

Your Personalised Guide to taking RSL Graded Screen Acting Recorded Video Exams

RSL Awards is excited about the possibilities video submission of exams presents, but we do still need to make sure that the videos adhere to a set of principles, to ensure we can still provide the excellent level of fairness and consistency you would expect from the RSL Awards exam process.

RSL Graded Screen Acting exams are only available via recorded video submission.

Procedural Guidance:

For RSL Screen Acting video exams to be valid, there are a number of rules you must adhere to:

1. Submit pdf copies of your Task 1 (Grades 1-8), Task 3 (Grades 6), and Task 3a (Grade 7/8) performance pieces at the point of booking your exam, or as soon after as possible.
2. **Only one camera/smartphone must be used for filming.**
3. **A separate video must be made for each and every task.**
4. **Videos must not be edited.**
5. Another person may be present in order to operate the camera. However, the other person is not permitted to interact with the candidate or intervene in the exam, with the exception of introducing the candidate, if required.
6. Prior to the performance of each and every task (therefore each and every video submitted), candidates state their name, the exam grade they are taking, and the task number, to camera. For younger candidates, this can be done by the camera phone operator.

For example:

Solo candidate (spoken by the candidate or the camera phone operator):

“Ali Jones, Grade 1, Task 1”

Two candidates: (spoken by the candidates or the camera phone operator. Each candidate wearing their candidate number on the front of their clothing):

“Ali Jones is number 1, Amy Smith is number 2. Grade 1, Task 1”.

7. Prior to the performance of Task 1, Grades 6-8 candidates should clearly display valid photographic identification (such as Passport, Driving Licence, Student Union Card, ID Card) for at least ten seconds, in line with our policy.
8. In addition, Grades 1-8 candidates must ensure they have included the required contextual introductions to scenes/scenarios, which vary dependent upon the grade. See the syllabus specifications at the relevant grade for full details.
9. Task 4 - Knowledge and Understanding video (Grades Debut – 8):
 - Candidates state their name and grade, then say “Task 4” (as per point 3, above), then present their prepared response(s) to the questions (the number of which is dependent upon the grade), direct to the camera.
 - For exams with two candidates, one Task 4 recording must be made, and each candidate states their name and presents their prepared responses in turn.
10. Check the video recordings of your exam carefully before submission, making sure that the picture and sound are of a reasonable quality and that all tasks have been captured in full.
11. Upload the video recordings **as one package** ensuring:
 - Each video is clearly labelled with the candidates’ name(s), the grade taken, and the task number.
 - The package containing the videos is labelled with the candidate name(s) and the grade taken.

- Candidates entering in twos upload the videos to one shared package, clearly labelled with both of their names and the grade taken. **Note that candidates entering in twos must be taking the same grade.**

Candidates will be marked by an official RSL Awards examiner. Additionally, the examiner will record a short video message to candidates that delivers feedback on the exam performance on top of the usual marksheet feedback.

Grade-by-grade video upload checklist:

Premiere:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3 = **TOTAL 4 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b x 2, Task 3 x 2 = **TOTAL 6 VIDEOS**

Debut:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 5 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b x 2, Task 3 x 2, Task 4 = **TOTAL 7 VIDEOS**

Grade 1:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 5 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b x 2, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 6 VIDEOS**

Grade 2:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 5 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b x 2, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 6 VIDEOS**

Grade 3:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 5 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b x 2, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 6 VIDEOS**

Grade 4:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 5 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a x 2, Task 2b x 2, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 7 VIDEOS**

Grade 5:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 5 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a x 2, Task 2b x 2, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 7 VIDEOS**

Grade 6:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 5 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a x 2, Task 2b x 2, Task 3, Task 4 = **TOTAL 7 VIDEOS**

Grade 7:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3a, Task 3b, Task 4 = **TOTAL 6 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a x 2, Task 2b x 2, Task 3a, Task 3b, Task 4 = **TOTAL 8 VIDEOS**

Grade 8:

Solo candidate: Task 1, Task 2a, Task 2b, Task 3a, Task 3b, Task 4 = **TOTAL 6 VIDEOS**

Two candidates: Task 1, Task 2a x 2, Task 2b x 2, Task 3a x2, Task 3b, Task 4 = **TOTAL 9 VIDEOS**

How to register for an Exam

To register please use the relevant online form, found [here](#):

Please note: there are two different forms. The form in the first tab is exclusively for schools, organisations, venues or exam centres. The form in the second tab is for independent candidates or parents/guardians.

Should you have any queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at paa@rslawards.com

After uploading the video recordings as one package and submitting the package, the candidate can relax and we will send a notification when the result is available. We also provide access to a short video of the examiner providing feedback.

We will then produce the official qualification certificate which confirms the award of the qualification. A minimum of 'Pass' is required to receive the certificate.

Filming guidance:

RSL has worked closely with BAFTA Award winning cinematographer Jack Burton, to create a detailed guide to filming your videos and achieving the correct camera shots required by the PAA Screen Acting syllabus:

Full guidance on how to submit your PAA Screen Acting Recorded Video Exam, including a video demonstration, [can be found here](#). The guidance below reflects the contents of the demonstration video, so should be read in conjunction.

Note that the video will guide you through the process when using a smartphone, which we consider to be the most suitable device to achieve the required shots straightforwardly. If another device is used, eg a digital camera, candidates and teachers may adapt the guidance accordingly.

Remember, the applicant is responsible for ensuring that the correct shot is used as required by the syllabus specification, and that the candidates(s) are clearly visible within the frame.

Simplicity is key:

Your aim is to showcase your screen acting abilities to the examiner. Simplicity is key to this. The simpler everything else is in your video the more you and your skills will stand out.

Pick your outfit. Note that costume is not permitted, although long skirts may be worn for period scenes if required. Choose something that is comfortable and practical for your performance. Some jewellery, man-

made fabrics and shoes can make loud noises when you move a lot so avoid these items if you notice their sounds. Please wear simple colours.

Only **one** camera/smart phone must be used. Use the standard built-in camera in your smart phone. No third-party camera apps please.

All videos should be framed landscape not portrait. This means turning the phone on its side and filming a rectangular frame with the longest sides on the top and the bottom of the frame. Just like the shape of a standard TV screen.

All videos should be filmed in colour and not black and white. The video must be filmed in standard mode with no filters.

All videos should be filmed indoors and have the simplest background you are able to achieve. Preferably the entire background should be one solid colour. Avoid patterned wallpaper if possible; stick to muted, soft colours. White is always a safe bet but also soft greys, blues and cream work well, amongst many others. You want to be the centre of attention, not the background colour. Your videos should not have items in the foreground either (e.g. furniture and plants). Another option would be to enquire about an interior space away from home such as your school or college.

Music and/or sound effects must not be played in the videos.

Try not to have any contrasting light in your frame as this might cause your phone to alter the intended exposure. Aim to achieve a frame that doesn't have any shadows. If filming your video on a very bright sunny day that is casting shadows, you could control the light coming through the window by hanging a white sheet - this way light can still pass through the sheet without it being too harsh and contrasting to the rest of the frame.

In summary:

- Simplicity is key
- Simple plain clothes (no costume)
- Videos to be filmed:
 - On **one** camera/phone
 - Landscape frame (like a TV screen)
 - Standard phone camera (no 3rd party apps)
 - No filters
 - Colour mode
- Filmed indoors
 - A simple plain background
 - Soft coloured backdrop. White is always good
 - Avoid TVs, picture frames, patterned wallpaper
 - Consider using a large bed sheet
 - Consider a location other than your home
- No foreground objects in frame

- No sound effects or music
- Avoid high contrasting light in your video
 - No bright light from windows in the background
 - Possibly diffuse the light with a white sheet

Camera Shots

The applicant is responsible for ensuring that the correct shot is used as required by the syllabus specification, and that the candidates(s) are clearly visible within the frame.

There are three different shot sizes required. Candidates and teachers/applicants are advised to watch the video demonstration for further clarification.

1. Wide shot

This is a full body shot and should be wide enough to not cut out any part of the body. Ensure you set the camera to take in the whole scene, along with any movement. Consider moving around, stretching your arms and legs to reach the parameters of the space you are intending on using. For exams with two candidates, both of you should do this. If any part of either of either candidate cuts out of the frame, position the camera further away until this doesn't happen.

2. Mid-Shot

This shot is achieved by moving the camera nearer to you than the wide shot. Position the camera at a distance from you that shows you from approximately the waist up. Note this is an estimate, it is recognised that your scene/scenario may include small movements and physicality, which might result in a slight deviation, but, generally 'waist-up' is what is expected.

The mid shot is more-or-less representative of how you might see a person if you were having a conversation with them. It allows for a little movement, whilst retaining the main focus on your face.

3. Close-up

This is a shot of your face and is achieved by moving the camera in further to you than the mid-shot. We want to see your whole head so be careful to not cut off the top of your head or the bottom of your chin. A good guideline is to leave the very tops of your shoulders inside the frame as well as a small gap above you within frame. This way you can ensure you do not cut anything out of frame that is required.

NB. For guidance on acting for close-up, please see the Definitions section, found later in this guide.

For solo candidates:

In your close-up task, if you are directing your speech to another, imagined character, do not look directly at the camera, but slightly beyond the side edge of the camera, focusing on the imagined other character.

For candidates entering in twos:

If your close-up task requires performing an extract from a duologue scene, the extract must be filmed twice, with the camera focused on each candidate in turn, framed in close-up.

If you're the other actor in someone else's close-up scene, get as close to the camera as possible without it catching you (unless it's an over-the-shoulder shot – see below) so the main actor is captured clearly in the frame.

It is suggested (but not mandatory) that you also have the edge of the other person in frame as well as yourself. This is known as an over-the-shoulder shot, and is a common way of filming dialogue between two people. It is important to maintain eye contact with your acting partner for this shot. Remember not to look directly at the camera.

Framing an Over-the-Shoulder Close-up:

This shot is achieved by moving the camera closer to you, just as if you were performing by yourself but then rotating yourself and your partner's body around so that you both remain within the backdrop and frame. As you are intending to have the edge of your performing partner's face as well as your own in shot you most likely will not need to move the camera in quite as close as if you were performing by yourself.

Now that you have done the close-up shot for yourself you just need to repeat this shot so that your partner is the main focus and only the edge of yourself is seen.

The simplest way to achieve this is by adjusting positions with each other and not altering the frame of the camera, whilst also swapping the shoulder you are filming over. For example, if you filmed over the right shoulder of the first person, film over the left shoulder of the second person.

It is worth checking this before recording and maybe making slight adjustments, but in most cases, you will not have to move the camera.

How to position your camera / smartphone:

The Screen Acting syllabus has been created for **static** camera shots. A static shot is a shot that is devoid of camera movement. This is why planning your shot first is useful.

If another person is going to be holding the camera phone, they should keep the footage as steady as possible. If you can use a tripod or some other kind of camera mount, that would be ideal. If the camera phone is handheld, please ensure you keep the video as stable as possible, and stick to the same guidelines below. Zooming in or out is not permitted.

If you do not have a tripod, you need to hold the camera phone in place by other means. Hardback books, paper weights, place mats, whatever you find that works for you.

Find something that can hold your phone when recording at different heights.

- For the wide shot you will need the phone to be fairly low, around the height of a standard chair or stool.
- For the mid-shot and close-up shots you will need the phone to be positioned higher so that the camera is set to eye level without looking up or down on you.

Definitions:

The following definitions are intended as a guide for teachers and candidates, to give further guidance in relation to specific assessment criteria within the PAA Screen Acting syllabus.

Objective: The objective is what the character wants, or what the character's goal is. What is the reason for the character's intentions and/or actions? What is the character trying to achieve?

Intention: This is related to the objective, but is more specifically about the character's thoughts and/or intended actions related to the objective. For example, what the character **intends to do** to achieve their objective.

Super-objective: This is what the character wants more than anything throughout the play or screenplay. An overarching objective, which may be linked to the overall outcome in the play or screenplay. A character's objective in a scene may be directly linked to their journey towards their super-objective.

The ability to adjust nuances of performance in relation to the proximity of the camera:

At Entry Level and Level 1 (Grades Premiere-3) candidates are expected to demonstrate some ability to adjust their performance in relation to the proximity of the camera, at Level 2 (Grades 4-5) a developing ability and at Level 3 (Grades 6-8) a full ability. To help them achieve this, candidates should be aware of the following:

Make sure you know the camera shot used for your scene so you have a good sense of how you need to adjust your performance. For example, a scene filmed as a close-up shouldn't be performed in exactly the same way as a wide shot.

Acting for Close-up:

Acting for close-up requires specialised acting skills. The closer you get to a camera, the more it is all about internalising your character's thoughts and feelings. The performance must be grounded in truth and believability. Of course, you may still use your body and voice, but you must be able to convey your thoughts and emotions with minimum movement, and mostly through your eyes. Consider the following:

- **Your inner thoughts are really important.** Anything that you are really thinking, feeling or seeing will come across, so avoid trying to "show" the audience what your character is feeling - it will look too big.
- Remember that even small movements like a glance aside, eye roll, or eyebrow raise could tell a story. Close-ups exaggerate everything.
- Your eyes are the most important feature in a close-up. Approach acting internally, and express thoughts through the eyes rather than the whole face. This will help eliminate unnecessary and distracting gestures. What you're doing with your eyes and your ability to tell your story through them is vital.

- In close-up scenes 'less is more', however this doesn't mean that you just have a blank face (unless the character's intention is to have a blank face!), because that would mean that you are not engaged and thinking in character. But remember that even tiny expressions are noticeable in close-up, so the maxim 'less is more' is important to consider.
- The closer you get to the camera, the faster you appear to go, so slow down and don't rush any powerful close-up moments.
- Listen. Even if you aren't speaking in a scene, listen intently to what's going on. Listening is interesting. Aim to listen with your eyes. One technique is to think of what you would say, but don't actually say it.

Commercial acting: Commercial acting requires the ability to sell a product while also appearing natural and demonstrating a believable character.

Other technical terminology relevant to PAA Screen Acting exams:

Action: This is the director's cue for the actors to begin. As an actor, you should stay in character from before the director says "Action" until after he or she says "Cut".

Cut: This signals the end of a take and to stop the action. For PAA Screen Acting exams, it is important for the camera operator to know the scene well enough to call "Cut" at exactly the correct time.

Split screen: A film/TV technique which allows different scenes or locations to be shown on the screen at the same time.