

Grade Six is the next step in music theory. Now you have mastered the basic technicalities of time signatures, key signatures and scales, triads and cadences, grade six looks at how these musical ideas combine to produce musical compositions.

Grade six is a big step for most students. If music were a language (many say it is!), then grades 1-5 would be learning the vocabulary and grammar, whereas grade six (and upwards) is all about using the language effectively, understanding nuances, and conversing naturally.

Grade six theory is actually a lot more "practical" in that sense - what may have seemed like abstract ideas in the earlier grades will become much clearer to you as you see how it is applied in practice.

UK students will be interested to know that a gaining your grade 6 music theory certificate also gives you **UCAS** (university admission) points. A pass gets you 5 points, a merit gets you 10, and a distinction gets you 15 UCAS points. Get ahead of your classmates - get your grade 6 theory under your belt!

ABRSM Grade 6 Syllabus

Everything from Grades 1-5, plus the harmonic vocabulary expected will include:

1. The use of 5-3, 6-3 and 6-4 chords on any degree of the major or minor (harmonic and melodic) scale
2. The recognition of the dominant seventh chord in root position, first, second and third inversions, and the supertonic seventh chord in root position and first inversion, in any major or minor key, and the figuring for all these chords.
3. An understanding of the principles of modulation
4. A knowledge of cadences, ornamentation and melodic decoration (which might include passing notes, auxiliary notes, appoggiaturas, changing notes and notes of anticipation)

Questions will cover:

1. Writing specified chords for voices in four parts or for keyboard (at the candidate's choice) above a given bass part of about four bars.
2. The indication of suitable chords for the accompaniment of a diatonic melody of about eight bars in any key, using any recognized method of notation, or (at the candidate's choice) the provision of a bass to a given melody, adding figures to indicate the intended harmonies.
3. Composition of a melody for a specified instrument (a choice will be given), using a given opening. Modulation to the dominant, subdominant, relative major or relative minor **may** be required.
4. Questions on short extracts of music written for piano or in open score for voices or for any combination of instruments and/or voices, designed to test the candidate's knowledge of the elements and notation of music, including the realization of ornaments, the identification and notation of underlying harmonic structure, phrase structure, style, performance, and on the voices and instruments for which the works were written.

Read the [complete ABRSM music theory syllabus](#).

