

# Guidelines for candidates with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

## Terminology

Throughout this document the term 'autistic spectrum disorders' (ASD) is used, acknowledging the fact that autism occurs in differing degrees of severity and in a variety of forms. This term includes the condition Asperger syndrome, which describes people at the higher functioning end of the autistic spectrum.

## Our policy

In addition to the specific provisions described below, we are happy to consider each person individually if their needs are not covered by our standard arrangements. However, it is important to understand 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.

## Entering for the exam

- If you decide that the provisions detailed below would be useful, please choose code C on the entry form.
- If you are requesting extra time for sight-reading, you will need to send an official supporting document with your entry. This is to confirm the candidate's needs and the support that they are likely to need, e.g. extra time or enlarged sight-reading.
- If you need something which is not covered by these guidelines, please enclose a covering letter explaining exactly what is needed and why. The more information you can give us the better.

## The supporting document

- You can send an assessment from an educational psychologist or specialist teacher, a letter from the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) at the school, a letter from the headteacher or a letter from the Local Education Authority (LEA).
- As it can take some time to get hold of this sort of document, it's a good idea to think ahead well in advance of the closing date.
- Once you have sent in the document, we will keep this on file, and won't ask to see another copy.

# Practical exams

**General extra time:** an additional five minutes will be allowed in the timetable for each examination, to account for any difficulties with reading or communication.

## Sight-reading

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**Extra time:** it is recognised that some candidates with ASD may have difficulties with short-term memory and therefore sight-reading. If this is the case, up to two minutes of the extra time already allowed may be used for the sight-reading/quick study preparation, rather than the usual 30 seconds. If this provision is required, a relevant assessment must be provided, along with a written request.

**Large notation sight-reading tests** are available on request, as this may aid candidates who have trouble with reading and processing visual information. If this provision is required, please advise the Associated Board when sending the assessment and covering letter at the time of entry.

**Tinted overlays/coloured paper:** candidates who have difficulty reading from white paper are welcome to bring tinted overlays with them. These can be used during any part of the exam. If the sight-reading is required on coloured paper then three sheets of paper in the correct colour, of the required size (A3/A4) must be provided on entry.

**Examiners will be aware** that having lost their place in the music candidates may have particular difficulty in re-finding it.

## Scales

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**Scale book:** candidates who have particular problems with short-term memory and therefore the memorising of the scales, may take the scale manual into the exam room *for reference only*. This means that candidates may have the scale book open on a music stand close to them and glance over if they have particular problems recalling the patterns. If candidates are deemed to be reading from the music, they will not be disqualified but neither will they be able to achieve full marks for this section. Advance written permission must be obtained from the Associated Board for this provision.

**Replays:** candidates may forget what scale they were playing – a replay will be allowed. Examiners will also be aware that some processing time may be needed for candidates to recall the key signature and finger patterns required. No penalty will be made for a lack of 'prompt' responses.

## Aural tests

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**Additional attempts:** examiners are asked to give an additional attempt at the aural tests if necessary. Any further attempts may be allowed at the examiner's discretion.

**Large notation aural tests** will be automatically provided if large notation sight-reading has been requested.

**Singing:** examiners will be aware that candidates with ASD may have particular difficulty with the singing required in the aural tests. As stated in the Associated Board's *Regulations*, candidates may whistle, hum or in some other way voice the tune. Alternatively, candidates may simply clap the rhythm, although in this case they would only be attempting half of the test, and would be marked accordingly.

## Order of the exam

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**Examiners will be aware** that the order in which the various sections of the exam are attempted may affect candidates with ASD. Therefore, the elements which comprise the exam will be accepted in any order, provided that it is logistically feasible – for example, it's better that elements requiring an accompanist are adjacent, to cause minimum disruption to both candidate and examiner. If an alternative order is required, the Applicant must give advance written notice of this order either to the Associated Board or to the steward on the day of the exam.

## Companions

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**Unfamiliar people:** it is recognised that sometimes the distress caused by interaction with an unfamiliar person may adversely affect the candidate's performance in an exam. In such cases it may be acceptable to allow a familiar person to accompany candidates. We do ask that this should not be a parent or music teacher unless absolutely necessary. If this provision is required, advance written permission must be obtained from the Associated Board.

## On the day

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Examiners have been asked to:

- be understanding of the difficulties posed by unfamiliar settings, situations and people
- speak clearly and not too fast, allowing time for candidates to process the information
- repeat an instruction if asked or if candidates are slow in responding, allowing five seconds before prompting
- be aware that rephrasing a question rather than repeating it may confuse the candidate
- be aware that memory lapses may occur.

## Singing exams

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**Copies of the words:** candidates with particular short-term memory difficulties may bring a copy of the words of their songs *for reference only*. Candidates asking for this provision should be aware that reference to the words which is deemed to inhibit communication will mean that the highest marks will not be achieved for their songs. Advance written permission must be obtained from the Associated Board for this provision.

## Time

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**Guidance during the exam:** examiners will be aware that candidates may either need reassurance that there is plenty of time for the exam, or alternatively may need firm guidance regarding time remaining. Candidates may bring a timer of their choice to the exam if needed.

## Written comments

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**Marks** will always reflect the standard of the candidate's performance. However, examiners will aim to avoid comments which directly relate to any of the above-mentioned points and would seem to emphasise them.

# Written exams

## Coloured papers

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Candidates who may benefit from working theory papers printed on non-white paper may request a paper printed on blue, green, pink or yellow paper, and should do so when submitting an entry.

## Amanuenses

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Candidates who are unable to access printed material, or who are unable to write down their answers may use an amanuensis to act as a reader, a scribe or both. From 1 January 2006, ABRSM will endeavour to provide a fully trained amanuensis. This may not be possible on all occasions, and candidates must be prepared to make their own arrangements if necessary, in accordance with the Associated Board's *Regulations*. For essential information on this option, please contact the Access Coordinator (see below).

Candidates who require an amanuensis must contact the Theory office  
*telephone: +44 (0)20 7467 8270; email: theory@abrsms.ac.uk*, prior to entry.  
A covering letter must be included with the entry form.

## Extra time

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If the candidate's assessment supports it, they will be entitled to additional time for the completion of each exam as follows:

Grades 1–3	30 minutes extra
Grades 4–5	40 minutes extra
Grades 6–8	60 minutes extra

# Further information

Access Coordinator, ABRSM, 24 Portland Place, London W1B 1LU

*telephone:* +44 (0)20 7467 8247

*textphone:* +44 (0)20 7637 2582

*e-mail:* [accesscoordinator@abrsms.ac.uk](mailto:accesscoordinator@abrsms.ac.uk)

Further information about autism and Asperger syndrome can be obtained from:

The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London, EC1V 1NG

*telephone:* +44 (0)20 7833 2299

Guidelines are also available for blind and partially sighted candidates, deaf and hearing impaired candidates, candidates with dyslexia or other learning difficulties and candidates with disabilities.

*All information correct at time of going to press. Updates will be posted on the website at [www.abrsms.org](http://www.abrsms.org)*