

MTB Exams Comhaltas Awards in Traditional Irish Music Performance (Graded Exams 1-8 plus Elementary 1-3)

The qualifications' objective

Comhaltas Awards in Music Performance (Grades 1-8 plus Pre Grade Elementary 1, 2 & 3) are intended to provide targets to enable candidates to develop their mastery of the skills and knowledge required to play and perform on musical instruments from a very basic to advanced level.

With these qualifications, the Music Teachers' Board aims to make graded instrumental music exams in Traditional Irish Music available to candidates either with live face to face assessments or to record and submit video recordings without the need for a live examiner to be present. Currently, they are only available as live face to face assessments. Recorded assessments are planned to be made available only at a later date which will be confirmed once available. These graded instrumental music examinations are marked by an MTB Exams' Comhaltas specialist examiner. The option to submit online recorded exams is designed to remove some of the barriers candidates and teachers sometimes encounter when taking graded music examinations. The optional online nature of delivery of our qualifications means that our qualifications are available to candidates of any age, in any location worldwide, without the need to enter a long time in advance or adhere to visiting examiner dates or limited exam periods. We also have a Reasonable Adjustments Policy (available via our website) to further maximise accessibility to our qualifications.

Regulation

MTB Comhaltas graded awards in Traditional Irish Music Performance are regulated in England by Ofqual (The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation).

Recognition by Ofqual is a mark of quality – it shows that as a board we meet their rules and requirements and are able to combine expertise in assessment with effective operational delivery. In turn, this provides assurance that the learners who have taken our Ofqual regulated qualifications have the required level of knowledge and skills in

the relevant subject area.

UCAS

MTB Comhaltas Grades 6-8 are eligible for the following UCAS Tariff points.

Grade – Tariff points			
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Distinction	12	16	30
Merit	10	14	24
Pass	8	12	18

Who may submit our qualifications

Live exams with a visiting examiner will be scheduled on specific dates offered by the Board and taken in line with the entry process outlined below. Candidates wishing to record their assessment in video, may record and submit video recordings of themselves without the need to have a teacher present. There is no visiting examiner and the candidate's recording may be made at any time on any day of the year. Candidates have up to 1 year from making an entry to submitting it to MTB Exams.

Candidates submitting online recordings or taking a face-to-face assessment with a visiting examiner must adhere to our rules, regulations and policies which are available to view on our website. **Crucially, for online submissions, video recordings must be made in one single unedited take to replicate a live performance and not using multiple recordings.** To facilitate this, MTB Exams offer an app allowing the recording and submission process to take place using just a phone or tablet.

The Specification

This specification provides the information required to help Teachers, Parents and Candidates to prepare for our qualifications and facilitate their delivery. It should be read along with the syllabuses which are available via the website.

Specification Review

The specification is valid from September 2023 and will be reviewed in September each year. The specification may be updated from time to time and the most recent version will be available at all times from the website.

The qualifications we offer are as follows:

Qualification Number	Qualification Title
610/3612/2	MTB Comhaltas Entry Level Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Elementary 1

610/3613/4	MTB Comhaltas Entry Level Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Elementary 2
610/3614/6	MTB Comhaltas Entry Level Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Elementary 3
610/3615/8	MTB Comhaltas Level 1 Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Grade 1
610/3616/X	MTB Comhaltas Level 1 Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Grade 2
610/3617/1	MTB Comhaltas Level 1 Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Grade 3
610/3618/3	MTB Comhaltas Level 2 Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Grade 4
610/3619/5	MTB Comhaltas Level 2 Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Grade 5
610/3620/1	MTB Comhaltas Level 3 Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Grade 6
610/3621/3	MTB Comhaltas Level 3 Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Grade 7
610/3622/5	MTB Comhaltas Level 3 Award in Traditional Irish Music Performance – Grade 8

The Guided Learning Hours (GLH), Total Qualification Time (TQT) and Credits for each grade are as follows:

Grade	GLH	TQT	Credit Value
Elementary 1	3	10	1
Elementary 2	6	20	2
Elementary 3	12	40	4
Grade 1	12	60	6
Grade 2	18	90	9
Grade 3	18	120	12
Grade 4	24	150	15
Grade 5	24	180	18
Grade 6	36	220	22
Grade 7	48	270	27
Grade 8	54	320	32

Specialisms

These qualifications allow candidates to specialise in the following:

Whistle, Flute, Fiddle, Concertina, Button Accordion, Piano Accordion, Banjo, Mandolin, Harp, Uilleann Pipes, Piano. Additional specialisations may be offered upon request.

What will be assessed

The assessment has three sections all of which are assessed separately.

1. **Performance (Accuracy/Expression/Technique)** – This is the performance of Traditional Irish Dance Tunes and Slow Airs and the skills being assessed here are the ability to play the correct notes and rhythms fluently, and the tempo and intonation. Also, an understanding of the appropriate stylistic expectations of the music, expressive elements such as dynamics and phrasing, plus any relevant technical ability required to successfully convey the music to an audience, such as tone quality, breath control, bow control, shifts across strings, clarity and quality of articulation, other particular techniques relevant to the piece being performed,
2. **Repertoire and Aural Skills** – This assesses the development, understanding and aural familiarity with the elements of Traditional Irish tunes and the candidate's development of a body of repertoire which they can recall and perform on request.
3. **Theory and Musical Knowledge** – This assesses the Reading Skills required to access this body of repertoire, including rhythmic and notational accuracy as well as interpretation of key signatures and time signatures. It also assesses understanding of keys and modes through the assessment of scales. A discussion (and, at grades 6-8, the ability to recall and discuss the content of a written research project) which is used to assess the broader musical understanding of Irish Traditional Music and the ability to analyse and discuss performances.

The assessment includes a mixture of prepared and unprepared elements (such as unprepared sight reading and aural tests).

For further detail about MTB Comhaltas Grades and the exact content of the syllabus please [click here](#)

To see the detailed marking criteria for MTB Comhaltas SCT Grades – [Click here](#)

The method of assessment

Assessment is through a live face-to-face, or a video recorded, instrumental graded practical examination. The process for this is as follows:

Assessments consist of three sections: 1. Performance 2. Repertoire and Aural Skills 3. Theory and Musical Knowledge. The requirements are listed on the syllabus. For live

face to face exams: A visiting examiner will attend a venue. Candidates will be assessed individually in examinations lasting between 10 and 45 minutes. During the assessment, the visiting examiner will listen to the performance tunes selected by the candidate. They will then ask the candidate perform short sections selected by the examiner, from a further repertoire list drawn up in advance by the candidate. The examiner will then ask the candidate to perform some unprepared aural tests including for example, melody repetition, tune type identification, clapping back rhythms and interval identification. For the Theory and Musical Knowledge sections, the candidate will be asked to play an unprepared sight-reading test and perform all of their prepared scales. The assessment will conclude with a discussion where the candidate is tested on their knowledge of prepared topics. For Grades 6-8, they will also be asked to recall content from their research project which has been submitted in advance. Full details of the content of these assessments are [available to view here](#).

For online assessments, the candidate should find their exam by logging into their Exam Portal. They will initially start the recording using the MTB app. Then, they will press 'start exam' on the Portal. This will generate the instructions for the assessment from the Exam Management System (EMS). The candidate will be asked to announce the title of, and perform, each of the performance tunes they have selected. The candidate will then be asked to perform short sections, randomly selected by the EMS, from a further repertoire list drawn up by the candidate. The EMS will then ask the candidate to perform some unprepared aural tests including for example, melody repetition, tune type identification, clapping back rhythms and interval identification. For the Theory and Musical Knowledge sections, the candidate will be asked to play an unprepared sight-reading test and perform all of their prepared scales. The assessment will conclude with questions generated by the EMS where the candidate is tested on their knowledge of prepared topics. For Grades 6-8, they will also be asked to recall content from their research project which has been submitted in advance.

The App, which must be used for recorded assessments, is available through the App stores on either Android or IOS devices or it can be accessed via the MTB App page on the MTB Exams website.

When attending a face to face assessment with a visiting examiner, the candidate should check they have the following:

- Photo ID for grades 6-8
- Repertoire Lists (all grades)

Before beginning a recorded assessment, the candidate should check they have the following:

- Photo ID for grades 6-8
- Repertoire Lists (all grades)
- A device with the app installed on which to record the exam

- A second device to start the exam on the EMS and generate the instructions

Conducting recorded online assessments:

Once started, the whole exam must be completed in one single recording and must not be paused or stopped. Once complete, the recording can be submitted via the MTB App. You will also need to submit a copy of your repertoire list (for all grades) and photo ID (for grades 6-8 only).

The criteria against which learners' levels of attainment will be measured

The following are the expected levels of expectation at each grade:

RQF Entry Level – Pre Grades Introductory & Higher:

Ability to perform very elementary repertoire with very simple technical and musical demands. A very basic understanding and aural familiarity with the elements of Traditional Irish tunes. Ability to memorise and recall a very small body of repertoire. Understanding of keys and modes through the assessment of very simple scales. Demonstrate elementary control of the very basic techniques associated with their specialisation (e.g. fiddle, whistle etc) and an understanding of very basic reading of rhythm, and aural awareness.

RQF Level 1 – Grades 1-3

Ability to perform simple repertoire with basic technical and musical demands. A basic understanding and aural familiarity with the elements of Traditional Irish tunes. Ability to memorise and recall a small body of repertoire. Understanding of keys and modes through the assessment of simple scales. Demonstrate basic control of a range of simple techniques associated with their specialisation (e.g. fiddle, whistle etc) and an understanding of simple reading of rhythm, and aural awareness.

RQF Level 2 – Grades 4&5

Ability to perform straightforward repertoire with straightforward/intermediate technical and musical demands. Moderate understanding and aural familiarity with the elements of Traditional Irish tunes. Ability to memorise and recall a limited body of repertoire. Understanding of keys and modes through the assessment of straightforward scales. Demonstrate a moderate level of control of most techniques associated with their specialisation (e.g. fiddle, whistle etc) and an understanding of straightforward reading of rhythms of a moderate difficulty, and a moderate level of aural awareness in straightforward situations.

RQF Level 3 – Grades 6-8

Ability to perform complex repertoire with sophisticated, complex technical and musical demands. Advanced understanding and aural familiarity with the elements of Traditional Irish tunes. Ability to memorise and recall a broad body of repertoire. Understanding of keys and modes through the assessment of complex scales. Demonstrate an advanced level of control of the full range of techniques including

complex techniques associated with their specialisation (e.g. fiddle, whistle etc) and an understanding of complex reading of rhythm, and a high degree of aural awareness.

Levels of attainment

The examination is marked out of 100 with a pass mark of 60

Levels of attainment are categorised as follows:

87-100 Distinction

75-86 Merit

60-74 Pass

45-59 Blue

0-44 White

Breakdown of mark allocation

All Grades

Exam element	Maximum mark available
Performance	60
Repertoire & Aural Skills	20
Theory & Musical Knowledge	20
Total	100

Equipment required to deliver the qualification

As well as your instrument, candidates taking the qualification using the Online Recorded Assessment route will need the [MTB Exams App](#) downloaded onto a phone or tablet plus a separate device to generate the exam instructions and questions.

The candidate will make an unedited video recording of the whole assessment. The MTB Exams App must be used for this. The recording needs to be of sufficient quality, volume and clarity for it to be easily marked by our examiners. The exam is submitted directly from the app.

The exam instructions and questions will be generated (using a separate device) by the MTB Exams EMS which is accessed by logging into your account (on the MTB Exams website) and going to your Exam Portal.

Candidates taking the qualification in a face-to-face assessment with a visiting examiner do not require any equipment beyond their own instrument.

Supporting materials

Printed materials to support preparation of these qualifications are available from the following website link - [click here](#)

Submitting recorded exams for marking

Video recorded assessments are submitted using the MTB Exams app once the recording is complete. Prior to the submission process, the app will ask you to take a picture of the candidate's photo ID (Grades 6-8 only).

Results

All exams are marked by a trained Comhaltas examiner.

The result will be emailed to the candidate usually within 2 weeks of submission and a certificate posted to the address supplied by the candidate after confirmation by the exam board. Certificates will normally be issued/posted within 4-6 weeks of receiving the marksheet. Receipt may vary depending on the speed of the postage delivery service.

Recorded Assessments

For recorded assessments, the recording should not be turned off at any point during the exam until all elements of the assessment have been completed. When using the app, if the recording is accidentally stopped or stops due to a technical issue it must be resumed as soon as possible and this must be within 5 minutes. Recordings on the app are time stamped so that MTB can track the length of a gap if the recording stops and restarts midway through the exam. Please explain the reason for any stop or restart of a recording using the submission note. MTB Exams may reject a submission for any reason if it is felt that that a recording does not comply to our expectations in this regard.

SEND

SEND candidates can apply for Reasonable Adjustments. Our Reasonable Adjustments policy is available [here](#)

Appeals, Complaints, Malpractice, Sanctions

Please access MTB's policies [here](#)

Customer Services

If you require clarification of any aspect of our exams or their delivery, please contact us via the 'contact us' page on the MTB Exams website [here](#)