

SINGING REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

Subject Code: 40

This section provides a summary of the most important points that teachers and candidates need to know when taking ABRSM Singing 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

There are eight grades for Singing and candidates may be entered in any grade irrespective of age and without previously having taken any other grade in Singing. 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).

Exam booking

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

ELEMENTS OF THE EXAM

All ABRSM graded singing exams comprise the following elements: accompanied songs (three in Grades 1–5, four in Grades 6–8); one unaccompanied traditional song; sight-singing; and aural tests. Marks are allocated as follows:

	Grades 1–5	6–8
Accompanied songs: <i>List</i> A	30	24
B	30	24
C	30	21
D	–	21
Unaccompanied traditional song	21	21
Sight-singing	21	21
Aural tests	<u>18</u>	<u>18</u>
Total	150	150

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. 102–103 for the marking criteria used by examiners.

ACCOMPANIED SONGS**Programme planning**

In Grades 1–5, candidates must perform *three* accompanied songs, one chosen from each of Lists A, B and C (as well as an unaccompanied traditional song: see p. 7). In Grades 1–3, there is a total maximum programme time for the accompanied songs that must be observed: four minutes at Grade 1, five minutes at Grade 2, and six minutes at Grade 3.

In Grades 6–8, candidates must perform *four* accompanied songs, one chosen from each of Lists A, B, C and D (as well as an unaccompanied traditional song: see p. 7).

Languages

In Grades 1–5, all items may be sung either in their original language or in a published singing translation in any other language.

In Grades 6–8, the song chosen from List B must be sung in its original language (i.e. French, German or Italian). The remaining three items in the programme may be sung either in their original language or in a published singing translation in any other language. Overall, however, in their chosen programme of four accompanied songs, candidates must sing in at least two languages.

The syllabus details the languages/singing translations for all the listed editions (except for English-language songs that are published without singing translations).

Keys

The syllabus details the published keys and vocal ranges for all items (except for those items encompassing more than one key, for which only the vocal range is specified). Where the syllabus cites more than one edition for a particular song, keys are listed for all editions, and, where there are different keys, the edition in the highest key is presented first. The vocal range is given for the first-listed edition only (unless there are slight variants in range between editions).

The vocal ranges are presented using the Helmholtz system, i.e.:

- c'' (–b'') one octave above middle C (upwards to B)
- c' (–b') middle C (upwards to B)
- c (–b) one octave below middle C (upwards to B)
- C (–B) two octaves below middle C (upwards to B)

All items may be sung by any voice and in any key, published or transposed, suited to the compass of the candidate's voice, except for those items from operas, operettas, oratorios, cantatas and sacred works in Grades 6–8 (Lists A and D) where a particular voice and key are specified (although original pitch may be adopted in Baroque pieces, if appropriate).

Exam music and editions

Whenever the syllabus requires a specific arrangement of a song, the edition listed in the syllabus must be used in the exam; in all such cases the arranger's name is presented in bold type. For all other songs, candidates may use any edition of their choice (in- or out-of-print or downloadable) provided the Grade 6–8 language and key requirements (explained on p. 5) are observed.

The listing of editions in this syllabus is given only for guidance and for the purposes of correct identification and is not intended to be comprehensive since many of the syllabus items are available in a large number of song collections and editions. The information on published keys, vocal ranges and translations is likewise given for guidance.

Songs marked **(F)** or **(M)** either contain words that indicate or suggest a female or male singer or are associated with a particular role, but this information need not be regarded as obligatory. Pronouns may be changed, at the candidate's discretion, as may other gender-specific words that are easily substituted.

Editorial indications

Indications such as the realization of ornaments, phrasing, metronome marks, etc., need not be strictly observed. Where the music contains no such indications, candidates should use their discretion to achieve a musical performance.

Verses and repeats

Unless otherwise indicated in the syllabus, candidates should perform all items complete, although they may omit straightforward repeats of sections (i.e. where the music and words are unchanged and therefore little is added to the overall effect of the performance).

In verse/chorus songs, the choruses are required. All da capo and dal segno indications should be observed, unless the syllabus specifies otherwise.

Singing from memory

All items in all grades must be sung from memory, except for items from oratorios, cantatas and large-scale sacred works, where candidates are permitted to sing with score, if they wish, in accordance with accepted performance practice.

Accompaniment

All songs in Lists A, B, C and D must be performed with a live piano accompaniment. Candidates must provide their own accompanist, who may remain in the exam room only while accompanying. The candidate's teacher may act as accompanist but candidates are not permitted to accompany themselves. The examiner will not act as an accompanist (except in the Sight-singing test).

If necessary, an accompanist may simplify any part of the piano accompaniment, provided the result is musically satisfactory. In a Grade 8 exam only, the accompanist is permitted to bring a page-turner to assist with difficult page-turns in the piano part.

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.

UNACCOMPANIED TRADITIONAL SONG (folk song)

In all grades, candidates are required to perform an unaccompanied traditional (folk) song of their own choice, from memory. A traditional song is defined as a folk song originating among the people of a region and forming part of their culture. Folk songs are essentially colloquial and have no traceable composer, and they cover a broad range of topics, such as: the natural world and the cycle of life; love and romance; work and relaxation; historical events; and situations of hardship, suffering, inequality and rebellion.

The following genres are not suitable: hymns, carols, chants, plainsong; nursery rhymes; national anthems; stylized folk song arrangements (i.e. that would rely on their piano accompaniment for the full musical effect to be achieved)

The unaccompanied traditional song may be sung in any language. An English translation or short summary should be provided for the examiner when words other than English are used. The song may be sung in any key comfortable for the candidate, and, if required, the first note or key-chord may be played on the piano to establish the pitch. The candidate's unaccompanied traditional song must not be the same song as any chosen from the lists of accompanied songs in the same exam.

Candidates must ensure that the unaccompanied traditional song fulfils the following timings:

	<i>minimum</i>	<i>maximum</i>
<i>Grades 1–4</i>	1 minute	2 minutes
<i>Grades 5–8</i>	1 minute	3 minutes

Possible sources

There are no 'set' songs for this part of the exam. Candidates are free to perform any song from any source or publication at any grade (provided the guidelines above are followed).

The many available collections of traditional/folk songs include the following:

- Sing Together (*available in melody-only and accompanied editions: OUP*)
- Best of Folk Songs: 40 British, Irish and American Songs (*available in melody-only and accompanied editions: Schott ED 12881 or 12880*)
- The ABRSM Songbook, Books 1–5 (*ABRSM*) (*each album contains twelve unaccompanied traditional songs*)
- Folk Voiceworks: 30 Traditional Songs (*OUP*)
- The Library of Folk Songs (*Amsco AM 961521*)
- A Selection of Collected Folk Songs, Vols 1 & 2, arr. Sharp & Vaughan Williams (*Novello NOV190038 or NOV190040*)
- Folk Songs of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales (*Alfred VF1880*)
- The New Scottish Song Book (*Hardie Press*)

SIGHT-SINGING

Useful information

Candidates will be asked to sing a short piece of music which they have not previously seen; this Sight-singing test will be accompanied by the examiner at the piano.

The tests for Grades 1–5 are printed without words and may be sung to any vowel (with or without consonant) or to sol-fa. The tests for Grades 6–8 are printed with clear, simple and singable words in English; candidates may use these or they may sing to any vowel or sol-fa, if they prefer (the choice will not affect the marking).

Separate bass-clef versions of tests are available for all grades: candidates should let the examiner know if they would prefer a bass-clef to a treble-clef test.

For practice purposes, two books of specimen sight-singing tests (Grades 1–5 and Grades 6–8) are available, published by ABRSM.

Preparation

Candidates will be given up to half a minute in which to look through and, if they wish, try out any part of the test (unaccompanied) before they are required to sing it for assessment. The examiner will play the key-chord and starting note before the preparation time and again before the actual assessment.

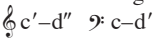
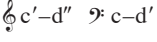
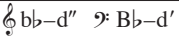
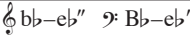
Accompaniments

None of the Sight-singing tests feature piano introductions and therefore it is the candidate who starts the performance, setting his or her own pulse and ‘shadowed’ by the examiner at the piano. In Grades 1 and 2 the piano accompaniments are minimal (occasional chords), with the top notes of the chords doubling the vocal line. In Grades 3–5 the accompaniments are slightly fuller, while in Grades 6–8 they are more akin to ‘real’ song accompaniments.

Parameters

There is a progression of note values through the grades (starting with only crotchets, minims and pairs of quavers at Grade 1), with rests provided at suitable breathing places. Italian and English descriptors are used (the Italian terms relating to the requirements of ABRSM’s Music Theory grades). Dynamic markings are printed above the vocalist’s stave.

The table on p. 9 shows the introduction of elements at each grade. Please note that these parameters are presented cumulatively, i.e. once introduced they apply for all subsequent grades (albeit within a logical progression of difficulty).

Grade	Length (bars)	Keys	Time	Vocal range	Intervals in vocal part	Texts
1	4	C, G & F majors	4/4	About a sixth, within the range of: 	Major/minor 2nds only, stepwise and diatonic, no repeated notes	None
2		D major	3/4		Rising major/minor 3rds within tonic chord	
3	8	B \flat major A minor		About an octave, within the range of: 	Rising and falling major/minor 3rds, cadential rising perfect 4ths, repeated notes	
4		A & E \flat majors E & D minors	6/8		Rising perfect 4ths (or 4ths falling back to note of departure), rising and falling octaves	
5		E major B & G minors			Perfect 5ths, falling perfects 4ths	
6	8–10	A \flat major C minor			Major/minor 6ths, occasional chromatic notes	English (optional)
7		F \sharp minor			Occasional minor 7ths, chromatic semitones	
8	8–12	C \sharp & F minors			Diminished 7ths	

AURAL TESTS

The requirements are the same for all subjects. Full details of the Aural tests are given on pp. 82–87.

(continued overleaf)

IN THE EXAM

Examiners

Generally, there will be one examiner in the exam room; however, for training and quality assurance purposes, a second examiner will occasionally be present. Examiners may stop the performance of a song when they have heard enough to form a judgment. They may also ask to look at the music (e.g. the accompanist's score – no additional copies are required) before or after the performance of an accompanied song. 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.

Song list

Candidates should provide the examiner with a list of the songs they will be performing, in particular the syllabus-number (e.g. A16) for each song in each list. Blank exam programme & running order forms are provided at the back of this booklet and may be filled in for this purpose.

Order of the exam

The individual sections of the exam may be undertaken in any order, at the candidate's choice, although it is always preferable for accompanied songs to be performed consecutively.

Performance

Candidates are advised to direct their performance towards the examiner (the 'audience'), who will be listening even when he/she has to look down to write.

ASSESSMENT

The tables on pp. 102–103 show the criteria that examiners use as the basis of assessment. These criteria (newly revised and expanded) 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. 102–103 (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.

