LAST UPDATED: 9 MAY 2025

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HARMONICA (DIATIONIC)

SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION 2023

PREMIERE – DEBUT

RSL Awarding the Contemporary Arts

Welcome to the Rockschool 2023 syllabus for Diatonic Harmonica
This syllabus guide is designed to give teachers, learners and candidates practical information on the graded qualifications run by RSL Awards.

This syllabus guide covers the following qualifications
- Performance certificates: Premiere and Debut

Period of operation
This syllabus specification coverserformance certificates in Diatonic Harmonica from 2023.

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SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION

2023 Edition

RSL Awarding the Contemporary Arts

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PREFACE

QUALIFICATIONS AT A GLANCE

Qualification titles and sizes

Qualification title	QAN	Total number of units	Guided learning hours (GLH)	Credit	Total qualification time (TQT)
RSL Entry Level Award in Performance Certificate in Music Performance (Entry 2)	610/4769/7	1	4	0	20
RSL Entry Level Award in Performance Certificate in Music Performance (Entry 3)	610/4770/3	1	8	4	40

Assessment overview

Assessment	
Form of assessment	All assessments are carried out by external examiners. Candidates are required to carry out a combination of practical tasks and underpinning theoretical assessment (for grade exams) or practical tasks only (for performance certificates).
Assessment bands	There are four bands of assessment (Distinction, Merit, Pass and Unclassified) for each qualification as a whole.
Quality assurance	Robust examiner training, standardisation and observation, combined with statistical analysis of results and formal sign off of certification at monthly Assessment Boards, ensures that all assessments are carried out to the same standard.

THE VALUE OF RSL QUALIFICATIONS

RSL qualifications
We are committed to maintaining and improving our reputation for excellence by providing high quality education and training through our syllabuses, examinations, music and resources. We advocate an open access approach to qualifications, providing a range of syllabuses, designed to accommodate a wide variety of candidates of different ages, experience and levels of achievement. RSL qualifications are listed on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in England and Northern Ireland by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).

Progression routes
RSL's graded qualifications provide a flexible progression route for candidates. They are a positive means of determining progress and enable candidates to learn the necessary techniques to gain entry to industry, and to further education (FE) and higher education (HE) courses. Graded qualifications operate according to a well-established methodology of 'progressive mastery'. They allow candidates to be tested in discrete stages in the development of a wide range of skills. They tend to be more rigorous than other types of exams and for that reason employers are confident that candidates with graded qualifications will have the necessary skills to work in a variety of different areas.

UCAS points
For students applying for work or university, many potential employers and institutions see graded exams in a very positive way. Recognised qualifications demonstrate an ability to dedicate commitment to extracurricular activities, providing evidence of versatility, which many students find beneficial within UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) applications and for university entrance interviews. Our qualifications at Level 3 (Grades 6 to 8) carry allocated points on the UCAS tariff. For full details relating to the allocation of UCAS points please see rslawards.com/about-us/ucas-points.

QUALIFICATION SUMMARY

Aims and broad objectives
The aim of RSL's graded music performance qualifications is to provide a flexible, progressive mastery approach to the knowledge, skills and understanding required for popular music performance. They motivate and encourage candidates of all ages and levels through a system of progressive mastery, enabling candidates to develop and enhance skills, knowledge and understanding in a safe and consistent way. The qualifications are beneficial for candidates wishing to progress at their own pace through smaller steps of achievement.

Expectations of knowledge, skills and understanding
The graded examination system is one based on the principle of 'progressive mastery' – each step in the exam chain demonstrates learning, progression and skills in incremental steps. Successful learning is characterised by a mastery of the fundamentals of the skills demanded in each grade.

Qualification structure
A graded qualification consists of a range of both practical and knowledge based elements, which are based on detailed requirements outlined in the relevant syllabus. Therefore, requirements for each grade will be set out in detail in the unit specifications.The learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each unit will require knowledge, skills and understanding of these syllabus requirements to be demonstrated at the grade entered.

CANDIDATE ACCESS AND REGISTRATION

Access and registration
The qualifications will:
- Be available to everyone who is capable of reaching the required standards
- Be free from any barriers that restrict access and progression
- Offer equal opportunities for all wishing to access the qualifications

Entry requirements
These qualifications are open to everyone who is capable of reaching the required standard; there are no entry requirements. However, candidates should be aware that the content at the higher grades will require a level of knowledge and understanding covered in previous qualifications. At the point of application, RSL will ensure that all candidates are fully informed about the requirements and demands of the qualification.

Age groups
These qualifications are suitable for candidates in the Under 16, 16+, 16–18 and 19+ age groups.

Recommended prior learning (RPL)
Learners are not required to have any prior learning for these qualifications. However, learners should ensure that they are aware of the requirements and expectations of each grade prior to entering for an assessment.

Exam entry
Candidates may enter online for any of the qualifications at various points in the calendar year in territories throughout the world. For further details on exam dates and fees, and to enter for a graded Harmonica qualification, visit the RSL website at: rslawards.com.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT

Information and support
The RSL website rslawards.com has detailed information on all aspects of RSL examinations, including examination regulations, detailed marking schemes and assessment criteria as well as examples to help you prepare for our qualifications.

Complaints and appeals
All procedural complaints and appeals, including malpractice and requests for reasonable adjustments / special considerations, can be made through the website: rslawards.com.

Equal opportunities
RSL's Equal Opportunities policy can be found on the website: rslawards.com.

Contacts for help and support
All correspondence should be directed to info@rslawards.com: or to:

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EXAM GUIDELINES

PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

Type of harmonica
At Premiere level, candidates will require either a 4-hole harmonica (e.g. Hohner Speedy) or diatonic harmonica with tape. At Debut, candidates will require a 4-hole or diatonic harmonica.

Performing from memory
Candidates are permitted to perform any or all of their pieces from their sheet music or from memory. Performing from memory is not compulsory and no additional marks will be awarded for doing so.

Adaptation and personalisation
Where indicative repertoire is selected, this should be performed as notated, except where candidates choose to embellish or rework any sections. In these instances, as well as where there are performance indications to ad lib., improvise, develop, etc, candidates will be marked on their ability to present the personalised material in a stylistically appropriate way, commensurate with the grade level. All performances will be expected to have a clear basis in the notated material. Note that Technical Exercises and unseen tests must be performed exactly as written.

Accompaniment
Where indicative repertoire is selected, this should be performed to a backing track or with live accompaniment unless written for solo performance. Candidates should inform RSL in advance if they are using a piano accompanist, and check with the examination centre for the availability of a piano ahead of their scheduled exam.

Please Note: Candidates may not perform pieces in their exam that they have previously performed for an RSL Assessment. This includes re-sits of their exams.

REPERTOIRE

Repertoire
The repertoire for Harmonica is entirely 'free choice'. Guidelines for the selection and performance of repertoire is given within the unit specifications.

Further guidance
For more information about the selection and performance of free choice repertoire, including level of demand, provision of sheet music, adaptation and personalisation, backing/accompaniment, prior approval, and a list of suggested repertoire for Harmonica, please see https://www.rslawards.com/free-choice-pieces/.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

EXAM ELEMENTS

Performance Certificates are available at Premiere and Debut. They consist of five performance pieces, performed in any order. There is no unprepared work.

EXAM DURATIONS

Exam	Premiere	Debut
Duration (minutes)	10	15

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Assessment methodology
Performance Certificates are assessed via an examination. All assessment of these is external and is undertaken by RSL Examiners. Candidates perform five prepared pieces, all of which are 'free choice'.

MARKING SCHEME

Performance Certificates are marked out of 100. The marks available are as follows:

Exam element and total marks available	Attainment band and mark range		
	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Performance Piece 1 (20 marks)	18–20	15–17	12–14
Performance Piece 2 (20 marks)	18–20	15–17	12–14
Performance Piece 3 (20 marks)	18–20	15–17	12–14
Performance Piece 4 (20 marks)	18–20	15–17	12–14
Performance Piece 5 (20 marks)	18–20	15–17	12–14

ATTAINMENT BANDS

The attainment bands for Performance Certificates are as follows:

Attainment band	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Mark range	90–100	75–89	60–74
Percentage	90–100%	75–89%	60–74%

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING CRITERIA

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes describe the skills and knowledge that candidates will be able to demonstrate during the exam.

Learners will be able to:

- Perform music in a range of musical styles

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The following assessment criteria are used to assess the learning outcomes:

Assessment criteria	Definition
Command of Instrument	The quality of the sound produced from the instrument, including the consistency of sound/tone and control of sound/tone commensurate with grade.
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.
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.
Style and Expression	An expressive and commanding performance of the notated material dictated by the demands of the performance piece.

The assessment criteria that apply to each element of the exam are shown in the following tables. Assessment criteria within each element are equally weighted: for example, in the Performance Pieces each assessment criteria makes up 25% of the total marks.

GRADING CRITERIA

Performance Pieces

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (18–20)	Merit (15–17)	Pass (12–14)	Below Pass 1 (6–11)	Below Pass 2 (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 not maintained	No attempt and/ or incomplete performance
Accuracy and 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 not demonstrated Understanding of musical structure not evidenced	No attempt and/ or incomplete performance
Style and Expression	Consistently convincing projection of the music	Mostly convincing projection of the music	Some convincing projection of the music	Music not projected convincingly	No attempt and/ or incomplete performance

PREMIERE

The Premiere Harmonica exam is available as a Performance Certificate only. Premiere exams are assessed in the same way as other Rockschool Performance Certificates. Please refer to the marking schemes within the preface section, and the Assessment and Grading Criteria section of this guide for further details.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Premiere exam is only available as a Performance Certificate.

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform five pieces which may be taken from the Method Book 1 or may be free choice. The table below provides guidance as to what suitable repertoire for this grade will likely contain. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that there is opportunity for candidates to demonstrate these elements within their performance:

Piece duration	Time signatures	Rhythms	Scales	Dynamics	Features	Effects
30 seconds to 1 minute	▪ 4/4	▪ Whole notes ▪ Half notes ▪ Quarter notes	▪ C Major	▪ None	▪ One step changes ▪ One octave leap ▪ Blow to draw	▪ None

Indicative repertoire for this level includes the following pieces:
Highland Spring
The Canyon
Summer Dreams
Hold Back the River
Shotgun

All of the above pieces can be found in the RSL Harmonica Method Book 1.

DEBUT

The Debut Harmonica exam is for candidates who have been learning a short time and have developed elementary skills, techniques, coordination and musical understanding.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Debut exam is only available as a Performance Certificate.

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform five pieces which may be taken from the Method Book 2 or may be free choice. The table below provides guidance as to what suitable repertoire for this grade will likely contain. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that there is opportunity for candidates to demonstrate these elements within their performance:

Piece duration	Time signatures	Rhythms	Scales	Dynamics	Features	Effects
30 seconds to 1 minute 30 seconds	▪ 4/4 ▪ 3/4	▪ Whole notes ▪ Half notes ▪ Quarter notes ▪ Dotted whole/half notes ▪ Ties	▪ C Major	▪ Forte ▪ Piano	▪ 2 step change ▪ Repeat marks ▪ Leaps (including direction change)	▪ Mixed articulation ▪ Extended slurs ▪ Tremolo

Indicative repertoire for this level includes the following pieces:
Southern Express
Race Day
Circus Skills
Perfect
Lean on Me

All of the above pieces can be found in the RSL Harmonica Method Book 2.