

# Guidance for digital ARSM exams

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## **Contents**

Introduction .....	1
Assessment requirements.....	1
Taking the exam .....	2
Submitting the video recording and declarations .....	6
Appendices.....	8

## **Introduction**

The ARSM diploma ([www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma](http://www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma)) is available to candidates via two methods of assessment – the traditional, face-to-face exam where the candidate performs to a member of our highly-trained examiner panel, or digitally, where an examiner from the same panel makes their assessment 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 **digital** ARSM exam.

You can find full details of the exam content and requirements in the ARSM syllabus available at [www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma](http://www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma).

The rules set out for exams are given in our Exam Regulations, available at [www.abrsm.org/examregulations](http://www.abrsm.org/examregulations).

It is very important that you read both of these documents if you are preparing candidates for an ARSM 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 will oversee 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 remotely-assessed ARSM exam, we require the following:

1. A video recording, which includes:
  - a continuous, unedited, performance of the chosen repertoire;
  - a completed programme form shown to the camera before the performance begins;
  - the opening of any own-choice repertoire 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. A declaration completed during the upload process by the candidate or responsible adult (where the candidate is under 18).

## **Candidate photo identification**

We require all candidates taking ARSM exams to provide a form of photographic identification (photo ID) in accordance with our Candidate Identification Policy ([www.abrsm.org/policies](http://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 guidance - [www.abrsm.org/en/exam-booking/how-to-book](http://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. 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 Withdrawals, Non-Attendance and Fee Refund Policy available at [www.abrsm.org/policies](http://www.abrsm.org/policies).

## **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 about breaks: [www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma](http://www.abrsm.org/arsmdiploma).

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 (and audio) 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 all the 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. The in-built microphone on most devices will be suitable.

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 legibility of the written programme form on screen (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**

### **Programme form**

Candidates should complete a programme form and show it to the camera at the start of the video recording, for approximately 5 seconds. The following information is required, presented in programme order:

- the candidate's name and subject (instrument);
- the list number, for items chosen from the ARSM repertoire list; own-choice repertoire can be marked with a dash (—);
- the composer's name and, where applicable, the arranger's/transcriber's name;
- full information on each piece to be performed, including:
  - name of the piece/larger work
  - catalogue number, where available – Opus number, BWV for Bach, K. for Mozart, etc.
  - details of individual movements/sections
  - for own-choice repertoire, the edition used
- for woodwind, brass and singing candidates, where the break (if planned) will be taken and its length;
- where applicable, any related instrument(s) to be used;
- an approximate timing for each piece (broken down for individual movements/sections of larger works);
- overall programme length, which should include gaps between items and, where applicable, a longer break.

A blank form to print and complete is provided at:

[www.abrsm.org/en/arism-associate-of-the-royal-schools-of-music/preparing-for-the-exam/](http://www.abrsm.org/en/arism-associate-of-the-royal-schools-of-music/preparing-for-the-exam/)

If there isn't enough room on the form, the information can be continued on a second form. Alternatively, you can write the information on a blank piece of paper.

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

## **Own-choice music**

The opening of the candidate's copy of any own-choice repertoire should also be shown to the camera, with the following easily visible:

- the title;
- the opening clef(s), key and time signatures, tempo marking and any other performance indications;
- a few lines of music from the beginning of each piece/song - a whole page of music may be shown, but this is not needed.

If more than one movement/piece from a multi-part work is presented as own-choice repertoire, the opening of each should be shown to the camera as described.

Where a responsible adult is present, they can show the music to the camera if the candidate prefers, as this does not form part of the assessed performance.

## **Announcement**

As well as showing the programme form and own-choice music to the camera, the candidate should announce the following information before beginning their performance:

- their name;
- exam subject (instrument);
- title, composer name and list number (where applicable) for each piece/song, in the order they will be performed.

Where a responsible adult is present they can make the introductory announcement if the candidate prefers, as this does not form part of the assessed performance.

## **Candidate identification**

We require all candidates taking ARSM exams must provide a form of photographic identification (photo ID) in accordance with our Candidate Identification Policy ([www.abrsm.org/policies](http://www.abrsm.org/policies)). The photo ID should be shown to the camera at the beginning of the exam. The candidate's face should be in full view of the camera when the photo ID is shown.

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. Even on 720p HD video at 30 fps, a 30-minute video file may be up to 1 GB in size which may 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.

*Please note: This is a 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.*

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

It's a free program which can compress any video files and works on all platforms.

*Please note: This is a 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.

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.

As part of the upload process, a declaration must be completed 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. Candidates over 18 must also be present at the point of upload to complete the declaration.

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 ARSM 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](http://www.abrsm.org/privacypolicy).



# Appendices

## Declaration content

### Candidates over 18

DASHBOARDPUBLIC VENUE BOOKINGPRIVATE VISITSUBMIT RECORDINGSALTOHELP

Log in or register → Select exam → Declaration → Upload recording → Confirmation

### Declaration

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'.

Candidate: John Smith, Piano ARSM


By ticking this box, I confirm the following: \*

- the video being submitted is the work of the candidate named above
- the exam was conducted under the [conditions specified](#) by ABRSM
- 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

For safeguarding and security purposes, please list everyone present in the room during the recording of the exam and their reason for being present

BackUpload recording

### Candidates under 18

DASHBOARDPUBLIC VENUE BOOKINGPRIVATE VISITSUBMIT RECORDINGSALTOHELP

Log in or register → Select exam → Declaration → Upload recording → Confirmation

### Declaration

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'.

Candidate: Jill Thomas, Violin ARSM

By ticking this box, I confirm the following: \*

- the video being submitted is the work of the candidate named above
- the exam was conducted under the [conditions specified](#) by ABRSM
- 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

For safeguarding and security purposes, please list everyone present in the room during the recording of the exam and their reason for being present

Name of responsible adult \*

Relationship to candidate \*

BackUpload recording

