

## Alliance of North American Pipe Band Associations

### Recommended Grade Level Expectations

The attached Grade Level Expectation standards are offered by the ANAPBA Music Committee as a guide to what is expected *of a top-level band or soloist in each grade*. Other bands and soloists in the grade may fail to meet one or more of these expectations. The standards attempt to encompass all the relevant elements in a performance. The standards do not attempt to dictate the relative importance of the various elements because that may vary depending upon the context in which the standards might be applied and the subjective nature of music appreciation. The hope is that these recommendations will be useful to three audiences.

#### Music Committees of the ANAPBA associations

By using these standards as an objective reference, The Music Committees of the member associations of ANAPBA will have a common and uniform standard when making grading decisions for their member bands and soloists. Using a publically available reference should promote a more uniform grade level standard across the continent. For example, a Grade 3 band may regularly produce a band unison typical of a Grade 2 band and regularly place first in local contests. But that band may consistently fail to produce a Grade 2 tone as defined in the standards. A Music Committee might keep that band in Grade 3 until it meets or exceeds the ANAPBA Grade 3 standards in all important areas.

#### Member bands of the ANAPBA associations

These standards should provide a useful reference for a band to use when deciding how to focus their efforts. They provide a benchmark against which a band can measure its progress. Many bands, especially in the lower grades, are often confused about what the associations and adjudicators are looking for. Hopefully, publishing these standards will reduce that confusion. For example, a Grade 4 band might compare itself against the standard and decide that it meets or exceeds the expectations for tone and ensemble at their current grade level but decide that the band fails to meet the expectations with respect to band unison. The band will now know that increased effort in improving band unison should bring the greatest return. And that band can avoid wasted effort in trying to improve their tone even further if it is already competitive at the current grade level.

#### Adjudicators of the ANAPBA associations

An adjudicator might use these standards when assessing contest performances. They provide an objective reference to assess the areas in which each performer either (1) exceeds expectations for the relevant grade level, or (2) fails to meet the expectations for that grade. Having assessed each performer against the standard, the adjudicator can then move to the more subjective stage of ranking the relative importance of each standard. For example, solo piper A in grade 2 may have technique comparable to a Grade 1 piper but fails to produce a tone appropriate for Grade 2, while solo piper B may have a Grade 1 tone but only Grade 3 technique. The adjudicator will have to balance the relative importance of technique and tone at this grade level when deciding how to rank these two players. But hopefully these standards provide a framework so that the adjudicator can quickly decide which elements must be considered when ranking competitors.

The Music Committee hopes that the piping and drumming community finds these standards useful. This document will be continual "work in progress" as standards change and develop. Comments and suggestions for improving this document are encouraged and welcome and should be sent to [anapbamusic@gmail.com](mailto:anapbamusic@gmail.com).

*The ANAPBA Music Committee*

## Band Grade Level Expectations - Piping

Elements	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
<b>Tone</b>					
chanters	Small but persistent issues with minor blowing instability and/or one or two imbalanced notes (i.e., a flat top hand)	Intermittent blowing instability and/or one or two very slightly imbalanced notes	Balanced chanters with minor intermittent blowing problems and may be a thin top hand	Accurately balanced and stable scale	Accurately balanced and stable scale in terms of both pitch and volume
drones	Tuned to a modern electronic standard but subject to blowing instability	Tuned to a modern electronic standard but subject to minor blowing instability	At pitch	At pitch	At pitch with rich depth and resonance
<b>Unison</b>					
melody	Reasonable unison (i.e., even notes are roughly the same length and dotted notes are longer than the associated short note) although there will be some slight variation in treatment from player to player	Good unison in marches and slow airs but inconsistent treatment of some short notes in dance tunes - problems are expected with 3 note runs in strathspeys and with GDE grace note groups and strikes in reels and jigs	Good unison in marches and slow airs but may be an occasional control problem with 3 note runs in strathspeys and with imprecise GDE grace note groups and strikes in reels and jigs	Precise	Precise
embellishments (i.e. can you hear two distinct low Gs in a taorluath?)	None expected	None expected	Clarity within the embellishments starts to emerge	Intermittent clarity within the embellishments	Clarity within the embellishments common
note errors	Maybe a few note errors of no more than a full beat	Maybe an occasional non-repeating note error	None	None	None
<b>Musical Expression</b>					
tempo	Reasonable tempos without any dragging (spirited and lively)	Reasonable, idiomatic tempos in marches but dance tunes likely to be at the bottom end of the acceptable range	All tunes should be at least close to ideal tempos	Idiomatic	Idiomatic
phrasing	Phrase endings and connecting notes should get full value most of the time, but some phrases run together	Phrase endings and connecting notes should get full value but no further attempt at phrase separation	Some attempt at phrase separation	Phrase separation should be clear	Phrase separation should be well-emphasized

Elements	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
accents and pointing	Some rhythmic accents should be present	Accents should be present in marches but with occasional missing accents in some phrases, strathspeys are likely to be under-accented, reels may be over-accented, and downbeats in jigs might be over-emphasized where an even treatment was intended	Accents should be clearly present in marches but accents and pointing in dance tunes may have the same problems as grade 4 but to a lesser extent	Should be clearly present and idiomatic	Should be clearly present and emphasize light and shade in the melody
Technical issues					
attacks	Reasonably together in terms of timing and pitch but the initial E may glide to pitch and there may be a tempo drop from rolls to tune	Reasonably together in terms of timing and pitch but the initial E may glide to pitch and there may be a tempo drop from rolls to tune	Precise in terms of timing but may be minor pitch instability	Precise	Precise
endings	Reasonably together with no obvious drop in volume or obvious trailing drones but may be some rushing in the last few bars	Reasonably together with no obvious drop in volume or obvious trailing drones but may be some rushing in the last few bars	Precise	Precise	Precise
breaks	Together, but may be unison problems in first few bars after each break	Together in marches but may be unison problems in first few bars after break into dance tunes	Together	Together	Together

## Band Grade Level Expectations - Drumming

Elements	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
<b>Tone</b>					
Snare	Closely achieve a pleasant pitch (i.e. all drums pitched evenly)	All drums pitched brightly and evenly	All drums pitched brightly and evenly	All drums set to achieve a full and balanced sound	All drums set to achieve a full and balanced sound with rich depth and resonance
Bass & Tenor	Attempt to pitch bass closely to pipes bass drone sound  Tenors pitched at pleasant intervals between pipes bass and tenor drones sounds	Bass pitched to match pipes bass drone sound  Tenors pitched at pleasant intervals between pipes bass and tenor drones sounds  Attempt at functional tuning encouraged	All drums functionally and accurately tuned	All drums in tune with band	All drums in tune with band with rich depth and resonance
<b>Material - Snare</b>					
Score Fit to Melodic Line	Score fits tune and follows the rhythmic structure of the melodic line  Use of triplet runs and 1/16 note groups with occasional use of 1/32 note groups	Score follows melodic line  Use of triplet, 1/16 and 1/32 note combinations	Score fits and enhances the melodic line of the tune	Score precisely fits and enhances melodic line	Score precisely fits and enhances melodic line
Rudiments & Embellishments	All basic rolls (but not necessarily use of the 5-stroke roll) and flams and accents  Drags not necessary	All rolls (including 5-stroke rolls) and embellishments (including drags) expected  Ruffs not necessary	All rolls & roll combinations, open staccato groups, and ruffs expected	Ability to use full range of rudiments and embellishments expected and played with great clarity	All rudiments and embellishments able to be used and delivered with exacting precision and clarity
Chips/Unisons placement	Modest use of straightforward and logical chips/unisons required	Effective placement of logical chips/unisons	Effective and enhancing placement of chips/unisons	Effective and enhancing use of chips/unisons with use of greater creative license expected	Effective and enhancing use of chips/unisons with a high degree of creative license expected

Elements	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
<b>Material - Bass &amp; Tenor -</b>					
Scoring	Follows the rhythmic structure of the melodic line  Use of space by bass and tenors is encouraged	Modest use of syncopation encouraged - some use of space expected  Simple splitting of tenor runs encouraged	Effective use of syncopation and space expected  Effective splitting of tenor runs expected	Effective use of more complex rhythmic concepts, splitting and space expected	Finely tuned use of complex rhythmic concepts, splitting and space expected
<b>Musical Performance</b>					
Tempo	Reasonable tempos with minimal slowing or rushing	Reasonable idiomatic tempos in marches but dance tunes likely to be at bottom end of the acceptable range	All tunes should be at least close to ideal tempos	Idiomatic	Idiomatic
Execution Errors	Some note errors of no more than a full beat are acceptable	An occasional non-repeating 1/32 note group error or flam error is acceptable	Occasional thickness is acceptable	None	None
Phrasing & Dynamics	Phrase endings and connecting notes should get full value  Use of crescendo is encouraged	Use of dynamic range from pianissimo to double forte encouraged  Use of crescendo is expected	Use of all dynamics expected	Use of all dynamics with great precision expected	Use of all dynamics with great precision and high degree of creative license expected
<b>Technical Issues</b>					
Introduction	Rolls should start and end together with attempt to minimize pulsing	Rolls should start and end together with minimal pulsing	Rolls should start and end together with no pulsing	Precise	Precise
Breaks	Basically together, however some separation in opening bars acceptable	Between tunes of the same idiom: No separation in opening bars  Between tunes of different idioms: Minimal separation in opening bars	Together and no separation on opening bars	Seamless	Seamless

## Band Grade Level Expectations - Ensemble

Elements	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
<b>Intonation - Balance</b>	Volume or weight balance within and between the corps				
pipes	Chanters may be thin - drones may either be too weak or too dominant	Chanters may be unbalanced in volume up the scale, drones may also be unbalanced (weak or dominant)	Chanters projecting well but drones maybe weak overall or in bass component	Chanters projecting well with solid drone support	Chanters projecting well with solid drone support including a strong fundamental
snare	May be an imbalance with pipes due to either unbalanced numbers or playing style	May be an imbalance with pipes due to either unbalanced numbers or playing style	Satisfactory balance between pipes and snares	Snare balancing pipes nicely - forte and piano both projecting clearly	Snare balancing pipes nicely - forte and piano both projecting clearly
bass drum	May be too weak or too dominant due to playing style or size of pipe section - may be resonance problems	May be too weak or too dominant due to playing style or size of pipe section - may be resonance problems	May be minor imbalance due to size of pipe section or too little resonance	Projecting well with appropriate resonance	Projecting well with appropriate resonance
tenors	May be too weak or too busy - may not be used as an independent voice	May be too weak or too busy - may not be used as an independent voice	Supports melody well at times but often struggles with role	Supports melody well most of the time with occasional conflicting passages	Tastefully used throughout
<b>Intonation - Pitch</b>	Pitch balance within and between the corps				
pipes	Chanters at a modern pitch with some slight inaccuracy in scale - drones may suffer from tuning or blowing issues	Pipes at a modern pitch with a fairly accurate scale - drones may suffer from tuning or blowing issues	Pipes at a modern pitch with a fairly accurate scale but minor intonation issues - drones well-tuned	Pipes at a modern pitch with an accurate scale - drones well-tuned	No issues
snare	Tension and general frequency range adequate	Tension and general frequency range adequate	Snare pitched well to chanters	Snare pitched well to chanters	Snare pitched well to chanters
bass drum	May not be tuned to drone fundamental	Tuned fairly well, but may have resonance issues	Support bass drone fundamental well	Support bass drone fundamental well	Support bass drone fundamental well
tenors	May not be tuned in relation to pipe scale	May not be tuned in relation to pipe scale	May not be tuned in relation to pipe scale or usage may create discord	Well-tuned to pipe scale, but may be used inappropriately at times	Well-tuned to pipe scale and appropriate voicings
<b>Integration</b>	Overall precision and unison within and between the corps				
within pipe corps	Reasonable unison on melody with some rough phrases	Good unison on melody	Tight unison on melody	Tight unison on melody with some clarity in embellishments	Tight unison on melody and embellishments

Elements	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
within snare corps	Some ongoing unison problems impacting rhythmic clarity	Intermittent unison issues impacting clarity	Unison presenting clearly defined rhythmic units but may have limited dynamics	Unison presenting clearly defined rhythmic accents but may have limited dynamics	Clearly defined rhythmic support with wide dynamic range
snare to pipes	Reasonable downbeat unison but could be more precise	Good downbeat unison with reasonable off-beat unison	Supporting both down beats and off-beats	Tight unison to the melodic line	Tight unison to the melodic line
bass section to pipes and snares	Reasonable downbeat unison	Good downbeat unison with reasonable off-beat unison	Tight, with occasional problems at breaks	Tight	Tight
<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Tempos, accents, phrasing, arrangement and emotional impact</b>				
presentation of melody	Reasonably lively tempos	Lively tempos with some attempt at phrase definition	Solid treatment of all idioms	Starting to display excellence in some tunes	Lively tempos, strong rhythmic accents and clear phrase separation in melody
rhythmic support	drum scores should not conflict with melody or phrasing and dynamic accents likely missing	drum scores should complement melody or phrasing but dynamic accents may be missing	Some dynamic accents present and may be some use of counter-rhythms	reasonable dynamic support from drum corps with clear phrasing expected at this level	Snares supplying a wide range of dynamic accents and supporting same phrase separation as pipe corps
arrangement	No expectations at this level	Some thought may be given to sequence of tunes	Some creativity but not all ideas fully developed	Generally solid musicianship throughout	Displays imaginative: bridges, key changes, logical flow, energy
<b>Technical Issues</b>	<b>Unified handling of technical issues</b>				
Attack	Intro E may glide to pitch - tempo may drop with start of opening tune	Intro E may glide to pitch - tempo may drop with start of opening tune	Intro E reasonably stable but not perfect	Entire band together in time and pitch - maintaining tempo from rolls into tune	Entire band together in time and pitch - maintaining tempo from rolls into tune
Ending	No obvious trailing drones, but not precise	Reasonably precise, but may be small drop in volume and/or rushing in final bars of tune	Together, but maybe small drop in volume and/or rushing in final bars of tune	Precise	Precise
Breaks	May be some small issues with every break	Usually tight, but may take a beat or 2 to settle	Tight, but may take up to a beat to settle	Tight	Tight

## Solo Grade Level Expectations - Piping

Elements	Grade 5 / Novice	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Open
<b>Tone</b>						
chanter	persistent issues with blowing instability and/or one or two imbalanced notes (e.g., a flat top hand)	Minor issues with blowing instability and/or one or two imbalanced notes (e.g., a flat top hand)	Intermittent minor blowing issues (esp. in dance tunes) and maybe one very slightly imbalanced note	balanced chanter but maybe a thin top hand	accurately balanced and stable scale	accurately set and well-blown
drones	tuned well, but sometimes subject to obvious blowing instability	tuned well but subject to minor blowing instability	tuned well but subject to minor blowing instability	At pitch	At pitch	At pitch with rich depth and resonance
<b>Technique</b>						
embellishments	Good clarity for some embellishments; sometimes not played properly or not timed properly in relation to the beat Some crossing noises may be expected	Good clarity for some embellishments but not all (e.g., a good F doubling but a very closed and tight C doubling) May have an occasional crossing noise	Good clarity within the embellishments but may be somewhat inconsistent as to grace note length and balance	Good clarity within embellishments that are mostly well-controlled as to grace note length and balance	Well-controlled and articulated embellishments	Well-controlled and precisely articulated embellishments complimenting and enhancing the melody
note errors	Maybe a few note errors of no more than a full beat	Maybe a few note errors of no more than a full beat	Maybe an occasional non-repeating note error	none	none	none
<b>Musical Expression</b>						
tempo	Tempos slower than idiomatic without actually dragging	Reasonable march tempos but at the bottom end of the acceptable range	Reasonable, idioms and tempos in marches but dance tunes likely to be at the bottom end of the acceptable range	all tunes should be at least close to ideal idioms and tempos	idiomatic	idiomatic
phrasing	No attempt at phrasing expected	Phrase endings and connecting notes should get full notated value most of the time, but some phrases may run together	Phrase endings and connecting notes should get full value in marches but phrases may run together in dance tunes	some phrase separation apparent	phrasing should be evident	phrase separation and "question and answer" phrasing expected



accents and pointing	melody played approximately as written with no further attempt at rhythmic accents	some rhythmic accents should be present	accents should be present in marches but with occasional missing accents in some phrases; accents in strathspeys likely to be a little too light; reels may be over-accented Accenting may be too little, too much or simply inconsistent in jigs or hornpipes	accents should be clearly present in marches but accents and pointing in dance tunes may have the same problems as Grade 3 - but to a lesser extent	should be clearly present and idiomatic	should be clearly present and emphasize light and shade in the melody
Technical issues						
breaks	N/A	N/A	may be tempo problems in first few bars of following tune	no tempo problems but no expectation of subtlety	a solid musical transition	a solid musical transition

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## Solo Grade Level Expectations – Snare Drumming

*NOTE: When used for adjudication purposes, the adjudicator should recognize that piper accompaniment errors (e.g. poor bagpipe uptake on introduction, playing the wrong tune, missing and mixing up parts and their repeats, erratic loss of chanter sound, sustained double toning or squealing drone, etc) can have an unintended negative impact on the solo snare drumming performance and its performance rating. When such situations occur and negatively impact the solo snare drumming performance, the adjudicator should discount or factor out those passages when determining the drummer's performance rating. Also, if an accompanying piper's unfortunate start significantly negatively impacts the drummer's introduction, the adjudicator should initiate an immediate restart of the performance, within the local association's rules.*

Elements	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Open
<b>Tone</b>					
	Drum pitched pleasantly to the ear	Drum pitched brightly and pleasantly	Drum pitched brightly and pleasantly	Drum set to achieve a pleasant, full and balanced sound with rich depth and resonance	Drum set to achieve a pleasant, full and balanced sound with rich depth and resonance
<b>Material</b>					
Score Fit to Melodic Line	Score follows melodic line using all basic rolls  Use of triplet, 1/16 and 1/32 note combinations	Score fits and enhances the melodic line of the tune	Score fits and enhances the melodic line of the tune	Score precisely fits and enhances melodic line	Score precisely fits and enhances melodic line
Rudiments & Embellishments	All basic rolls (not necessarily including the 5-stroke roll) and flams, drags, and accents	All rolls (including 5-stroke rolls) and embellishments expected  Ruffs not necessary	All rolls & roll combinations, open staccato groups, and ruffs expected	Ability to use full range of rudiments and embellishments expected and played with great clarity	All rudiments and embellishments able to be used and delivered with exacting precision and clarity
<b>Musical Performance</b>					
Tempo	Reasonable tempos with minimal slowing or rushing	Reasonable idiomatic tempos.	All tunes should be at least close to ideal tempos	Idiomatic	Idiomatic
Execution Errors	Some note errors of no more than a full beat are acceptable	An occasional non-repeating 1/32 note group error or flam error is acceptable	An occasional non-repeating 1/16 or 1/32 note group error or flam, drag or ruff error is acceptable	None	None

Elements	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Open
Phrasing & Dynamics	Phrase endings and connecting notes should get full value  Use of crescendo is expected	Use of dynamic range from pianissimo to double forte encouraged	Use of all dynamics expected	Use of all dynamics with great precision expected	Use of all dynamics with great precision and high degree of creative license expected
<b>Technical Issues</b>					
Introduction	Rolls should start and end together with attempt to minimize pulsing	Rolls should start and end together with no pulsing	Precise	Precise	Precise
Breaks	Not applicable	Between tunes of different idioms: Minimal separation in opening bars	Together and no separation on opening bars	Seamless	Seamless