

Guidelines for Examination Venue (Percussion, inc. Drum Kit)

In the UK Trinity College London prefers, wherever possible, that percussion and drum kit candidates go to a specialist centre, particularly for higher grades (i.e. grades 6-8 and Advanced Certificate). A list of these centres and representatives is available from the website. We are aware however that this is not always practical for reasons of date or travel distance. The guidelines in this document aim to clarify what you need to consider if accommodating percussion or drum kit entries, particularly if doing so at a non-specialist centre.

Please note that in all cases percussion or drum kit diplomas must be taken at a specialist centre or in London.

Examination Venue

The examination room must be a quiet one in which the performance of candidates will be undisturbed by outside noise. It should be possible to open the windows without the risk that sound to or from the examination room (or warm-up/waiting room) will pose problems in the conduct of examinations.

There must be sufficient space for candidates to be able to perform effectively although a room of moderate size rather than a large hall is usually most appropriate. However large percussion (especially timpani) can be very bulky and not all venues will be able to reasonably accommodate these examinations.

Wooden floored rooms are generally not ideal for drum kit exams. Ideally the room will be carpeted with suitable acoustic dampening.

Signage must be displayed clearly in the exam venue, including an **Exam Room** notice on the entrance to the examination room and **Quiet Please/Silence - Exams in Progress** in the vicinity especially in areas of traffic (corridors, stairs etc.)

Please note that no one is permitted to wait or listen outside the examination room.

Equipment requirements for Drum Kit exams

- A piano (digital pianos are acceptable) and piano stool is required for supporting tests in all percussion and drum kit examinations.
- A PA system and CD player, or other appropriate playback equipment must be provided for drum kit exams. See separate section below for guidance on playback equipment.
- Drum kit specifications are given on page 10 of the 2014-2016 Percussion Syllabus (current at the time of writing). The kit should consist of:
 - snare drum with adjustable drum kit size stand (not orchestral)
 - bass drum (18-22")
 - 2 mounted toms (high/medium)
 - floor tom (low)
 - hi hat (12"-14")
 - ride cymbal (18-22")
 - 2 crash cymbals (14-18")
 - splash for Grades 5-8
 - adjustable drum stool

- It is expected that a specialist percussion centre will provide a kit meeting this specification. Drum heads should be in good condition and tuned correctly, and all stands and pedals should be in good mechanical order.
- Normally a mid-sized kit (often referred to as a 'fusion kit') is best for examination purposes as younger candidates will be able to play comfortably. Older or taller players may in this case request to use their own, larger kit, at the discretion of the Centre Representative.
- Candidates wishing to use their own kits at non-specialist centres may only do so at the discretion of the Centre Representative, and the setting-up of the kit must not be allowed to interfere with the timing of the session.
- In all cases candidates must provide their own sticks, which must be in good condition and suitable for the repertoire being performed. Double bass drum pedals may be used in solos and fills if desired, and must be provided by the candidate.
- Trinity recommends the use of ear defenders by candidates and examiners for the performance of drum kit repertoire for health and safety reasons. These should be used for all Pieces and Exercises.

Electric drum kits

Specialist percussion public centres in the UK & Ireland are expected to provide an acoustic kit as detailed above. Exams may only be taken on electric drum kits up to and including Grade 5, at private exam centres, or at non-specialist public centres where arrangements have been made for the candidate to provide their own kit,

However, it is vital that the instrument is capable of producing all timbral and dynamic variety demanded by the score, as well as any particular effects that individual pieces may call for. Particular attention should be paid to the following areas:

- dynamic contrast
- snares on/off
- cross stick
- use of brushes
- clarity of grace note rudiments
- clarity of rolls
- use of any additional percussion (e.g. cowbell)
- differentiation between ghosted and non-ghosted notes
- choked cymbal.

As a guide the following electronic kit types are considered sufficient for examinations:

- Roland TD4KX up to the TD9KX2
- Yamaha DTX550K up to the DTX950K

Equipment requirements for other percussion exams (tuned percussion, snare drum, timpani, orchestral percussion)

- A piano (digital pianos are acceptable) and piano stool is required for supporting tests in all percussion examinations.
- A PA system and CD player, or other appropriate playback equipment must be provided for accompaniment of percussion exams at grades 1-3 where an accompanist cannot be provided. See separate section below for guidance on playback equipment.

Snare drum

- Snare drum exams may be taken using the snare on a drum kit, or may be taken using an orchestral snare drum.
- Candidates must provide their own sticks, which must be suitable for the repertoire being performed.

Timpani

- Timpani pieces may require from 2-5 drums, depending on the grade.
- Hand- or pedal-tuned timpani may be used up to Grade 5. For Grades 6-8, pedal-tuned timpani must be used.

Tuned percussion

- Tuned percussionists may use a xylophone, marimba, vibraphone or glockenspiel.
- Technical work for grade 6-8 will require an instrument with at least a 4 octave range.

Orchestral percussion

- Orchestral percussion exams will require a snare drum piece, timpani piece and tuned percussion piece to be done. The equipment required is therefore very substantial.

Please ensure that the applicants are fully aware of what is and is not available at your venue before accepting entries.

If you do not have the required equipment available for use then it may be necessary for the applicant or candidate to supply these. Please make sure that you communicate clearly with the applicants in this case to ensure that everyone knows exactly what they need to supply. It will be a benefit to timetable the percussion exam(s) at the end of a day or adjacent to a break in order to allow for set-up time where equipment is provided by an applicant or candidate.

Playback equipment

A CD player or other audio system must be provided, of a quality that reflects the grades being examined. For higher grades the system must be able to handle higher volumes, and it is essential that the tracks can be heard clearly, with a good balance and without distortion.

It is preferable that any leads do not go across the main floor area, but if this is unavoidable they should be taped securely to the floor.

Headphones

Candidates may prefer to play using headphones for accompanied pieces. A separate headphone mix or a splitter should be used as the examiner must be able to hear the backing track through the main speaker system. Candidates are responsible for providing their own headphones and cables. Due care should be given to the balance of the kit and the backing track in the room during the performance.

Room Setup

Examiners' tables should be positioned far enough away from the candidates to ensure that crowding does not occur, but not so far away that there is a sense of remoteness.

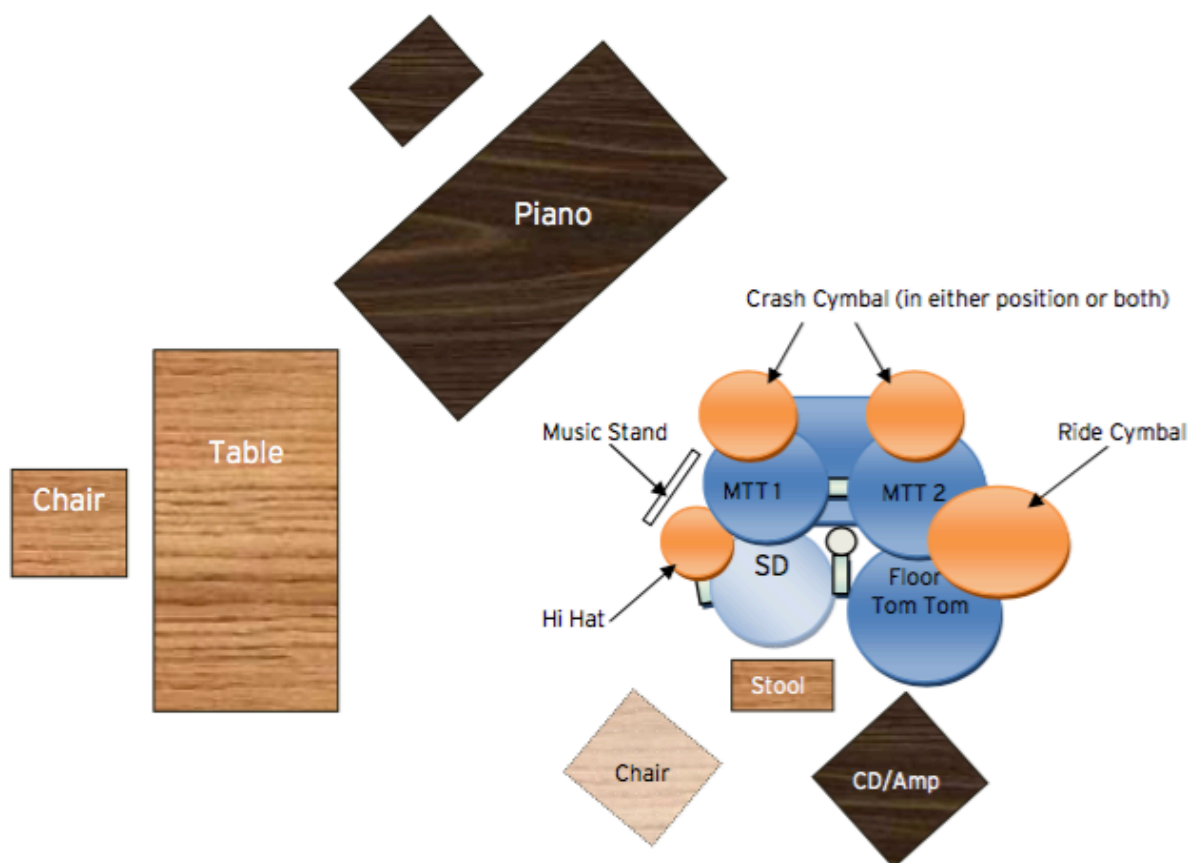
The examiner needs:

1. A table of a sufficient size to accommodate paperwork and a laptop computer and have space to write the report; a second table to the side of the desk is useful to place a mixer/CD player etc.
2. A comfortable and supportive chair
3. A carafe of drinking water and a glass
4. Similar requirements for a second examiner (as necessary, should exam monitoring be taking place)

A music stand in working order must be provided.

Drum Kit setup

There should be at least 3m, and preferably more, between the examiner's chair and the nearest part of the drum kit to enable a good balance of sound between the drum kit and the backing tracks.



The drum kit should be set up so that the candidate is facing sideways to the examiner, and not facing the examiner. This position allows the examiner to see the candidate's feet and hands, and the ride cymbal. If the candidate is left-handed, it would still allow the same view, but the examiner may need to sit a little more to the right.

It is important that the Stool, Snare and Mounted Tom #1 are aligned in a straight line, facing the same direction as the bass, with the feet equidistant around the snare. You or the examiner can check this before starting by sitting at the drum kit.

Cymbals can be placed in a variety of positions and heights; it is up to the candidate to choose. The important point is that each cymbal is placed within easy reach.

With some grades, where a change from stick to brushes or beaters is called for, a chair should be made available as indicated.

Adjustments

Just as candidates come in all shapes and sizes, the drum kit will need to be adjusted accordingly. Do encourage the candidate, if they wish to adjust the angles of the drums or cymbals, to use the adjustment screws rather than just pull on the instruments. This will ensure that the drum kit will continue to be in working order for the full term. Hopefully, a teacher or technician may be on hand. However, it may be worthwhile to take time looking over the kit when setting up the room. It is also useful to have a spare chair or piano stool to hand in case the drum kit stool is not the right height for a candidate, and some stools can take time to adjust - and leave you with greasy hands in the process.

Four and Five-Piece Drum Kits

It is important to note that all pieces can be played using a standard five-piece kit. However, should a candidate wish to alter the set up in any way, for example to remove the middle tom and bring the ride cymbal nearer to the body in a classic four-piece set-up, they are free to do so, either at the beginning of the exam or between pieces.

Operation of playback equipment

Grade exams - Accompanied pieces

We highly recommend that specialist centres are set up so that the playback equipment is positioned within reach of the examiner and operated by them. This is consistent with arrangements for Trinity Rock & Pop drum exams and helps avoid a candidate becoming nervous through being asked to operate unfamiliar equipment.

However, at non-specialist centres where the playback equipment is often supplied by the candidate, it may be operated by the candidate if they so prefer and the room layout allows for this. Common sense and compromise should prevail.

If it is impractical for either the candidate or examiner to operate the player then it is permissible for another party to enter the room to do so. Follow the guidelines for page-turners on page 9 of the Information & Regulations booklet.

A brief sound check should be carried out to ensure candidates are happy with volume levels before starting the exam.

Grade exams - Unpitched Aural Tests

As these tests are confidential, the playback equipment must be operated by the examiner.

Diplomas

The playback equipment should be positioned close to the candidate so that they are able to operate it with complete control.

Warm up room

Warm up rooms are not generally provided for percussion or drum kit exams. Candidates should be encouraged to make sure that they are comfortable with the instruments or drum kit before the exam starts - percussion timings are slightly longer than normal grade exams to allow for this.

Changes of Venue

When examiners change venue during the day, for instance when visiting a school for the afternoon, the necessary travel time must be allowed for and not taken out of the examiner's lunch break.