

The new mark scheme explained

The examination is marked out of 100. There are five attainment bands: Below Pass 2, Below Pass 1, Pass, Merit and Distinction. The division of marks is shown below. It is not necessary to pass each component to pass the exam overall.

	Below Pass 2 30%	Below Pass 1 45%	Pass 60%	Merit 75%	Distinction 87%	Maximum mark available
Piece 1	7	10	13	16	19	22
Piece 2	7	10	13	16	19	22
Piece 3	7	10	13	16	19	22
Technical Work	5	7	9	11	12	14
Test 1	2	4	6	8	9	10
Test 2	2	4	6	8	9	10
Total	30	45	60	75	87	100

The basic concept of subdivision of marks is now fairly common practice in mark schemes and is often used in the UK and elsewhere in school examinations such as GCSE or international equivalents. It was recognised that, provided a manageable scheme could be created, this would be something from which all Trinity Guildhall candidates, teachers and examiners could benefit.

Several potential mark schemes with various final totals and subdivisions were considered but, ultimately, it was felt that candidates could expect a more consistent mark if examiners had at their disposal only a limited range of marks for each segment, supported by very specific criteria defining each attainment band (pass, merit, etc.) for every mark awarded. Finally it was decided to retain 100 as the total mark, but to revise how marks are apportioned to each segment.

Establishing the goal posts

Developing the mark scheme revealed the advantages of re-defining the attainment bands. Within the overall mark of 100, a decision was made to slightly revise the three attainment levels: Pass, Merit and Distinction, while retaining two Below Pass bands, as required by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

The bands are:

Below Pass 2:	30%
Below Pass 1:	45%
Pass	60%
Merit	75%
Distinction	87%

In the revised scheme, the bare Pass mark has been set at 60%, which enables mathematical clarity in the division of marks, and Merit remains where it was previously set for Trinity, but it will be a little higher than in the previous Guildhall scheme. The top band, Distinction, is very slightly higher than Trinity's existing Distinction, though fractionally lower than Guildhall's top band, High Honours. A more detailed mathematical analysis reveals that this plan represents a convenient and logical spread of marks, particularly when applied to the subdivided marks for the Performance section.

In setting the Pass mark at 60% it is very important indeed that it should not be assumed either by those used to Guildhall's 50% pass mark, or by those familiar with Trinity's current 65% pass mark, that there will be either a raising or lowering of the basic standard required at any grade to pass the examination. A broad similarity of Pass, Merit and Distinction standards at all grades, across all accredited boards, was established some years ago by QCA in a direct comparative consultation exercise. There is no intention by Trinity Guildhall to amend the standard of achievement required to reach any one of these, regardless of grade.

The new mark scheme, at its various key points, designates standards of attainment that are intended to correlate as closely as possible with those in the existing Trinity and Guildhall schemes. The only really significant change that will be noticed by current Guildhall teachers and candidates, is the reconciliation of the former 'Honours' and 'High Honours' bands into a single Distinction band, already familiar within the existing Trinity syllabus.

Performance section – component marks

Each of the pieces is assessed in three areas, as set out below, and the marks divided as follows:

Areas	Below Pass 2	Below Pass 1	Pass	Merit	Distinction	Maximum mark available
Notational Accuracy & Fluency	2	3	4	5	6	7
Technical Facility	2	3	4	5	6	7
Communication & Interpretation	3	4	5	6	7	8
Total	7	10	13	16	19	22

Variations to mark scheme

The mark scheme is as above for all instruments and singers except for:

- Singing Grades 6, 7 & 8 – four songs are performed, other elements identical: marks = 17 for each piece (=68) 12 for Technical Work, 10 each for two Supporting Tests
- Drum Kit – Two longer pieces are performed and an extended Rudimental Study combines the third piece and the technical requirements: marks = 28 for each piece (=56), 24 for Rudimental Study, 10 each for two Supporting Tests

Performance section

It is recognised that most learners spend the highest proportion of their lesson and practice time working on the pieces they are learning. This was confirmed by research among teachers, who were broadly supportive of the concept of allocating a slightly higher overall proportion of the marks to the pieces than has traditionally been the case, and so it was decided to increase the allocation for each piece to 22 marks, giving a total of 66% for the Performance section.

Each mark of 22 will be subdivided diagnostically into three distinct areas:

Notational Accuracy and Fluency	7 marks
Technical Facility	7 marks
Communication and Interpretation	8 marks

It is recognised that in any such subdivided scheme there will be a certain inescapable influence between the discrete areas. However, we are confident from extensive trialing of the system with examiners and teachers that careful reference to the criteria, which are published exactly as used by examiners, plus intensive examiner training, will enable all examiners to provide well-focused feedback to candidates and teachers through meaningful separation and marking of the three areas.

Only the performance pieces will be allocated subdivided marks.

Technical Work

The above changes leave 14% of the marks available for the Technical Work, which seems both sensible and proportionate overall. Specific Assessment Criteria will again inform examiners, candidates and teachers about how the marks are allocated. The popular opportunity to choose between playing scales/arpeggios and a technical study has been retained in most disciplines.*

Supporting Tests options

The introduction of the options scheme for the Supporting Test section and the overall reduction of segments from three to two enabled a convenient 10% to be allocated to each of the two chosen options, equitably representing their perceived significance.

The examiner's report

On the report form, separate boxes will be provided for comments upon all segments of the examination, with the well-established requirement that examiners' marks reflect the comments they have made.

There will also be an optional 'General comments' box, something that examiners themselves have often requested. While all comments should be grounded in the various areas covered by the assessment criteria, examiners are not required or even encouraged to quote the criteria statements in their reports. Rather, the comments will be an individual report on each candidate examined, reflecting how they performed their chosen repertoire, technical work and tests. When working as specialists in particular, examiners will be encouraged to comment upon technique, and to give hints for future development, but the majority of the report will always focus on what took place on the occasion of the examination, with the marks reflecting that view.

The new Trinity Guildhall Report form in brief

TRINITY GUILDHALL

Examination Report

This is not a certificate

John Smith
Grade 1 XXXX
Belfast (39)

Registration No: 000010:0123456789
Session Date: 01/2006

		Notational Accuracy & Fluency	Technical Facility	Communication & Interpretation	Marks
		<input type="text" value="7"/>	<input type="text" value="7"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>	
<p>Pieces out of 22</p>					22 (13)
		<input type="text" value="7"/>	<input type="text" value="7"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>	
<p>Marks divided into three areas</p>					22 (13)
		<input type="text" value="7"/>	<input type="text" value="7"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>	
<p>Choice of scales/arpeggios or study/exercise*</p>					22 (13)
Technical Work	Scales & Arpeggios <input type="checkbox"/>	Study &/or Exercise(s) <input type="checkbox"/>			
<p>Choice of two tests from four</p>					14
Test 1	Sight Reading <input type="checkbox"/>	Aural <input type="checkbox"/>	Improvisation <input type="checkbox"/>	Musical Knowledge <input type="checkbox"/>	10
Test 2	Sight Reading <input type="checkbox"/>	Aural <input type="checkbox"/>	Improvisation <input type="checkbox"/>	Musical Knowledge <input type="checkbox"/>	10
<p>Technical Work out of 14</p>					14
General comments					Total:
<p>Overall general comments</p>					100

Marks on this Examination Report are provisional until the results are confirmed by a certificate (or otherwise).

Overall Attainment Bands are as follows: Pass 60, Merit 75, Distinction 87. Sectional Pass Marks are indicated in brackets.

Your local Trinity Guildhall contact will receive confirmation of your marks with the certificates.

Examiner's signature: _____

Date: _____

* Pianists must play three short exercises and a small number of scales and arpeggios (four of each in early grades). Singers choose a set of vocal exercises. Most other instruments have a choice between playing scales and arpeggios and playing studies/exercises that explore similar technical areas.