

Theory diplomas:

Advice for candidates



“ I’m thinking of studying for a theory diploma: which one should I take? ”

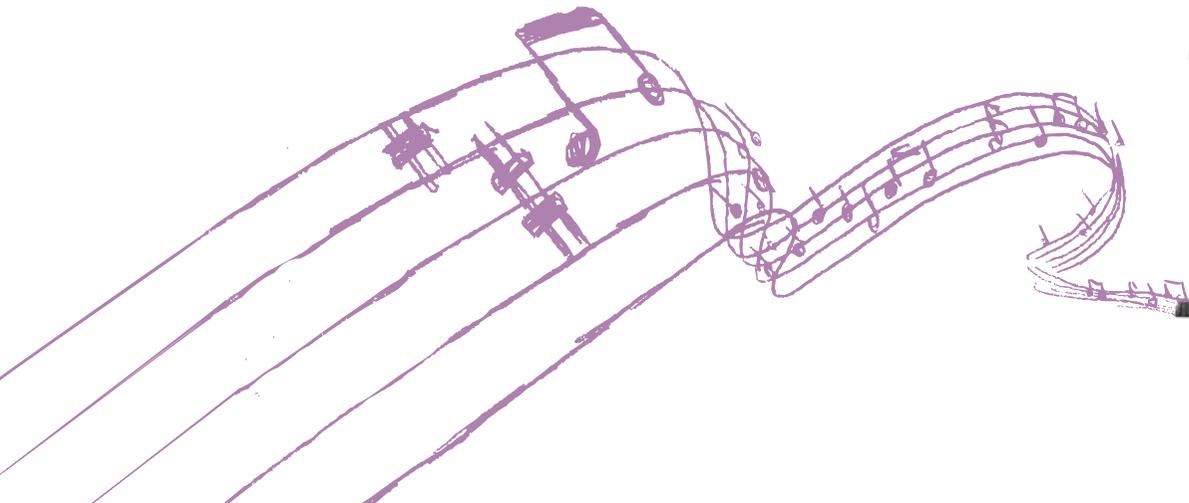


Trinity offers two theory diplomas: **AMusTCL** and **LMusTCL**. These provide a pathway into professional musicianship and study in the creative arts, taking candidates from the graded exams towards a deeper understanding of their musical interests.

Both diplomas demand an understanding of analytical concepts and procedures, while drawing on an extensive knowledge of music history in the Western tradition. Much of the groundwork for this is progressively introduced and strengthened in the Trinity Theory syllabus and workbooks at Grades 6-8, or through formal study through qualifications such as A-Level, Scottish Advanced Higher or International Baccalaureate.

Essential knowledge

- ▶ Conventions of Western classical musical notation
- ▶ Clefs, keys, intervals and chords
- ▶ Pulse and rhythm
- ▶ Types and capabilities of voices and instruments
- ▶ Chord knowledge, including Roman numeral notation
- ▶ Ability to write progressions using four-part harmony correctly, using:
 - Triads in root position, first and second inversions
 - Dominant seventh in root position and all three inversions
 - Secondary sevenths
 - Diminished sevenths
 - Chords of the ninth, eleventh and thirteenth
 - Neapolitan sixth
 - Augmented chords in Italian, French and German forms
- ▶ Knowledge of the various historical styles of music from the end of the Renaissance to the present time (Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Modern periods) and the forms used (binary, ternary, rondo, sonata etc)



Musical skills

In Section A, knowledge of written musical skills is tested including harmony, counterpoint, orchestration and melodic composition.

For example, Question 1 at **AMusTCL** requires harmonisation in the style of J S Bach of a Baroque Lutheran chorale, including all four parts of the final phrase.

For success in this question at **AMusTCL**, candidates should have an awareness of the conventions of chorale writing as found in cantatas and settings of the Passion during the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

For example, characteristic features such as:

- ▶ Two root positions of the tonic chord, with the bass rising an octave
- ▶ Use of quavers and passing notes to give the music a greater sense of flow and give the individual parts more shape
- ▶ Alto and tenor range of over a 6th and bass with a wider range still (an 11th)

An example from Bach's Cantata no. 88 is shown below.

Riemenschneider 104
(from Cantata 88, 5th Sunday after Trinity)



Further guidance can be found in the [AMusTCL study guide](#), available in the Trinity eBook store.

The other questions in Section A at **AMusTCL** include an orchestration of a short extract of a Classical symphony based on a provided piano reduction, harmonisation and continuation of an extract of an early Romantic piano work, harmonisation of a 20th century popular song with piano accompaniment, or writing a coherent melodic line based on a given opening in a modern style (ie not using major/minor keys). This last task is a challenge of a different sort from those of the other questions in Section A, as it does not involve harmonic and tonal considerations; here the requirements include rhythmic invention, phrase shaping, dynamics, and possible use of tempo change and varied articulation, to suit the characteristics of the nominated instrument or voice.

At **LMusTCL**, in Section A, candidates are required to complete the opening of a given string quartet in a Classical or early Romantic style. They must also choose between an analysis of five unseen extracts, orchestrating an extract of moderate length whilst displaying an understanding of the relevant technical considerations, including attention to instrumental balance, colour and effect, or, writing for piano, harmonising a given theme and then writing two variations.



Now, what about repertoire?

For both **AMusTCL** and **LMusTCL** in Section B, candidates will need to study set works: in other words, the score of a piece lasting for several hundred bars, and understand its structure, recognise its style and discern its historical source and context. The current list of set works can be found on the [website](#).

For instance, in an orchestral score at **AMusTCL**, candidates are expected to be able to read all clefs and transposing instruments, to be able to tell what keys a Classical piece such as a string quartet or wind serenade may modulate to, and to distinguish forms and devices such as imitation and canon, pedal notes and suspensions. Candidates will need to work quickly and accurately in order to succeed, as the exam requires answers to five questions, worth 20 marks each. The set work questions each comprise a series of sub-questions that require commenting on the orchestration or vocal writing, identifying features such as ostinato, a chromatic auxiliary note, or syncopation. Alternatively, a single essay question may be answered, with close reference to the study score.

For **LMusTCL**, candidates need to be already fully competent at analysing large scale complex works such as a Brahms symphony, a Bartók string quartet or a Walton concerto. Compared with **AMusTCL**, greater breadth and depth of study are required. Here, detailed commentary is required in the form of essay questions, giving references to texture, orchestration, tempo, dynamics and other features. Set works should not be studied in isolation: candidates will need to be familiar with the output of the composers they are studying as well as their contemporaries, and be prepared to illustrate their answers with a wide range of examples from similar forms of work eg opera or Lieder, and works from the period.

A sample paper for **AMusTCL** and **LMusTCL** can be found on our [website](#).

AMusTCL

Section A: Musical skills

Candidates must answer a total of FIVE questions, including at least one question from Section A and at least one question from Section B.

1 Baroque: Lutheran chorale

Harmonise the given melody, adding ATB in the style of the opening, then write an effective fourth phrase returning to the home key. The question must be worked in SATB style using short score. Write your answer on this page.



LMusTCL

Section A: Musical skills (50 marks)

Candidates must answer both questions. Each question carries 25 marks.

1 String quartet

Complete this music, which comes from the exposition in the first movement of Mozart's Quartet in C, K. 465. The first four bars and most of the remainder of the first violin part are given as a guide to style and idiom. Mozart reaches a perfect cadence on the first beat of bar 20 and you should do the same, finishing there.



Past papers are available to purchase on the [eBook store](#).