



LONDON INTERNATIONAL 2025 倫敦國際中國音樂節 CHINESE MUSIC FESTIVAL 2025

Chinese Music Grading Exam and Competition Guidelines

Aims and Objectives

1. To provide Chinese music practitioners and students in the UK a platform to obtain formal and systematic certificates to recognise and grade level of expertise.
2. To provide certification that is recognised and authorised in both China and the UK.

Examining Bodies

- China Nationalities Orchestra Society (CNOS) - A national authority in Beijing, China.
- SOAS, University of London - One of the UK's top Institutes, established in 1916.
- China Arts Ltd. (UK) - Organiser (independent arts organisation, in partnership with the London Youlan *Qin* Society and UK Chinese Music, have taught Chinese instrumental music for over 20 years in the UK).

What the exams and competition involve

The London International Chinese Music Festival (LICMF) combines the exams and competitions in one process. Candidates can choose to take both the exam and competition at the same time or to take only one of the two. The competition is divided into two age groups: Youth and Adult, and solo or group/ensemble performances.

What music materials are the grading exams based on

The LICMF grading exams are based on the standardised series of teaching books titled 全国民族乐器演奏社会艺术水平考级丛书 (National Traditional Instrumental Performance Social Arts Level Grading Book Series). They are China's national grading books for various instruments, including 古琴曲集 (Grading Pieces for the *Guqin*), 二胡曲集 (Grading Pieces for the *Erhu*) etc. (see attached). The books are compiled by 中国民族管弦乐学会 China Nationalities Orchestra Society (CNOS)) and published by 人民音乐出版社 (People's Music Publishing Society). Most UK-based tutors of Chinese musical instruments use these books. CNOP also allows examinees to play the same pieces in different versions, styles and from different publications. For the exam regulations and requirements see below.

Instruments that can be entered for the exam and Competition.

All traditional Chinese instruments, including: *guqin* 古琴, *guzheng* 古筝, *pipa* 琵琶, *liuqin* 柳琴, *erhu* 二胡, *yangqin* 扬琴, *sanxian* 三弦, *zhongruan* 中阮, *dizi* 笛子, *xiao* 箫, *sheng* 笙, *hulusi* 葫芦丝, *suona* 唢呐 and percussion 打击乐.

For candidates taking only the grading exams

- Candidates need to prepare three pieces (one can be a study piece) for their chosen grades, based on CNPS published books or other credible versions. However, the examiners can decide whether you play two or three pieces. No scores, microphone or accompaniment are allowed for the exams.
- First-time candidates can choose to be examined at any of grades 1 to 3. Candidates can start from grade 3 exams if they have mastered grade 1 and 2 skills and pieces. However, from grade 3 upwards candidates must take subsequent grade exams one by one consecutively, and must not jump grade exams, for example, from grade 3 to grade 6 or 8. However, you can choose to take two consecutive grades if you have passed previous grades. (You may be asked to show the proof of your certificates)
- Candidates must not take exams for more than two grades on the same instrument in the same year.

Candidates will get one of four results: Fail, Pass, Merit or Distinction. The certificate will be sent within one to two months.

Candidates taking only the competition.

- Candidates must choose one piece approximately 5 to 6 minutes in length to best represent their skill and musicality.
- For the competition, apart from the age divisions of Youth (8 to 16 years old) and Adult (17 years and above), candidates can also enter either solo or group/ensemble performances.

Candidates taking both the exam and competition.

This will be the same as taking grading exam, but you need to indicate, either on the form or by telling the examiners on the day, which piece is for the competition. You can play a third piece (5 to 6 minutes approx.) only if the grading music cannot represent your level and skill.

Criteria for the exam and competition marks

Candidate will be judged against four general criteria:

- Skill and tone colour 25%
- Rhythm 20 %
- Artistic presentation 30%
- Complexity and completeness 25%

The Grading Exams Certification results combine the marks for the candidates' live performances in the UK and the marks by CNOS in China judged by the video recordings of the same exams. The examining bodies ensure that the candidates get fair and objective marks accompanied by commentary notes on the above four areas that are judged.

The competition body will issue certificates for 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes, divided into Youth and Adult groups. There will be awards for performance and encouragement as well as best tutors' awards.

Competition certificates will be presented at the Festival Showcase Concert during the festival and some of the winners will have the opportunity to perform at the concert.

Useful links

Further information is available from CNOS at the following links:

中国民族管弦乐学会社会艺术水平考级现行指定适用考级教材 Materials:

https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/jp_xlI3adA8ZkO0ahFDnGw

中国民族管弦乐学会各专业考级曲目 List of pieces:

<https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/FkRiVqIKiXOAjgoL4vSLlg>