

DIGITAL MARKSHEETS



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INTRODUCING THE RSL AWARDS DIGITAL MARKSHEETS



Tim Bennett-Hart - Director of Academic

RSL Awards is proud to announce that from the 4th May all Rockschool Graded Music Exams (excluding Theory and Music Production) and Performing Arts Awards Musical Theatre qualifications will be marked by examiners digitally. We wanted to highlight a few of the reasons why we have made this change and the benefits that it will give candidates.

It's worth pointing out from the start that this work has taken over 18 months of refinement and testing to ensure that the standards we apply in exams remain unchanged. However, the processes behind the exams will enhance our customer service and the experience of the candidates.

Within this document we explore the Rockschool learning outcomes and how assessment criteria are used to ensure a standardised approach to marking. As well as explaining how the introduction of digital marksheets and how candidates can get the most from the exams they enter.

By using the information within this document I hope that our process of examining will be demystified so that teachers and candidates can prepare for their exam really understanding our approach to assessment.

✓ LEARNING OUTCOMES

There are three learning outcomes in Rockschool graded music exams:

1. Be able to perform music in popular musical styles.
2. Be able to demonstrate technical ability on an instrument/voice through responding to set technical demands.
3. Be able to demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests.

Graded Examinations reference all three learning outcomes, whereas Performance Certificates only require the first outcome to be met.

🕒 WHAT ARE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA?

- Assessment Criteria are how we assess the learning outcomes.
- They are applied to evidence musical outcomes at progressing grades.
- Each criterion is equally weighted.
- Each is considered / marked separately.
- The combination gives the total mark for each piece/supporting test.

✓ ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1. **Command of Instrument**
The quality of the sound produced from the instrument, including the consistency of sound/tone, control of sound/tone commensurate with grade.
2. **Sync or Pulse**
Alignment of the performance to backing track, metronome or applied to a solo performance, observing notation markings. For unaccompanied pieces candidates should maintain a secure internal pulse and adjust the pulse where instructed within the music.
3. **Accuracy and Understanding**
Representing the written notation accurately, except by instruction through performance notes, or interpreting the written part with equivalent skills demonstrated. Secure understanding of musical structure evidenced through transitions of phrases, bars and sections.
4. **Style and Expression**
An expressive and commanding performance of the notated material dictated by the demands of the performance piece.

AWARDING MARKS

When we award marks, we relate entirely to the assessment criteria.

The mark is determined by the extent to which the criteria are evidenced overall.

Criteria achieved SOME of the time:	PASS ('OK')
Criteria achieved MOST of the time:	MERIT ('GOOD')
Criteria achieved ALL of the time:	DISTINCTION ('EXCELLENT')

1. COMMAND OF INSTRUMENT

The quality of the sound produced from the instrument, including the consistency of sound/tone, control of sound/tone commensurate with grade.

UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
0-5	6-11	12-14	15-17	18-20
No Attempt and/or incomplete performance.	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced.	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality.	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality overall.	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout.

2. SYNC OR PULSE

Alignment of the performance to backing track, metronome or applied to a solo performance, observing notation markings. For unaccompanied pieces candidates should maintain a secure internal pulse and adjust the pulse where instructed within the music.

UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
0-5	6-11	12-14	15-17	18-20
No Attempt and/ or incomplete performance.	Performance not synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained.	Performance sometimes synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained.	Performance mostly synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained.	Performance consistently synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained.

3. ACCURACY AND UNDERSTANDING

Representing the written notation accurately, except by instruction through performance notes, or interpreting the written part with equivalent skills demonstrated. Secure understanding of musical structure evidenced through transitions of phrases, bars and sections.

UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
0-5	6-11	12-14	15-17	18-20
No Attempt and/ or incomplete performance.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated. Understanding of musical structures not evidenced.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	All of written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.

4. STYLE AND EXPRESSION

An expressive and commanding performance of the notated material dictated by the demands of the performance piece.

UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
0-5	6-11	12-14	15-17	18-20
No Attempt and/ or incomplete performance.	Performance Music not convincingly projected.	Some convincing projection of the music.	Mostly convincing projection of the music.	Consistently convincing projection of the music.

Example Marksheet

RSL Awarding the Contemporary Arts		Graded Music Exam report	
Candidate details		Exam details	
Name	0	Date	Saturday, 0 January 1900
		Exam centre	0
		Instrument	0
		Grade	0
		Exam type	0
Qualification details			
Qualification	#N/A		
QAN	#N/A		
U: Unclassified - P: Pass - M: Merit - D: Distinction			
	Criteria (All levels)		
Title:	0		
Piece 1	Command of Instrument	D	19
	Sync or pulse	D	
	Accuracy and Understanding	D	
	Style and Expression	D	
Title:	0		
Piece 2	Command of Instrument	D	17
	Sync or pulse	M	
	Accuracy and Understanding	M	
	Style and Expression	M	
Title:	0		
Piece 3	Command of Instrument	D	18
	Sync or pulse	D	
	Accuracy and Understanding	M	
	Style and Expression	D	
Technical Exercise	Command of Instrument	U	0
	Sync or pulse	U	
	Accuracy and Understanding	U	
Unseen Tests	Command of Instrument	U	0
	Sync or pulse	U	
	Accuracy and Understanding	U	
Ear Tests	Accuracy and Understanding	U	0
General Musicianship Questions	Question 1 (1 correct 0 incorrect)	1	5
	Question 2 (1 correct 0 incorrect)	1	
	Question 3 (1 correct 0 incorrect)	1	
	Question 4 (1 correct 0 incorrect)	1	
	Question 5 (1 correct 0 incorrect)	1	
Total		59	UNCLASSIFIED
		Grade	UNCLASSIFIED
		Distinction	90 to 100
		Merit	74 to 89
		Pass	60 to 73
Comments			
Assessment Criteria			
1. Command of Instrument The quality of the sound produced from the instrument, including the consistency of sound/tone, control of sound/tone commensurate with grade.			
2. Sync or Pulse Alignment of the performance to backing track, metronome or applied to a solo performance, observing notation markings. For unaccompanied pieces candidates should maintain a secure internal pulse and adjust the pulse where instructed within the music.			
3. Accuracy and Understanding Representing the written notation accurately, except by instruction through performance notes, or interpreting the written part with equivalent skills demonstrated. Secure understanding of musical structure evidenced through transitions of phrases, bars and sections.			
4. Style and Expression An expressive and commanding performance of the notated material dictated by the demands of the performance piece.			

THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL MARKSHEETS

Moving to digital marksheets has a number of advantages for candidates and teachers:

CLEARER AND EASIER TO UNDERSTAND

We want our exams to be as accessible as possible for all candidates. To enhance our approach, we have separated each element of the exam into assessment criteria that are easy to understand – the examiner will give candidates a grade for each of these elements which will combine to create a final score.

SPEED OF RESULTS

Using a digital marksheet allows our examiners to upload results directly to a candidate's profile on the RSL Awards site, rather than posting a hard copy report form. There are still rigorous quality checks to go through, but, we are confident that candidates will see their results quicker.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

An added benefit, and something we are very committed to, is the reduction in paper use and the carbon impact of transporting marksheets. These enhancements to our process will save hundreds of thousands of pieces of paper being transported across the world.

ACCESSIBILITY

We don't believe that the way we examine should be kept secret. By being completely transparent about the elements of a performance we are grading, we hope that teachers and candidates will be able to focus on their preparation for examinations. In time, we hope that this will reduce any anxious or nervous feelings as candidates take exams and benchmark their learning.

No matter what the outcome, RSL Awards exams should be a positive part of the learning process, affirming the progress of a student and giving them clear goals to try and achieve.

CONSISTENCY ACROSS INSTRUMENTS

Within the Rockschool Grades, all instruments will now be marked with the same consistent use of assessment criteria, across all grades. We hope that this will help teachers or candidates who teach/study multiple instruments.

FAQS

Why have RSL Awards brought in digital marksheets?

At RSL Awards we pride ourselves on the customer service we provide to candidates. The marking we provide is an extension of this: we wanted to refresh the forms our examiners use to offer more detailed information in a clearer way.

How are the sections of the exam marked?

The individual components of the exam are still marked separately. However, candidates will be able to see a grade for each of the criteria marked in that section. This will make the specific areas where candidates performed well easier to see.

Will my marks still be calculated in the same way as before?

Each section of the exam is still worth the same proportion of marks leading to the final grade

Will I still get any written feedback on each piece from the examiner?

Yes – but rather than handwritten feedback, examiners will type holistic feedback at the end of the exam. This will highlight the best features of the performance, as well as highlighting areas that could be improved in future exams.

Previously, I have had to wait to get my marks? Will this be a quicker process now?

Because the marking is on a device, rather than paper, we've been able to develop a bespoke system for examiners to upload marks. This should speed up the time from your exam to receiving your grades.

Do I still get a certificate? Do I get my marksheet at the same time?

You will still get a certificate for the exams. We have a range of quality procedures before the release of the certificates and marksheets.

Will I still be assessed for Performance, Technical Exercises, Sight-Reading/ Improvisation, and General Musicianship Questions as separate areas?

The format of the Graded Exam, Performance Certificates, Graded Certificates, and Musical Theatre Performing Arts Awards remain unchanged and candidates do not need to prepare any differently.

Are the grade boundaries for Pass, Merit and Distinction still the same?

There are no changes to the grade boundaries.

I teach lots of different instruments. Does this now mean I can use the same criteria across every instrument I teach or are there still some differences?

Yes. We hope that this will make it easier for teachers to switch seamlessly between multiple instruments in their teaching.

I've noticed that Style and Expression is a requirement across all the grades. Will I now be assessed on this at the beginner grades too?

We have always assessed confidence in presentation at the lowest grades. However, feedback told us this was ambiguous. This is now expressed as 'Style and Expression: Convincing Projection of the Music'. We want to be clear to all candidates that 'feeling' the music and expressing themselves is something that is desirable in a musical performance

I have been preparing for the exam for several months. How will this affect me?

We have rigorously tested the processes and taken stakeholder feedback to ensure that the grade a candidate receives is identical whether they are examined before or after the switch over date. We are not looking for candidates to perform any differently from before, and are applying the same standards, but in a different way.

Graded Examinations

LEARNING OUTCOMES	EXAM SECTION		ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	% OF FINAL MARK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to perform music in popular musical styles 	Performance Pieces (x3)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Command of Instrument Sync or Pulse Accuracy and Understanding Style and Expression 	60%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to demonstrate technical ability on an instrument/ voice through responding to set technical demands 	Technical Exercises		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Command of Instrument Sync or Pulse Accuracy and Understanding 	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests 	Unseen Tests	Sight Reading/ Improvisation and interpretation/ Quick Study Pieces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Command of Instrument Sync or Pulse Accuracy and Understanding 	10%
		Ear Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accuracy and Understanding 	10%
		General Musicianship Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct Answers 	5%

Graded Examinations

PERFORMANCE PIECES					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	18–20	15–17	12–14	6–11	0–5
Command of Instrument	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality overall	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Sync or Pulse	Performance consistently synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance mostly synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance sometimes synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance not synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Style & Expression	Consistently convincing projection of the music.	Mostly convincing projection of the music.	Some convincing projection of the music.	Music convincingly projected.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance

TECHNICAL EXERCISES					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	13–15	11–12	9–10	4–8	0–3
Command of Instrument	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality overall	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Sync or Pulse	Performance consistently synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance mostly synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance sometimes synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance not synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION / QUICK STUDY PIECE					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	9–10	7–8	6	3–5	0–2
Command of Instrument	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality overall	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Sync or Pulse	Performance consistently synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance mostly synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance sometimes synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance not synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance

EAR TESTS					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	9–10	7–8	6	3–5	0–2
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS (GMQS)					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	5 correct responses	4 correct responses	3 correct responses	2 correct responses	0–1 correct responses

Performance Certificates

LEARNING OUTCOMES	EXAM SECTION	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	% OF FINAL MARK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to perform music in popular musical styles 	Performance Pieces (x5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Command of Instrument Sync or Pulse Accuracy and Understanding Style and Expression 	100%

PERFORMANCE PIECES					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	18–20	15–17	12–14	6–11	0–5
Command of Instrument	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality overall	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Sync or Pulse	Performance consistently synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance mostly synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance sometimes synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance not synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Style & Expression	Consistently convincing projection of the music.	Mostly convincing projection of the music.	Some convincing projection of the music.	Music convincingly projected.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance