



YAMAHA MUSIC SCHOOL

CLASS VOCALS

SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION

2025 Edition



Awarding the
Contemporary Arts

Welcome to the Rockschool / Yamaha syllabus for Class Vocals

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 graded qualifications from Debut to Grade 3

Period of operation

This syllabus specification covers graded qualifications in RSL / Yamaha Class Vocals from 2022.

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PREFACE

QUALIFICATIONS AT A GLANCE

Qualification titles and sizes

Graded Examinations in Popular Music Performance

Qualification title	QAN	Total number of units	Guided learning hours (GLH)	Credit	Total qualification time (TQT)
RSL Entry Level Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Yamaha) (Entry 3)	610/0868/0	1	8	4	40
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Yamaha) - Grade 1	603/3869/6	1	12	6	60
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Yamaha) - Grade 2	603/3870/2	1	18	9	90
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Yamaha) - Grade 3	603/3871/4	1	18	12	120

Graded Certificates in Popular Music Performance

Qualification title	QAN	Total number of units	Guided learning hours (GLH)	Credit	Total qualification time (TQT)
RSL Entry Level Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance (Yamaha) (Entry 3)	610/4792/2	1	8	4	40
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance (Yamaha) - Grade 1	610/4793/4	1	12	6	60
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance (Yamaha) - Grade 2	610/4794/6	1	18	9	90
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance (Yamaha) - Grade 3	610/4795/8	1	18	12	120

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.
Assessment bands	There are four bands of assessment (Distinction, Merit, Pass and Unclassified) for the qualification as a whole.
Quality assurance	Quality assurance ensures that all assessments are carried out to the same standard by objective sampling and reassessment of candidates' work. A team of external examiners is appointed, trained and standardised by RSL.

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](https://www.rslawards.com/about-us/ucas-points).

QUALIFICATION SUMMARY

Aims and broad objectives

The aim of graded music performance qualifications is to provide a flexible, progressive mastery approach to the knowledge, skills and understanding required for popular music performance. RSL's graded qualifications 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.

Quality assurance

All RSL examinations and graded qualifications are standardised according to the processes and procedures laid down by RSL.

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, visit the RSL website at: [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com).

FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT

Information and support

The RSL website [rslawards.com](https://www.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](https://www.rslawards.com).

Equal opportunities

RSL's Equal Opportunities policy can be found on the website: [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com).

Contacts for help and support

All correspondence should be directed to info@rslawards.com: or to:

RSL

Harlequin House
7 High Street
Teddington
Middlesex
TW11 8EE

EXAM GUIDELINES

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Yamaha and RSL grade books

Pieces and technical exercises required for each grade can be found in the relevant Yamaha Class Vocals publications. The backing tracks for the Class Vocals pieces can be found as downloads as detailed in the course book. In addition, RSL publishes individual grade books for each grade, containing ten popular songs in contemporary musical styles, arranged for the grade level, all of the required technical work for the grade, and examples and guidance of the other exam elements. Backing tracks are available for the songs from rslawards.com/downloads using the download code included in the grade book. Also available from the download site are full recordings of each arrangement, featuring a professional vocalist's interpretation of the score.

Candidate notes

It is permitted to use grade books that contain handwritten notes made during the course of a candidate's study. However, for General Musicianship Questions that ask about a specific piece from the grade book, if the candidate's copy of the score contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the piece as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Photocopying pages

Candidates are allowed to photocopy relevant pages of sheet music as necessary to alleviate page turns but all copied materials must be handed to the examiner at the end of the examination. The examiner will not facilitate page turning for the candidate during their performance.

Microphone use

At Debut to Grade 3 the use of a microphone is optional – candidates may perform with a microphone if they feel it will enhance their performance. A microphone and lead will be provided by the centre, but candidates can use their own microphone in the exam should they prefer.

PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

Repertoire

Candidates are required to perform a selection of Class Vocals repertoire pieces at each grade, as well as a number of 'free choice' pieces – guidelines on the selection and performance of these is given in the next section of this syllabus guide.

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.

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

Candidates should perform pieces as notated, except where they 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.

Transposition to suit vocal range

Candidates are permitted to change the key of any song according to their vocal range. Each piece in the grade book is presented with a MIDI accompaniment file for candidates to use if they require the key of the piece to be adjusted. Candidates are responsible for bringing the audio file of the transposed accompaniment to the exam. The accompaniment should be using a standard piano sound. No further adaptation must be made to the file in the form of tempo or arrangement changes.

Setting levels

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to perform the opening bars of their first performance piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place alongside the backing track. No further sound checks will be undertaken.

Accompaniment

All songs must be performed to a backing track or with live accompaniment (including self-accompaniment). Where live accompaniment is selected, this must replicate the tempo, feel and style of the grade book arrangement as closely as possible. Where candidates use an alternative arrangement to the one provided in the grade book, this will be treated as a free choice piece (see guidance below). 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.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Overview

A number of free choice pieces can be performed at each grade. Free choice pieces must be available in fully notated sheet music and candidates must bring a copy of the sheet music for the examiner to refer to during the examination. This material will be retained by the examiner at the end of the examination.

Selection of free choice pieces

Free choice pieces must be in a modern popular genre such as pop, rock, jazz, country, blues, soul, reggae, film and musical theatre. Own compositions are acceptable. Free choice pieces must demonstrate a comparable level of technical and musical demand to the pieces given in the set selections in the grade books, which can be referred to as an indication of appropriate level. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that they provide suitable opportunity for candidates to demonstrate the relevant assessment criteria. If a chosen free choice piece does not meet these requirements this may impact on the level of achievement possible within the examination.

Performance of free choice pieces

Free choice pieces can be performed to a backing track (without the examined part on the track), with live accompaniment (including self-accompaniment) or unaccompanied. If performing to a backing track the candidate must provide a device containing the audio. This can be any device with a 3.5mm jack output (e.g. mp3 player, portable CD player, phone or tablet). We recommend that where possible two different sources are brought, so there is a backup. Note that audio cannot be streamed as we cannot guarantee that good internet connectivity will be available in all venues.

Further guidance

A list of wider repertoire for Vocals is available at [rslawards.com/free-choice-pieces](https://www.rslawards.com/free-choice-pieces). This page also contains grade-specific free choice criteria and wider requirements which need to be observed in full to be eligible for use in the exam. Prior approval is not required, but any deviation/simplification/omissions from any aspect of the criteria or requirements may be reflected in the marks awarded. If there is doubt about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, advice on its suitability is available by emailing freechoicepieces@rslawards.com.

GRADE EXAMINATIONS

EXAM ELEMENTS

Yamaha / RSL Class Vocals Grade Examinations consist of the following elements:

Grade Exams

Grade	Prepared work	Unprepared work
Debut to Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Pieces (x3) Technical Exercises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation Ear Tests General Musicianship Questions

Graded Certificates

Grade	Prepared work
Debut to Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Pieces (x3) Technical Exercises

EXAM DURATIONS

Grade Exams

Exam	Debut	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Duration (minutes)	15	20	20	25

Note: Graded Certificates are taken remotely and have no specific assessment timings

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Assessment methodology

RSL / Yamaha Grade Examinations in Class Vocals are assessed via an examination. All assessment of these is external and is undertaken by RSL Examiners. All Graded Certificates are taken as Recorded Digital Exams and specific guidance on this procedure is available to download on the RSL website here: rslawards.com

For Grade Exams, the assessment is divided into the following sections, the first two of which are prepared in advance, the following three are unseen until the exam. Candidates can choose to perform the Technical Exercises first if they wish – at the beginning of the exam, the examiner will ask the candidate if they want to begin with Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises.

- **1. Performance Pieces (60%)**

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one from each of list A (compulsory selection from Class Vocals), list B (a choice of a Class Vocals song or a free choice piece) and list C (a free choice piece).

- **2. Technical Exercises (15%)**

Candidates will perform three compulsory prepared technical tests from the Yamaha Class Vocals books. Details of each test can be found under each grade unit chapter in this guide.

- **3. Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation (10%)**

Candidates have a choice of performing a previously unseen piece of sight reading or a test of improvisation and interpretation. Examples of the tests are provided in the RSL Vocals syllabus grade books.

- **4. Ear Tests (10%)**

Candidates will be asked a selection of ear tests on melodic and rhythmic recall/identification.

- **5. General Musicianship Questions (5%)**

Candidates will be asked five general musicianship questions.

GRADE EXAMINATIONS

MARKING SCHEME

Grade Examinations 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
Technical Exercises (15 marks)	18-20	11-12	9-10
Ear Tests (10 marks)	9-10	7-8	6
Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation (10 marks)	9-10	7-8	6
General Musicianship Questions (5 marks)	5 correct responses	4 correct responses	3 correct responses

Graded Certificates are marked out of 80. 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
Technical Exercises (20 marks)	18-20	15-17	12-14

ATTAINMENT BANDS

The attainment bands for Grade Examinations are as follows:

Attainment band	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Mark range	90-100	74-89	60-73
Percentage	90-100%	74-89%	60-73%

GRADE EXAMINATIONS

ATTAINMENT BANDS

The attainment bands for Grade Examinations are as follows:

Attainment band	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Mark range	90-100	74-89	60-73
Percentage	90-100%	74-89%	60-73%

The attainment bands for Graded Certificates are as follows:

Attainment band	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Mark range	72-80	59-71	48-58
Percentage	90-100%	74-89%	60-73%

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING CRITERIA

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

Graded Exams:

Learners will be able to:

- Perform music in a range of musical styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on an instrument/voice through responding to set technical demands

Graded Certificates:

Learners will be able to:

- Perform music in a range of musical styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on an instrument/voice through responding to an unseen selection of set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of an unseen selection of set tests

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, whereas in the Ear Tests the Accuracy and Understanding criteria makes up 100% of the 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	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
	Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time	Understanding of musical structure not evidenced	
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

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING CRITERIA

Technical Exercises

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (13–15)	Merit (11–12)	Pass (9–10)	Below Pass 1 (4–8)	Below Pass 2 (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 not maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy and Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
	Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time	Understanding of musical structure not evidenced	

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING CRITERIA

Sight Reading / Improvisation & Interpretation

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (9-10)	Merit (7-8)	Pass (6)	Below Pass 1 (3-5)	Below Pass 2 (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 not maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy and Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
	Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time	Understanding of musical structure not evidenced	

Ear Tests

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (9-10)	Merit (7-8)	Pass (6)	Below Pass 1 (3-5)	Below Pass 2 (0-2)
Accuracy and Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
	Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time	Understanding of musical structure not evidenced	

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING CRITERIA

General Musicianship Questions

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (5)	Merit (4)	Pass (3)	Below Pass 1 (2)	Below Pass 2 (0-1)
Responses to questions	5 correct responses	4 correct responses	3 correct responses	2 correct responses	0-1 correct responses

DEBUT

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

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three compulsory tests at this grade. All tests can be found in Yamaha Class Vocals, book 1:

Exercise	Requirements	Accompaniment
'Starter Siren' (CV1)	Sung to 'EE', 'OO' or 'ih' sounds	With backing track
'Solfege 1d' (CV1)	To be sung in Solfege	With backing track
'Rhythm 1' Group 1 and 2 (CV1)	To be sung concurrently	With backing track

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one from each of list A, B and C below.

List A

Piece	Requirements
'The Owl' (CV1)	With backing track

List B

Piece	Requirements
'Stop! Look and Listen!' (CV1)	With backing track
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

List C

Piece	Requirements
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen rhythm to perform, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The rhythm will be 4 bars long, all on the note C4. Candidates may sing in any octave. The tempo will be 70bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression, over which they will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The chord progression will be 4 bars long, based on chords I, IV and V, starting and finishing on the root chord (C). The tempo will be 70bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track three times. Candidates can rehearse during the first and second playthroughs, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their improvisation over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Rhythmic Recall

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL**Requirements**

The examiner will play two notes. Candidates will be asked to identify whether the second note is higher or lower than the first. The notes will be in the key of A minor, starting on the root note. The notes will both be whole notes at 80bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat vocal count in. After the second playthrough candidates will give their answer. Candidates should use the words 'higher' or 'lower' in their answer.

TEST 2: RHYTHMIC RECALL

There are two parts to this test: Rhythm Recall and Identification.

Part 1: Rhythm Recall

Requirements

The examiner will play a 2-bar rhythm. Candidates will be asked to sing the rhythm back, on any pitch, using 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds. The rhythm will be played on a single note, to a drum backing based on half notes, quarter notes and eighth notes. The tempo will be 80bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing the rhythm back. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

Part 2: Identification

Requirements

Candidates will be asked to identify the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

Process

Candidates will be shown two notated rhythms. They will be asked to identify one which matches the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- The treble clef
- The time signature
- The rhythmic value of one note, from the following:
 - Whole note
 - Half note
 - Quarter note
- A rest (of any value)

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- Where is your jaw?
- Where are your lungs?
- Why is it important to warm up before singing?

GRADED CERTIFICATE

Please note: Graded Certificates can only be taken as Recorded Digital Exams.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three compulsory tests at this grade. All tests can be found in Yamaha Class Vocals, book 1:

Exercise	Requirements	Accompaniment
'Starter Siren' (CV1)	Sung to 'EE', 'OO' or 'ih' sounds	With backing track
'Solfege 1d' (CV1)	To be sung in Solfege	With backing track
'Rhythm 1' Group 1 and 2 (CV1)	To be sung concurrently	With backing track

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one from each of list A, B and C below.

List A

Piece	Requirements
'The Owl' (CV1)	With backing track

List B

Piece	Requirements
'Stop! Look and Listen!' (CV1)	With backing track
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

List C

Piece	Requirements
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

GRADE 1

The Grade 1 Class Vocals exam is for candidates who have mastered the key Debut level skills and have since acquired greater use of technique, rhythms, coordination and musical understanding. There is also an opportunity to build on basic improvisation.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three compulsory tests at this grade. All tests can be found in Yamaha Class Vocals, book 1:

Exercise	Requirements	Accompaniment
'Octave Siren' (CV1)	Sung to 'UH', 'eh' or 'AW' sounds	With backing track
'Semitone Solfege' (CV1)	To be sung in Solfege	With backing track
'Rhythm 2' Group 1 and 2 (CV1)	To be sung concurrently	With backing track

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one from each of list A, B and C below.

List A

Piece	Requirements
'Fiesta Salveje' (CV1)	With backing track

List B

Piece	Requirements
'Little Sammy Green' (CV1)	With backing track
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

List C

Piece	Requirements
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen melody to perform, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be 4 bars long, in the key of C major, covering a range of up to a major 3rd. Candidates may sing in any octave. The tempo will be 70bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression, over which they will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The chord progression will be 4 bars long, based on chords I, IV and V, starting and finishing on the root chord (C). The tempo will be 75bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track three times. Candidates can rehearse during the first and second playthroughs, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their improvisation over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Rhythmic Recall

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL**Requirements**

The examiner will play three notes. Candidates will be asked to identify whether the last two notes are higher or lower in sequence (i.e. whether the second note is higher or lower than the first, and whether the third note is higher or lower than the second). The notes will be in the key of A minor, starting on the root note. The rhythmic values of the notes may include whole notes and half notes at 85bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat vocal count in. After the second playthrough candidates will give their answer. Candidates should use the words 'higher', 'lower', 'up' or 'down' in their answer.

TEST 2: RHYTHMIC RECALL

There are two parts to this test: Rhythm Recall and Identification.

Part 1: Rhythm Recall

Requirements

The examiner will play a 2-bar rhythm. Candidates will be asked to sing the rhythm back, on any pitch, using 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds. The rhythm will be played on a single note, to a drum backing. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing the rhythm back. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

Part 2: Identification

Requirements

Candidates will be asked to identify the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

Process

Candidates will be shown two notated rhythms. They will be asked to identify one which matches the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- The treble clef
- The time signature
- The rhythmic value of one note, from the following:
 - Whole note
 - Half note
 - Quarter note
- A rest (of any value)

GRADE 1

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- Where is your diaphragm?
- Where is your larynx?
- What is the difference between head voice and chest voice?
- Why is it important to warm up before singing?

GRADED CERTIFICATE

Please note: Graded Certificates can only be taken as Recorded Digital Exams.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three compulsory tests at this grade. All tests can be found in Yamaha Class Vocals, book 1:

Exercise	Requirements	Accompaniment
'Octave Siren' (CV1)	Sung to 'UH', 'eh' or 'AW' sounds	With backing track
'Semitone Solfege' (CV1)	To be sung in Solfege	With backing track
'Rhythm 2' Group 1 and 2 (CV1)	To be sung concurrently	With backing track

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one from each of list A, B and C below.

List A

Piece	Requirements
'Fiesta Salveje' (CV1)	With backing track

List B

Piece	Requirements
'Little Sammy Green' (CV1)	With backing track
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

List C

Piece	Requirements
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

GRADE 2

The Grade 2 Class Vocals exam is for candidates who have mastered the key skills up to Grade 1 and since acquired greater use of technique, rhythms, coordination and musical understanding. There is also the continuing opportunity to develop improvisation skills.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three compulsory tests at this grade. All tests can be found in Yamaha Class Vocals, book 1:

Exercise	Requirements	Accompaniment
'Solfege Hoe Down (Natural Minor)' (CV2)	To be sung in Solfege	With backing track
'Solfege Interval Training' (CV2)	To be sung in Solfege	With backing track
'Fruits of the Forest' (CV2)	As written	With backing track

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one from each of list A, B and C below.

List A

Piece	Requirements
'Headline Act' (CV2)	With backing track

List B

Piece	Requirements
'Perfect Sunday Afternoon' (CV2)	With backing track
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

List C

Piece	Requirements
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen melody to perform, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be 4 bars long, in the key of C major or A minor, covering a range of up to a major 3rd. The tempo will be 70–80bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression, over which they will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The chord progression will be 4 bars long, in the key of A minor. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track three times. Candidates can rehearse during the first and second playthroughs, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their improvisation over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Rhythmic Recall

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL**Requirements**

The examiner will play a melody. Candidates will then sing back the melody to a drum backing, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be a 2-bar diatonic melody in the key of C major, starting on the root note, using the first three notes of the scale. Candidates may sing in any octave. The melody will be based on half notes and quarter notes. The tempo will be 85bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should play the melody back to the drum backing.

TEST 2: RHYTHMIC RECALL

There are two parts to this test: Rhythm Recall and Identification.

Part 1: Rhythm Recall

Requirements

The examiner will play a 2-bar rhythm. Candidates will be asked to sing the rhythm back, on any pitch, using 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds. The rhythm will be played on a single note, to a drum backing. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing the rhythm back. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

Part 2: Identification

Requirements

Candidates will be asked to identify the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

Process

Candidates will be shown two notated rhythms. They will be asked to identify one which matches the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- Identify any pitch name (candidates will not need to state flat, sharp or natural)
- Identify rhythmic values, from the following:
 - ▶ Whole note
 - ▶ Half note
 - ▶ Quarter note
 - ▶ Eighth note
 - ▶ Sixteenth note
- Identify any rest values
- Identify and explain the meaning of any of the following:
 - ▶ 4/4 time signature marking
 - ▶ Repeat marks, 1st and 2nd time bars
 - ▶ Staccato marks
 - ▶ Slurs

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate’s knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- What is the meaning of ‘diction’?
- What is the meaning of ‘tone’?
- During a song, when would be a better time to take a breath?
- Why is posture important when singing?

GRADED CERTIFICATE

Please note: Graded Certificates can only be taken as Recorded Digital Exams.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three compulsory tests at this grade. All tests can be found in Yamaha Class Vocals, book 1:

Exercise	Requirements	Accompaniment
‘Solfege Hoe Down (Natural Minor)’ (CV2)	To be sung in Solfege	With backing track
‘Solfege Interval Training’ (CV2)	To be sung in Solfege	With backing track
‘Fruits of the Forest’ (CV2)	As written	With backing track

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one from each of list A, B and C below.

List A

Piece	Requirements
‘Headline Act’ (CV2)	With backing track

List B

Piece	Requirements
‘Perfect Sunday Afternoon’ (CV2)	With backing track
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

List C

Piece	Requirements
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

GRADE 3

The Grade 3 Class Vocals exam is for candidates who are ready to consolidate their final stage as a beginner vocalist. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 2 and have since acquired greater use of technique, rhythms, coordination and musical understanding. Improvisation phrasing is now confident and articulate and candidates have started to develop the beginnings of stylistic awareness.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three compulsory tests at this grade. All tests can be found in Yamaha Class Vocals, book 1:

Exercise	Requirements	Accompaniment
'Siren-isma' (CV3)	To be sung on an appropriate vowel sound	With backing track
'Vocal Slide (Portamento)' (CV3)	As written	With backing track
'Vocal Scoop' (CV3)	To be sung as written	With backing track

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one from each of list A, B and C below.

List A

Piece	Requirements
'Me and My Piano' (CV3)	With backing track

List B

Piece	Requirements
'Through My Eyes' (CV3)	With backing track
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

List C

Piece	Requirements
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen melody to perform, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be 4 bars long, in the key of F major or D minor, covering a range of up to a perfect 5th. Candidates may sing in any octave. The tempo will be 75–85bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression, over which they will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The chord progression will be 4 bars long, in the key of G major or E minor. The tempo will be 80–90bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track three times. Candidates can rehearse during the first and second playthroughs, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their improvisation over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Rhythmic Recall

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play a melody. Candidates will then sing back the melody to a drum backing, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be a 2-bar diatonic melody in the key of C major or A minor, starting on the root note, using up to the first five notes of the scale. Candidates may sing in any octave. The melody may contain half notes, quarter notes and eighth notes and may contain rests. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should play the melody back to the drum backing.

TEST 2: RHYTHMIC RECALL

There are two parts to this test: Rhythm Recall and Identification.

Part 1: Rhythm Recall

Requirements

The examiner will play a 2-bar rhythm. Candidates will be asked to sing the rhythm back, on any pitch, using 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds. The rhythm will be played on a single note, to a drum backing. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing the rhythm back. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

Part 2: Identification

Requirements

Candidates will be asked to identify the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

Process

Candidates will be shown two notated rhythms. They will be asked to identify one which matches the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- Identify any pitch name (including stating flat, sharp or natural)
- Identify rhythmic values, from the following:
 - ▶ Whole note
 - ▶ Half note
 - ▶ Quarter note
 - ▶ Eighth note
 - ▶ Sixteenth note
 - ▶ Triplet eighth notes
- Identify any interval up to a fifth between two adjacent notes (candidates will not need to state major, minor or perfect)
- Identify and explain the meaning of any of the following:
 - ▶ 4/4 time signature marking
 - ▶ Repeat marks, 1st and 2nd time bars
 - ▶ Staccato marks
 - ▶ Slurs
 - ▶ Crescendo/diminuendo
 - ▶ D.C. al Coda, D.S. al Coda and al Fine markings
 - ▶ Ad lib.

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- What is the meaning of the 'break'?
- What is the meaning of 'transition'?
- How do you support a long sustained note?
- Give an example of a type of food that would be good to eat before a performance?
- Give an example of a type of food that would not be good to eat before a performance?

GRADED CERTIFICATE

Please note: Graded Certificates can only be taken as Recorded Digital Exams.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three compulsory tests at this grade. All tests can be found in Yamaha Class Vocals, book 1:

Exercise	Requirements	Accompaniment
'Siren-isma' (CV3)	To be sung on an appropriate vowel sound	With backing track
'Vocal Slide (Portamento)' (CV3)	As written	With backing track
'Vocal Scoop' (CV3)	To be sung as written	With backing track

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one from each of list A, B and C below.

List A

Piece	Requirements
'Me and My Piano' (CV3)	With backing track

List B

Piece	Requirements
'Through My Eyes' (CV3)	With backing track
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

List C

Piece	Requirements
<i>Free Choice piece</i>	Candidates may perform a free choice piece in accordance with RSL guidelines.

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

REVISION HISTORY

REVISION HISTORY

21st September 2022

No revisions.

31st March 2025

Added the Graded Certificate qualification type and added information about it in each relevant section of the syllabus.

Page 9: Added guidance on selection of performance pieces stipulating that candidates may not be assessed on the same performance pieces more than once”