



**A guide to the *Viva Voce*
requirements of ABRSM's
Diploma Exams**

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The *Viva Voce* - Guidance and Information for Diploma candidates

The Purpose of the *Viva Voce*

The *Viva Voce* is an important mode of assessment, providing an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, approach and understandings with the examiners. In all cases it is used to reassure examiners that the candidate is the author of all submissions made for the Diploma and examiners are asked to comment specifically on this point in their reports. It is to be hoped that examiners will be able to reach such a judgement in the normal course of events. However, if examiners perceive a significant discrepancy between the level of authority communicated by the submission and the candidate's performance in the *Viva Voce* (after allowing for the fact that candidates may be nervous, and that some candidates are better at writing than they are at spoken discourse), then it may be necessary to probe deeper. Candidates who have had improper levels of assistance with their submission will usually be unable to express a clear view on the main sources used in their investigation, or to expand on key issues contained in the work they have submitted.

In the Directing Diplomas the *Viva Voce* is also an opportunity for you to discuss your approach to putting together and matching the demands of the programme.

The Conduct of the *Viva Voce*

Viva Voce exams vary in duration, content and style, according to the subject under examination. The following general guidelines apply to all subject-lines.

- (i) The tone and manner of *Viva Voce* exams is as relaxed as possible and every effort is made to put candidates at ease. The opening questions are informal, progressing to topics on which candidates are likely to be knowledgeable, then on to more challenging questions.
- (ii) All questions are clearly and directly expressed and phrased so that they can elicit genuine answers. Some will be open-ended, others will be more direct.
- (iii) Candidates are not penalized if they ask for clarification of a question.
- (iv) Examiners are not concerned by short periods of silence if candidates are considering their answers.
- (v) Candidates may opt not to answer a question because, for example, they feel they might expose an area of fundamental ignorance. If this happens, examiners will assist the candidate with a number of helpful prompts. Examiners will form a judgement as to whether a candidate's incapacity to offer an answer to a particular question or series of questions is a significant factor in the assessment of the candidate's overall performance in the exam.
- (vi) Examiners may invite candidates to expand upon or clarify a particular point raised. Demonstrations can take place at any point in the exam. Examiners will invite candidates to indicate when they would like to perform, and demonstrations can be given at any time upon the candidate's initiative or the examiner's request. It is perfectly permissible for candidates to demonstrate a particular feature by performing it rather than describing it verbally, if this is appropriate.
- (vii) At the end of the exam candidates are given time to say something (if they so wish) which emphasizes the value of their work.

How the *Viva Voce* affects the overall mark

Programme Notes, Written Submissions and Arrangements are drawn into *Viva Voce* discussions. With the exception of Programme Notes (which are reviewed during the exam) these requirements are assessed before the exam and given a guideline mark according to ABRSM's criteria.

In the case of FRSM Written Submissions for Directors, the guideline mark contributes to the overall *Viva Voce* mark. Because in these cases the *Viva Voce* covers others areas in addition to these submissions, the guideline mark may be adjusted or confirmed on the basis of the candidates responses in the *Viva Voce*.

Viva Voce: Directing Diplomas

Topics that the Viva Voce will cover

The *Viva Voce* will cover the rehearsal and performance demonstration, the Arrangement, the Programme Notes or Written Submission and other aspects of directing. Candidates should expect a greater breadth of questioning at successively higher levels.

You will be asked questions

- designed to put you at ease.
- relating to the rehearsal/performance.
- relating the rehearsal/performance to its wider context, which allow you to demonstrate your strengths. (For example, a final question such as: 'Are there any really important points which you want to make that I have not yet asked you about?').

Directors can expect some or all of the following areas to be covered within this pattern of questioning:

- Programming: the choice made and challenges presented by the repertoire.
- Problems that arose in the rehearsal and performance and how these could have been tackled differently – any further thoughts.
- Technique – your personal style and influences, ways that these could be further adapted or developed.
- Rehearsal structure and approach – that chosen for the exam and discussion of other approaches.
- Problem solving including the communication to the ensemble of the interpretation of the music balanced against the need to listen to their ideas and draw on their experience.
- Awareness of established interpretations of the repertoire where these exist.
- Orchestration: to display an understanding of the technical issues surrounding the instruments in the ensemble.
- Arrangement: a discussion of the approach taken and its effectiveness.

How the Viva Voce is marked

	DipABRSM	LRSM	FRSM
19-25 Distinction Excellent. Candidate has demonstrated exemplary standards in most areas examined.	Outstanding communication skills. A commanding knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes. An excellent knowledge of professional values and practices.	Outstanding communication skills. A commanding knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes. An excellent knowledge of professional values and practices.	Outstanding communication skills. An expert knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Mastery of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Written Submission. An excellent knowledge of professional values and practices.
16-18 A high pass Very good. Candidate has demonstrated commendable standards in most areas examined and may have shown excellence	Impressive communication skills. A comprehensive knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes. A very good knowledge of	Impressive communication skills. A comprehensive knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes. A very good knowledge of professional values and practice.	10-18 Pass Impressive communication skills. A commanding knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A full understanding of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Written Submission. A very good

in some.	professional values and practice.		knowledge of professional values and practice.
13-15 A clear pass Good. Candidate has demonstrated a good overall standard in most areas examined.	Good communication skills. A sound working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes. A good knowledge of professional values and practice.	Good communication skills. A sound working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes. A good knowledge of professional values and practice.	
10-12 Pass Candidate has shown competence in most areas examined and has satisfied the requirements for the award.	Competent communication skills. A broad working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Adequate understanding of the issues raised by the Programme Notes. A satisfactory knowledge of professional values and practice.	Competent communication skills. A broad working knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Adequate understanding of the issues raised by the Programme Notes. A satisfactory knowledge of professional values and practice.	
0-9 Fail Candidate has not satisfied the basic requirements for the award.	Weak communication skills. Patchy knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes. Insufficient knowledge of professional values and practice.	Weak communication skills. Patchy knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Programme Notes. Insufficient knowledge of professional values and practice.	Insufficient communication skills. Insufficient knowledge of the ensemble, its idiom and repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised by the Arrangement and Written Submission. Insufficient knowledge of professional values and practice.