you have booked an exam, you have 28 days to submit the exam video. You must do this by the date and time given in your exam booking.

It will not be possible to submit video recordings after the exam submission deadline has passed. If we do not receive a submission the candidate will be marked as absent. A candidate who is marked as absent, may be eligible for a partial refund under certain circumstances. Please see our refund policy on our website for further details: www.abrsm.org/en/policies/withdrawals-non-attendance-and-fee-refund-policy/.

Taking the exam

Exam date

Candidates can choose when to record their exam performance.

Instructions for the responsible adult (where applicable)

Role of the responsible adult

The responsible adult is responsible for overseeing the exam for candidates under 18. The person taking on this role must read this guidance before the exam recording takes place and make sure that the requirements outlined in this guidance document are followed. The responsible adult must also be present when the applicant or candidate uploads the video to our online booking service, as they will need to complete the declaration form.

During the exam

The responsible adult must:

- stay in the exam room for the duration of the exam;
- make sure that the exam is recorded in one continuous take.

The responsible adult may also:

- act as page-turner where needed;
- provide accompaniment for the candidate;
- help the candidate with the video recording device;
- carry out any of the pre-performance procedures that must be filmed except showing the candidate's photo ID.

Video recording

General recording requirements

The exam should be recorded as one continuous audio-visual file – this means that once recording has started, the candidate should make their announcements, show their documents to camera and perform all their repertoire in one continuous take. You can find full instructions covering the recording process below.

Tuning before the exam does not need to be recorded, as the examiner only assesses the performance itself. However, any subsequent re-tuning or break during the performance should be included as part of the continuous recording. See [the syllabus](#) for further details:

www.abrsm.org/performancegrades

The recording must not be edited in any way after the exam.

Recording devices and set-up - video resolution

Most modern smartphones, tablets and laptops will be suitable for the video recording of the exam. Camera resolution should be 720p (and should be set before the recording is made). This will give appropriate clarity. Lower resolution (e.g. 480p) may produce an unclear, grainy picture and higher resolutions are likely to result in files that are too large to upload successfully. Video resolution can usually be altered in the device settings.

Recording devices and set-up - camera position

Either landscape or portrait view is acceptable. The camera should be static with candidate, instrument and music stand (if used) clearly in view, in order to enable an overall sense of performance. The candidate's face (either facing the camera or in profile) should be visible throughout the performance.

Where an accompanist is part of the performance, they should be in view. However, the candidate should be prioritised as the main focus at all times if viewing both is not possible. It is also important for the examiner to be able to hear the candidate and any accompaniment in appropriate balance.

For keyboard instruments, the whole of the keyboard(s) should be visible and, where applicable and possible, the pedals should also be in view. For percussion candidates, each instrument being played in the exam should be visible throughout (as the camera will be static).

We acknowledge that in certain circumstances, for example in Organ exams, the recording device may need to be set at a distance from the candidate in order to secure a balanced sound. In these instances, we understand that a clear picture of, for example, manuals and/or pedal board may not be possible; the candidate must, however, be clearly visible.

People present

If a responsible adult, or any other person not actively involved in the performance, is in the room they should remain still and silent during the performance and be situated out of the camera view. They should not disrupt or direct the candidate's performance, or interfere with the recording in any way.

Testing and trialling

We recommend testing the recording device and trialling recording before the exam – to make sure that the recording will be of a good enough quality, with clear, undistorted sound and vision. Other things to check include, suitable lighting levels, camera position and the clarity of the information shown to the camera (see below).

Before starting the recording, it may be helpful to check that audible or potentially distracting notifications are disabled on the device, that it is well charged (where appropriate) and has enough available storage space.

The recording must be of a good enough quality to allow assessment of all aspects of the performance, including tone quality and dynamic range. Examiners will mark based on what they hear and see, and they cannot take poor quality- or balance of- a recording into account. We will not accept any requests for exam result appeals made on the grounds of recording quality.

File size

Recordings must be in one of the following formats: MP4, WMV, MOV or MPG. The file size must not exceed 2GB.

If the resolution of the video is too high, the file may be too large or slow to upload. In these circumstances, the file should be compressed to ensure it uploads successfully. There are a number of platforms available online and through Android and Apple app stores to help with this.

Pre-performance procedures

Own-choice music copy

The opening of the candidate's copy of the own-choice piece/song should be shown to the camera with the following easily visible:

- Title
- Opening clef(s), key and time signature, tempo marking and any other performance indications
- A few lines of music from the beginning of the piece/song – the whole page of music may be shown, but this is not needed

Where a responsible adult is present, they can show the copy to the camera if the candidate prefers.

Announcement

The candidate should also announce the following information before beginning their performance:

- Name
- Exam subject (instrument)
- Grade
- Piece/song title, composer name and list information (where applicable) for each piece, in the order they will be performed

Where a responsible adult is present they can make the introductory announcement if the candidate prefers.

Candidate photo identification

All candidates taking a Performance Grade must show a form of photographic identification (photo ID) to the camera. **The candidate's face should be in full view of the camera when the photo ID is shown.** For more information and a list of accepted forms of photo ID, please read our Candidate Identification Policy: www.abrsm.org/policies.

The candidate must show their photo ID to the camera themselves.

Post-performance information

File names

Your file name must only include letters, numbers, underscores (_) or dashes (-). Your file name must not include spaces or any other characters, otherwise it will not be accepted. Your file name must also not be blank. Files with no file name will not process correctly and therefore will not be viewable by our examiners.

Compressing videos

If you have a large video file and/or slow broadband speed, you may want to consider compressing your video to help reduce the length of time required for the video upload process.

For high grade exams videos are likely to be approximately 20-30 minutes. Even on 720p HD video at 30 fps, a 30-minute video file may be up to 1 GB in size which could take a while to upload. In such instances we recommend you compress your video before uploading to make sure your file uploads as quickly as possible. Compression is a way of reducing the file size while maintaining the quality and ratio of the audio and video.

As an example, compressing a 768.84 MB performance video through an online compression site creates a file which is 39% smaller (461.94 MB).

In most instances when compressing a video file, if you watch the two videos side by side it is not always obvious which is which when compression has worked correctly. We would always recommend you watch back your whole performance once you have compressed your video and make sure you are happy with how it looks and sounds before uploading.

There are various free internet sites available to help with video compression. One example of free compression software is freeconvert: <https://www.freeconvert.com/video-compressor>

To use this all you need to do is upload your video and click compress (using the site default settings), let the site run its processes and then download the compressed file back to your computer.

If you want to use downloadable software (rather than an online converter) to help you compress your videos there are also various options available. One example is handbrake: <https://handbrake.fr>

This is a free program which can compress any video files and works on all platforms.

Please note: these are third party piece of software – many other options are available. We do not endorse particular products and recommend that customers make their own choices when using third party software.

Submitting the video recording and declarations

Once the exam is booked, the candidate or applicant has 28 days to submit the video recording. The upload function will only be available during this period of time. Please leave plenty of time to upload the video, in case there are any problems that need resolving.

When you are ready to upload you will need to login through either account (candidate or applicant) and select 'Submit Recordings'. Once you have selected the correct candidate you will be able to start the upload process.

Before you upload the video, you will be asked to complete the following.

Online programme form

- If there is a syllabus overlap option, indicate if the pieces/songs are from the current or previous syllabus.
- Enter each piece/song in performance order, giving the list number (if relevant), composer and title.
- Indicate which piece/song is own choice

Declaration

- To confirm that the recording was made in accordance with our Exam Regulations (see Appendix 1). When the candidate is under 18, this declaration should be made by the responsible adult who was present at the time of the recording. The responsible adult must therefore also be present when the video is uploaded.

You will only be able to submit your recording once, so make sure the file you are selecting is the correct one.

If you lose your internet connection while the video is uploading, the upload will automatically pause and then resume when the connection returns. If the internet connection is lost for 30 minutes or more, then the upload will stop completely and you will see the following error message: 'There has been an error with your video upload. Please try again.'

We will keep recordings of Performance Grade exams for 120 days after the video has been uploaded. We will then destroy the recordings.

Use of the video recording

The video recording of the exam is made for the sole purpose of ABRSM's assessment and it must not be shared or used for any other purpose. Sharing the recording may also risk infringing the rights of composers and/or their music publishers, for which the candidate could be liable.

During the process of recording and submitting the exam only, you are allowed to share the recording with anyone who is directly involved with the exam, such the applicant or teacher. The video recording of the exam must not be shared with any other person or uploaded to file sharing or social media websites such as Facebook or YouTube.

If the exam recording is shared with anyone other than ABRSM (for assessment purposes) or the people directly involved with the exam (as outlined above), the candidate may be disqualified.

You can only submit a recording as evidence for a qualification once. If you try to submit a previously submitted video a second time (for any qualification) we will not accept or assess the recording and the candidate will be disqualified from the second assessment.

Status of the video recording (for data protection purposes)

A video recording of an exam has the status of an examination script and is therefore exempt from subject access requests made under data protection law. However, candidates are allowed to retain a copy of their video recording after submitting it to ABRSM. They can request other information about themselves and how ABRSM uses their personal data in accordance with our Privacy Policy (www.abrsm.org/privacypolicy).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Declaration content

Candidates over 18

The screenshot shows the ABRSM website's Declaration page for candidates over 18. The header includes the ABRSM logo and navigation links: DASHBOARD, PUBLIC VENUE BOOKING, PRIVATE VISIT, SUBMIT RECORDINGS, and ALTO. A breadcrumb trail reads: Log in or register -> Select exam -> Declaration -> Upload recording -> Confirmation. The main heading is "Declaration". Below it, a note states: "This should be completed by the person submitting the recording. If a candidate is under 18, this must be a responsible adult. See our [website](#) for a definition of 'responsible adult'". The candidate information is "Candidate: Definitely Over18, Baritone Performance Grade 4". A checkbox with the text "By ticking this box, I confirm the following:" is present. To the right, a text box is labeled "For safeguarding and security purposes, please list everyone present in the room during the recording of the exam and their reason for being present". The confirmation list includes: "the video being submitted is the work of the candidate named above", "the exam was conducted under the [conditions specified](#) by ABRSM", and "the video of the exam will not be shared with any other person, or uploaded to any file sharing or social media website, such as Facebook or YouTube". At the bottom, there are "Back" and "Upload recording" buttons.

Candidates under 18

The screenshot shows the ABRSM website's Declaration page for candidates under 18. The header and navigation are identical to the previous page. The breadcrumb trail is: Log in or register -> Select exam -> Declaration -> Upload recording -> Confirmation. The main heading is "Declaration". Below it, a note states: "This should be completed by the person submitting the recording. If a candidate is under 18, this must be a responsible adult. See our [website](#) for a definition of 'responsible adult'". The candidate information is "Candidate: Eve Mulcahy3, Piano Performance Grade 1". A checkbox with the text "By ticking this box, I confirm the following:" is present. To the right, a text box is labeled "For safeguarding and security purposes, please list everyone present in the room during the recording of the exam and their reason for being present". The confirmation list includes: "the video being submitted is the work of the candidate named above", "the exam was conducted under the [conditions specified](#) by ABRSM", and "the video of the exam will not be shared with any other person, or uploaded to any file sharing or social media website, such as Facebook or YouTube". Below this, there are two additional text boxes: "Name of responsible adult" and "Relationship to candidate". At the bottom, there are "Back" and "Upload recording" buttons.