

If I have passed grade 8 ABRSM, what help do I need?

This depends on which questions you plan to answer. In AMusTCL, you answer five questions. At least one must be taken from each section.

Section A

1. You have to harmonise a **chorale** melody, and add another two bars. You would have harmonised a hymn or easy chorale at grade 6 if you sat that exam, although **these are much more complex, and you have to finish the melody.**
2. You have to **orchestrate** several bars of a passage from a piece of music in the style of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven or Schubert. You are given a closed score, indicating notes only (like a piano reduction). You have to create an orchestral score, deciding which instrument(s) should play what, with correct notation and performance directions. **This does not appear in ABRSM grade exams.**
3. You continue a **piano** score from an opening written in the early Romantic Period (e.g. Schumann, Mendelssohn or Chopin). The melody is given for all but the last few bars, which you have to add. **This is much more challenging than filling in parts in a simple piano score, as in grade 8.**
4. You continue an **arrangement of a popular song** from the 20th century – usually in the style of a song from a musical from the 1960s or earlier. Jazz chords are given. You have to come up with the last few bars of the melody. **This does not appear in ABRSM grade exams.**
5. You continue a two- or three-bar opening of a **melody in 20th century style.** **It will not be diatonic;** it may be in a mode, or pentatonic, or atonal. (Most ABRSM melody questions are diatonic.)

Section B:

There is a choice of several **set works** from different periods. You study the work, and take the score into the exam room. You can do either of these:

- ❖ Write an essay about the work. Essays ask you to comment on one or more elements of the music – such as key structure, texture, mood and instrumental timbre. One might even ask you to relate to of these elements – such as “How are changes of texture and instrumentation reflected in the mood?” There is nothing like the essay in ABRSM grade exams. There are [detailed notes](#) about one of the set works, and essay writing is covered in the [Musical Knowledge](#) module.
- ❖ Answer questions about the work. The questions are largely fact-based, like those in grade 8, although one or two might ask you to comment on the music in some way, such as:
 - Why might the second phrase of the chorale be thought to be in G major?
 - Comment on the harmonic colour of the voice parts compared with that for trumpets and timpani.
 - Why does Schumann break the pattern of the bassoons playing octaves on the third beat of bar 1?
 - Discuss the tonality from bar 52 to the end of the movement.
 - Discuss the atmosphere Ravel creates in bars 1–32.
 - Identify how the different contrapuntal elements undergo changes in bars 1–32.

The [Score Analysis](#) module covers this sort of material.

From Grade 6 on, ABRSM exams ask you when a piece would have been written – although workbooks do not help much. The [Musical Knowledge](#) module presents this and other background information.

There are some differences in terms used; for example Trinity use the term “cadential 6/4” of what ABRSM calls a 6/4 – 5/3 progression. These are explained in a file about terminology in the introductory section.

If you are still not sure, you may like to download a sample paper and answer paper from the [diploma theory](#) page of the Trinity website, and view the samples that I have posted on the website – then decide which questions to answer, and what you think you need help with.

You can also download a survey from a box on the left side of the [AMusTCL Outline](#) page.

If you want to send in assignments to be marked, please visit the [AMusrego](#) page, which has links you can click to find more information. You can “pick and mix” – order resources for sections you feel confident about, and take the other sections as a “course”. You can even send in workings to past questions for marking. Please check the [Charges, payments and refunds](#) page, note 6. Online lessons are also available. The current cost is NZD79 per hour.

If you are still not quite sure of what to do, please [contact me](#).