

Explaining our UK accreditation

All our graded music exams (except Practical Musicianship) and diplomas are accredited by Ofqual in the UK and are part of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Practical and Theory exams at Grades 6–8 also attract points towards entrance to university in the UK (see under 'UCAS' below).

QCA/Ofqual

Ofqual is the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator. It replaces what was the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

Ofqual regulates all the national public exams in the UK such as GCSEs and A-levels. They are also responsible for accrediting qualifications offered by 'awarding bodies' such as ABRSM. Awarding bodies are typically exam boards who offer exams or qualifications, but not tuition (as universities and colleges do).

Accredited qualifications can only be offered by awarding bodies recognised by Ofqual. Recognised awarding bodies have to adhere to procedures, policies and regulations set out by Ofqual, which range from administrative procedures, to quality assurance and even fees charged. Ofqual have a responsibility to ensure awarding bodies that offer accredited qualifications operate in a fair and consistent manner and are held accountable.

You will notice our graded music exam certificates have the Ofqual logo in the bottom left corner.

NQF – the National Qualification Framework

All accredited qualifications in the UK are given an NQF level. This allows a qualification to be clearly benchmarked and compared to other qualifications. If a qualification shares an NQF level with another qualification, they are broadly similar in terms of the depth of knowledge, skills and understanding required, even though the size of the qualifications (i.e. their breadth) may be different.

The NQF has 9 levels (entry level and levels 1–8).

The NQF levels for ABRSM exams can be found in the back of all syllabus booklets. The table below lists the NQF levels for our exams alongside an example of a standard UK qualification with the same NQF level to help demonstrate how ABRSM exams compare to UK school, college and university qualifications:

ABRSM exam	NQF level	Example qualification with the same NQF level
Grades 1–3	1	GCSEs at Grades D–G
Grades 4 and 5	2	GCSEs at Grades A*–C
Grades 6–8	3	A-levels
DipABRSM	4	Certificate of Higher Education
LRSM	6	Bachelors degree, graduate certificate or diploma
FRSM	7	Masters degree, postgraduate certificate or diploma

UCAS – the University and College Admissions Service

All students applying to UK universities apply through UCAS. Universities offer places on courses usually on the grounds that a student will gain a specific minimum number of UCAS points. These points are collected through qualifications. ABRSM exams at Grades 6–8 are included in the UCAS points tariff. The point recommendations for ABRSM exams are as follows:

	Grade 6			Grade 7			Grade 8		
	Pass	Merit	Distinction	Pass	Merit	Distinction	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Practical	25	40	45	40	55	60	55	70	75
Theory	5	10	15	10	15	20	20	25	30

(these figures can also be found in the *Examination Information and Regulations* booklet, page 34)

Students can claim points for both Theory and Practical exams, based on the highest grade taken. For comparison, AS-levels (taken at age 17, after one year of study in the UK) attract between 20 and 60 points, and A-levels (taken at 18 after an additional year of study on top of the AS year) attract between 40 and 120 points, depending on the grade achieved.