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# DRUMS

SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION 2018

PREMIERE - GRADE 8



Awarding the  
Contemporary Arts



rockschool®

Graded Examinations in Popular Music Performance

# DRUMS

## Syllabus Specification

SEPTEMBER 2018

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## Acknowledgements

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**Stu Roberts:** Paiste cymbals, Regal Tip drumsticks,  
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#### Special Thanks

Brad Fuller and Georg Voros

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#### Endorsements

Noam Lederman: Mapex Drums, PAISTE cymbals,  
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Mastered by Duncan Jordan  
Executive producers: James Uings, Jeremy Ward  
and Noam Lederman

#### Recording and Audio Engineering (Classics 2012 Repertoire)

Produced by Tom Farncombe (Hal Leonard)  
Engineered, mixed and mastered by Jonas Persson (Hal Leonard)  
Mastering and additional mixing by Duncan Jordan

# Contents

3	Acknowledgements	19	Recommended Prior Learning
6	Contents	<b>20</b>	<b>Further Information &amp; Contact</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>PREFACE</b>	20	Guidance on Free Choice Pieces
<b>8</b>	<b>Foreword</b>	20	Complaints & Appeals
<b>9</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	20	Equal Opportunities
9	The Value Of RSL Qualifications	20	Contacts for Help & Support
9	RSL & UCAS	<b>21</b>	<b>GRADING CRITERIA &amp; DEFINITIONS</b>
9	Period Of Operation	22	Graded Examinations
9	Examinations	24	Performance Certificates
<b>10</b>	<b>Overview</b>	25	Definitions
10	Unit Overview – Graded Examinations in Popular Music Performance	<b>26</b>	<b>UNIT SPECIFICATIONS</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Overview</b>	27	Premiere
11	Unit Overview – Graded Certificates in Popular Music Performance	29	Debut
<b>12</b>	<b>Overview</b>	33	Grade 1
12	Unit Overview – Performance Certificates in Popular Music Performance	37	Grade 2
13	Assessment Overview	41	Grade 3
<b>14</b>	<b>Qualification Summary</b>	45	Grade 4
14	Aims & Broad Objectives	50	Grade 5
14	Progression	56	Grade 6
14	Qualification Structure	61	Grade 7
14	Entry Requirements	66	Grade 8
<b>15</b>	<b>Assessment Information</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>Revision History</b>
15	Assessment Methodology		
15	Assessment Timings		
16	Marking Schemes		
18	Examination Structure		
18	General Notes		
18	Expectations of Knowledge, Skills and Understanding		
18	Quality Assurance		
<b>19</b>	<b>Candidate Access and Registration</b>		
19	Access and Registration		

# PREFACE

## FOREWORD

Rockschool's Drum Syllabus 2018 has been designed to build upon the ever-popular 2012 qualification, expanding upon the original compositions with arrangements of six new 'hit tunes' at each grade. This has resulted in an even broader scope for learners at all levels to engage with repertoire which has been rigorously benchmarked against academic and industry standards. Furthermore, students can gauge their progress via commensurate levels of technical exercises, prepared and unseen skills tests and questions relating to their studies at each grade.

This specification guide serves three purposes:

- To provide regulatory information surrounding the qualification
- To provide an overview of examination structure and content
- To provide content and assessment specification relevant to each graded examination

Rockschool's graded exams continue to provide a progressive mastery approach to music and an enjoyable experience for all learners.

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Rockscool 2018–2024 syllabus for Drums. This syllabus guide is designed to give teachers, learners and candidates practical information on the graded examinations run by Rockscool.

The Rockscool website [www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com) has detailed information on all aspects of our examinations, including examination regulations, detailed marking schemes and assessment criteria as well as notated and audio examples to help you prepare for the examination.

This Syllabus Guide covers the following examinations:

- Graded Examinations Debut – Grade 8
- Performance Certificates Debut – Grade 8
- Graded Certificates Debut – Grade 8

## The Value Of RSL Qualifications

RSL advocates an open access approach to qualifications, providing a range of syllabi, designed to accommodate a wide variety of candidates of different ages, experience and levels of achievement. RSL qualifications are regulated in England and Northern Ireland by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), in Wales by Qualifications Wales and accredited in Scotland by Qualifications Scotland. RSL is committed to maintaining and improving its reputation for excellence by providing high quality education and training through its syllabi, examinations, music and resources.

## RSL & UCAS

For students applying for work or University, many potential employers see graded music exams in a very positive way. Recognised qualifications demonstrate an ability to dedicate commitment to extra-curricular activities, providing evidence of versatility which many students find beneficial within UCAS (Universities & Colleges Admissions Service) applications and for University entrance interviews.

Our qualifications at Level 3 (Grades 6–8) carry allocated points on the UCAS tariff.

For full details relating to the allocation of UCAS points please see: [www.rslawards.com/about-us/ucas-points](http://www.rslawards.com/about-us/ucas-points)

## Period Of Operation

This syllabus specification covers Drums Grade Examinations and Performance Certificates from September 2018.

## Examinations

Rockscool offers **two types of graded music examination: Graded Examination & Performance Certificate.**

**Please note:** Premiere exams are only available as a performance certificate.

### GRADE EXAMINATIONS

Grade Examinations are available from Debut – Grade 8 and consist of the following elements:

PREPARED WORK	UNPREPARED WORK
3 Performance Pieces: Debut – Grade 8 Technical Exercises: Debut – Grade 8	Sight Reading: Debut – Grade 5 or Improvisation & Interpretation: Grades 1–5 Quick Study Piece: Grades 6–8 Ear Tests: Debut – Grade 8 General Musicianship Questions: Debut – Grade 8

### PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

Performance Certificates are available from Premiere – Grade 8 and consist of the following:

PREPARED WORK
5 Performance Pieces: Premiere – Grade 8

## GRADED CERTIFICATES

Graded Certificates are available from Debut – Grade 8 and consist of the following:

### PREPARED WORK

3 Performance Pieces: Debut – Grade 8  
Technical Exercises: Debut – Grade 8

## OVERVIEW

### Unit Overview – Graded Examinations in Popular Music Performance

QUALIFICATION TITLE	QAN	TOTAL NO. OF UNITS	GUIDED LEARNING HOURS	CREDIT	TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME
RSL Entry Level Award in Popular Music Performance (Entry 2)	601/3895/6	1	4	0	20
RSL Entry level Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Entry 3)	501/0370/2	1	8	4	40
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance – Grade 1	501/0391/X	1	12	6	60
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance – Grade 2	501/0646/6	1	18	9	90
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance – Grade 3	501/0647/8	1	18	12	120
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance – Grade 4	501/0389/1	1	24	15	150
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance – Grade 5	501/0643/0	1	24	18	180
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance – Grade 6	501/0390/8	1	36	22	220
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance – Grade 7	501/0645/4	1	48	27	270
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance – Grade 8	501/0648/X	1	54	32	320

## OVERVIEW

### Unit Overview – Graded Certificates in Popular Music Performance

QUALIFICATION TITLE	QAN	TOTAL NO. OF UNITS	GUIDED LEARNING HOURS	CREDIT	TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME
RSL Entry Level Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance (Entry 3)	610/4760/0	1	8	4	40
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 1	610/4761/2	1	12	6	60
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 2	610/4762/4	1	18	9	90
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 3	610/4763/6	1	18	12	120
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 4	610/4764/8	1	24	15	150
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 5	610/4765/X	1	24	18	180
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 6	610/4766/1	1	36	22	220
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 7	610/4767/3	1	48	27	270
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 8	610/4768/5	1	54	32	320

## OVERVIEW

### Unit Overview – Performance Certificates in Popular Music Performance

QUALIFICATION TITLE	QAN	TOTAL NO. OF UNITS	GUIDED LEARNING HOURS	CREDIT	TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME
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
RSL Level 1 Award in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 1	610/4771/5	1	12	6	60
RSL Level 1 Award in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 2	610/4772/7	1	18	9	90
RSL Level 1 Award in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 3	610/4773/9	1	18	12	120
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 4	610/4774/0	1	24	15	150
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 5	610/4775/2	1	24	18	180
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 6	610/4776/4	1	36	22	220
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 7	610/4777/6	1	48	27	270
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 8	610/4778/8	1	54	32	320

## 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.
Unit Format	Unit specifications contain the title, unit code, credit level, credit value, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, grade descriptor, and types of evidence required for the unit.
Bands of Assessment	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 re-assessment of candidates' work. A team of external examiners is appointed, trained and standardised by RSL.

## Learning Outcomes

### Performance Certificate

Learners will be able to:

- Perform music in a range of musical styles

### Graded Certificate

Learners will be able to:

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

### Graded Exam

Learners will be able to:

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

# QUALIFICATION SUMMARY

## Aims & Broad Objectives

The aim of popular 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.

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

## Progression

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 FE and 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 industry is confident that achievement at the highest level gained by candidates of graded qualifications will have the skills necessary to work in other areas of the business.

## 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 below (page 26 and onwards) and 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.

## Entry Requirements

There are no entry requirements for these qualifications. However, candidates should be aware that the content at the higher grades will require a level of knowledge and understanding covered in previous qualifications.

For further details on exam dates and fees and to apply for your music performance grades please visit the RSL website at [www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

# ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

## Assessment Methodology

The graded examinations in Popular Music Performance are assessed via an examination. The examination is divided into the following sections:

### Technical tests covering knowledge of:

- Scales
- Arpeggios
- Chords
- Stylistic Studies (Level 3 only)

### Performance Pieces

- Three Performance pieces (two pieces can be 'Free Choice Pieces')

### Unseen Tests

- Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation (Level 1 & 2 only)
- Quick Study Piece (Level 3 only)
- General Musicianship Questions

## Assessment Timings

Examination timings for the graded examinations in Popular Music Performance are as follows:

### GRADE EXAMS

- **Debut:** 15 minutes
- **Grade 1:** 20 minutes
- **Grade 2:** 20 minutes
- **Grade 3:** 23 minutes
- **Grade 4:** 25 minutes
- **Grade 5:** 25 minutes
- **Grade 6:** 30 minutes
- **Grade 7:** 30 minutes
- **Grade 8:** 30 minutes

### PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

- **Premiere:** 10 minutes
- **Debut:** 12 minutes
- **Grade 1:** 15 minutes
- **Grade 2:** 15 minutes
- **Grade 3:** 18 minutes
- **Grade 4:** 20 minutes
- **Grade 5:** 20 minutes
- **Grade 6:** 23 minutes
- **Grade 7:** 23 minutes
- **Grade 8:** 26 minutes

Graded Certificates are taken remotely and have no specific assessment timings.

All assessment of these qualifications is external and is undertaken by RSL Examiners.

## Marking Schemes

GRADE EXAMS: DEBUT – GRADE 5			
ELEMENT	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Technical Exercises	9–10 out of 15	11–12 out of 15	13+ out of 15
Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9+ out of 10
Ear Tests	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9+ out of 10
General Musicianship Questions	3 out of 5	4 out of 5	5 out of 5
Total Marks	60%+	74%+	90%+

GRADE EXAMS: GRADES 6–8			
ELEMENT	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Technical Exercises	9–10 out of 15	11–12 out of 15	13+ out of 15
Quick Study Piece	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9+ out of 10
Ear Tests	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9+ out of 10
General Musicianship Questions	3 out of 5	4 out of 5	5 out of 5
Total Marks	60%+	74%+	90%+

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES: PREMIERE TO GRADE 8			
ELEMENT	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 4	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 5	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Total Marks	60%+	75%+	90%+

**GRADED CERTIFICATES: DEBUT TO GRADE 8**

<b>ELEMENT</b>	<b>PASS</b>	<b>MERIT</b>	<b>DISTINCTION</b>
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Technical Exercises	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Total Marks	60%+	75%+	90%+

## Examination Structure

The examination structure for the grade examinations is shown below:

1. Pieces or technical exercises
2. Technical exercises or pieces
3. Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation (Debut – Grade 5); Quick Study Piece (Grades 6–8)
4. Ear Tests
5. General Musicianship Questions

## General Notes

At the beginning of a Grade Examination, the Examiner will ask the candidate if they wish to begin with Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises. In a Performance Certificate, candidates may present their Performance Pieces in any order of their choice.

Prior to the start of the Performance Pieces, the Examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place alongside the backing track. Once the level has been established, the Examiner will then commence with the first piece in full. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first Performance Piece only.

Candidates may perform any or all of their pieces from memory. This is not compulsory at any level and no additional marks are given for this. With the exception of certain Technical Exercises where memory requirements apply, it is permitted to use grade books which contain notes made during the course of a candidate's study.

**Note:** It is not permitted to make any notes at any time during the exam.

For General Musicianship Questions, the Examiner may use his or her version of the selected piece as the basis to ask the questions if such notes contained on the candidate's version are deemed sufficiently extensive or might assist the candidate when answering the questions.

The Examiner will not facilitate page turning for candidates. Candidates are allowed to photocopy relevant sheet music as necessary to alleviate page turns but all copied materials must be handed into the Examiner at the end of the examination.

All tempo markings are to be observed unless otherwise stated. Each piece is designed carefully to achieve a number of outcomes appropriate for the grade.

## 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.

Learners will be able to complete a set of practical tasks and be tested on their underpinning knowledge (the complexity and variety of tasks are determined by which qualification is being attempted). This allows them to demonstrate popular music performance knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to the grade. These technical skills set a firm platform for further technical and creative development by the learner.

## 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

At the point of application, RSL will ensure that all candidates are fully informed about the requirements and demands of the qualification.

Candidates may enter online for any of the qualifications at various points in the calendar year in territories throughout the world. Dates will be published on the website at [www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

**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.

## Recommended Prior Learning

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.

## FURTHER INFORMATION & CONTACT

### Guidance on Free Choice Pieces

For all examinations, candidates are able to play a number of free choice pieces:

- **Grade Examinations: Two free choice pieces** (a minimum of one piece must be from the Drums grade book)
- **Performance Certificates: Three free choice pieces** (a minimum of two pieces must be from the Drums grade book).

*Please note:* free choice pieces are not available for the Premiere exam.

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.

Free choice pieces must be in a modern popular genre such as:

- Pop
- Jazz
- Blues
- Reggae
- Rock
- Country
- Soul
- Film and Musical Theatre

Own compositions are also acceptable. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that they provide suitable opportunity for candidates to demonstrate the relevant assessment criteria. Candidates are reminded that if a chosen Free Choice Piece does not meet these requirements this may impact on the level of achievement possible within the examination.

**All pieces must be performed to a backing track (without the examined part on the track) except in cases where a piece has been selected from previous Rockscool syllabi and does not have a backing track or has been specifically arranged by Rockscool as a solo piece.**

### Adaptation and Personalisation of Pieces

Candidates should perform pieces as notated, except where they choose to embellish or rework any sections (NB. this does not apply to technical exercises or unseen tests which must be performed exactly as written). 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.

### Complaints & Appeals

All procedural complaints and appeals, including malpractice and requests for reasonable adjustments/special considerations, can be found on the RSL website [www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

### Equal Opportunities

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

### Contacts for Help & Support

All correspondence should be directed to:

#### RSL

Harlequin House  
Ground Floor  
7 High Street  
Teddington  
Middlesex  
TW11 8EE

Or [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com)

# GRADING CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS

## Graded Examinations

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

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

**SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION / QUICK STUDY PIECE**
**BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE**

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

**EAR TESTS**
**BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE**

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

**GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS (GMQS)**
**BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE**

Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	5 correct responses	4 correct responses	3 correct responses	2 correct responses	0–1 correct responses

## Performance Certificates

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

## Definitions

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

# UNIT SPECIFICATIONS

# PREMIERE

The Premiere Drums 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 Grading Criteria & Definitions section of this guide for further details.

## PREMIERE (PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE)

### PERFORMANCE PIECES

There is a choice of six pieces in the Drums method book, with an additional three ensemble pieces. Candidates should choose five out of these nine pieces to play in the examination.

Candidates are NOT permitted to submit Free Choice Pieces for the Entry Level 2 (Premiere) exam.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

Before playing the first piece all the way through the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct by asking the candidate to play along to the backing track for the first few bars. Once the correct level has been agreed the examiner will begin again and conduct all five pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.

# DEBUT

The Debut Drum exam is for candidates who have been learning a short time and have learnt the basic skills.

## GRADE EXAM

### PREPARED WORK

Candidates play 3 pieces that last a maximum of 1 minute and Technical Exercises covering the preliminary areas.

### UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to use their drums for a simple sight-reading test, which is rhythmic reading and two ear tests that begin to develop fill playback and groove recall. The final part of the exam is a set of 5 simple questions based on the candidate's choice of piece. These are designed to explore simple theory and instrument knowledge

## EXAM STRUCTURE

The Debut exam lasts 15 minutes and will be taken in the following structure:

1. Pieces or Technical Exercises: The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
2. Technical Exercises or Pieces: The candidate will perform the element not chosen above
3. Sight Reading: The candidate is given a simple and previously unseen test to practice and play
4. Ear Tests: The candidate responds to two simple tests. Fill playback and Groove recall
5. General Musicianship Questions: The candidate answers 4 questions related to a piece of their choice

## PIECES

At Debut the pieces last up to a maximum of 1 minute. This is so the candidate can remain focused and concentrate on the basic requirements of notation and control. Simple groove work and coordination and sync.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

*Before playing the first piece all the way through, the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct for the candidate by asking them to play along to the backing track for the first few bars. Once the correct level has been agreed, the examiner will begin again and conduct all three pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.*

## TECHNICAL WORK

At Debut there are four groups of technical work. The examiner will ask a selection from each group and before you start the section you will be asked whether you would like to play the exercises along with the click or hear a single bar of click before you commence the test. Groups A–C should be played at  $\text{♩} = 70$  bpm.

### GROUP A: SINGLE STROKES

- In eighth notes

### GROUP B: DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth notes

### GROUP C: PARADIDDLES

- In eighth notes

### GROUP D: FILL

In the exam you will be asked to play the Fill exercise from the Debut Grade book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and the examiner will choose one fill from a set of four to be played in bar 4.

## UNSEEN TESTS

### SIGHT READING

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

At Debut you will be offered a previously unseen sight reading test that is in the form of a four bar rhythm played on the snare drum. An example is shown in the Debut grade book.

The test is four bars long and made up of half and quarter notes and quarter note rests. The examiner will allow 90 seconds preparation and practice time and will offer the option of practising with or without a metronome. The candidate will then perform the test for the examination.

### EAR TESTS

There are two tests: **Fill Playback & Recognition, and Rhythmic Recall.**

#### Fill Playback & Recognition

**Tempo:** 70bpm

The examiner will play you a one bar fill played on the snare drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. The test is made up of quarter and eighth notes. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the fill back with the metronome backing. The candidate will then be required to identify the test from two printed examples.

#### Groove Recall

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar groove that is repeated played on the hi hat, snare and bass drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the groove back with the metronome backing.

## GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

The examiner will ask you four music knowledge questions based on a piece of music that you have played in the exam. You will nominate the piece of music about which the questions will be asked.

### MUSIC KNOWLEDGE:

In Debut you will be asked to identify:

- Drum voices on the stave
- Quarter-note and eighth-note values

### INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE:

The examiner will also ask you one question regarding your instrument:

- The following parts of the drum kit; snare, high tom, medium tom, floor tom, hi-hat, ride cymbal and crash cymbal

## PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

### EXAM STRUCTURE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute each. There are no other elements in the Performance Certificate examination.

## GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

### EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute each and perform all of the technical exercises listed below.

### TECHNICAL WORK

At Debut there are four groups of technical work. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](http://rslawards.com)

#### GROUP A: SINGLE STROKES

- In eighth notes

#### GROUP B: DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth notes

#### GROUP C: PARADIDDLES

- In eighth notes

#### GROUP D: FILL

In the exam you will be asked to play the Fill exercise from the Debut Grade book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and you must perform each fill from the set of four to be played in bar 4.

## FREE CHOICE PIECES

There is an option of playing free choice pieces in the examination.

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Graded Certificate:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Performance Certificate:** 3 free choice pieces

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website:

[www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com) and a member of the RockschooL team will advise you.

# GRADE 1

The Grade 1 Drum exam is for candidates who have been learning between six months – one year and have mastered the key basic skills.

## GRADE EXAM

### PREPARED WORK

Candidates perform 3 pieces that last a maximum of 1 minute 15 seconds and demonstrate a selection of Technical Exercises

### UNPREPARED WORK:

Candidates are required to play either a 4-bar sight reading test, or a 4-bar Improvisation and Interpretation test. There are also two ear tests that begin to develop fill playback and groove recall. The final part of the exam is a set of 5 simple questions based on the candidate's choice of piece. These are designed to explore theory and instrument knowledge.

## EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 1 exam lasts 20 minutes and will be taken in the following structure:

1. Pieces or Technical Exercises: The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first
2. Technical Exercises or Pieces: The candidate will perform the element not chosen above
3. Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation: The candidate is given a simple and previously unseen test to practice and play
4. Ear Tests: The candidate responds to two simple tests. Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall
5. General Musicianship Questions: The candidate answers 5 questions related to a piece of their choice

## PIECES

At Grade 1 the pieces last up to a maximum of 1 minute 15 seconds. The length of piece is designed so the candidate can remain focused and concentrate on the requirements of notation, values, evenness of sound, technical control and sync.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

Before playing the first piece all the way through, the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct for the candidate by asking them to play along to the backing track for the first few bars. Once the correct level has been agreed, the examiner will begin again and conduct all three pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.

## TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 1 there are four groups of technical work. The examiner will ask a selection from each group and before you start the section you will be asked whether you would like to play the exercises along with the click or hear a single bar of click before you commence the test. Groups A–C should be played at ♩ = 70bpm

### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth notes alternate bars

### GROUP B: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- In 16th notes alternate bars

### GROUP C: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddle in 16th notes

### GROUP D: FILL

In the exam you will be asked to play the Fill exercise from the Grade 1 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and the examiner will choose one fill from a set of four to be played in bar 4.

## UNSEEN TESTS

### SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 1 you will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation. This is a previously unseen test. An example is shown in the Grade 1 book.

#### SIGHT READING

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

At Grade 1 you will be offered a Sight Reading test that is in the form of a four bar rhythm played on the snaredrum. The test is made up of eighth and quarter notes, and quarter note rests. The examiner will allow 90 seconds preparation and practice time and will offer the option of practising with or without a metronome. The candidate will then perform the test for the examination.

#### IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

**Tempo:** 70–80 bpm

At Grade 1 the test is four bars long and the candidate will have 30 seconds preparation time. The test is in the form of a notated one bar groove that should be developed and a one bar fill. The examiner will offer the metronome as a guide throughout this time. The candidate will then have a complete practice run through with the backing track and then on the repeat, the test will be examined.

#### EAR TESTS

There are two tests: Fill Playback & recognition and Groove recall.

##### Fill Playback & Recognition

**Tempo:** 70 bpm

The examiner will play you a one bar fill played on the snare drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. The test is made up of quarter and eighth notes and quarter note rests. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the fill back with the metronome backing. The candidate will then be required to identify the test from two printed examples.

##### Groove Recall

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar groove that is repeated played on the hi hat, snare and bass drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the groove back with the metronome backing.

## GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam you will be asked five questions. Four of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be asked about your instrument. For this section of the exam the candidate chooses the piece to answer 5 questions on. The examiner will ask you four music knowledge questions and one instrument knowledge question.

#### MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 1 you will be asked to identify:

- Drum voices on the stave
- Quarter note and eighth note values
- A rest in the piece

#### INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 1 you will be asked to identify:

- The following parts of the drum kit – bass drum, snare, high tom, medium tom, floor tom, hi-hat, ride cymbal and crash cymbal
- Two main drum kit makes

## PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

### EXAM STRUCTURE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute 15 seconds each. There are no other elements in the Performance Certificate examination.

## GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

### EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute 15 seconds each and perform all of the technical exercises listed below.

### TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 1 there are four groups of technical work. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](http://rslawards.com)

#### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth notes alternate bars

#### GROUP B: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- In 16th notes alternate bars

#### GROUP C: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddle in 16th notes

#### GROUP D: FILL

In the exam you will play the Fill exercise from the Grade 1 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and you must perform each fill from a set of four to be played in bar 4.

## FREE CHOICE PIECES

There is an option of playing free choice pieces in the examination.

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Performance Certificate:** 3 free choice pieces

Candidates also have the option of playing material from the RockschooL Classics (formerly Hot Rock) book – Drums Grade 1.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website:

[www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com) and a member of the RockschooL team will advise you.

# GRADE 2

The Grade 2 Drum exam is for candidates who have been learning approximately one year to eighteen months and have established the key basic skills along with solid basic techniques.

## GRADE EXAM

### PREPARED WORK:

Candidates perform 3 pieces that last a maximum of 1 minute 30 seconds and demonstrate a selection of Technical Exercises.

### UNPREPARED WORK:

Candidates are required to play either a 4-bar sight reading test or a 4 bar Improvisation and Interpretation test. There are also two ear tests that develop Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall and the final part of the exam is a set of 5 simple questions based on the candidate's choice of piece. These are designed to explore theory and instrument knowledge.

## EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 2 exam lasts 20 minutes and will be taken in the following structure:

1. Pieces or Technical Exercises: The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first
2. Technical Exercises or Pieces: The candidate will perform the element not chosen above
3. Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation: The candidate is given a simple and previously unseen test to practice and play
4. Ear Tests: The candidate responds to two simple tests. Fill playback & recognition and Groove recall
5. General Musicianship Questions: The candidate answers 5 questions related to a piece of their choice

## PIECES

At Grade 2 the pieces last up to a maximum of 1 minute 30 seconds. The length of piece is designed so the candidate can remain focused and concentrate on the requirements of notation accuracy, basic technical control, articulation, sound and sync.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

*Before playing the first piece all the way through, the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct for the candidate by asking them to play along to the backing track for the first few bars. Once the correct level has been agreed, the examiner will begin again and conduct all three pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.*

## TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 2 there are five groups of technical work. The examiner will ask a selection from each group and before you start the section you will be asked whether you would like to play the exercises along with the click or hear a single bar of click before you commence the test. Groups A–D should be played at  $\text{♩} = 70$ .

### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth and 16th notes alternate bars

### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddles in 16th notes using the whole kit

### GROUP C: FLAMS

- In quarter notes

### GROUP D: TRIPLETS

- In eighth notes with alternate sticking

### GROUP E: FILL

In the exam you will be asked to play the Fill exercise from the Grade 2 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and the examiner will choose one fill from a set of four to be played in bar 4.

## UNSEEN TESTS

At Grade 2 you will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation. This is a previously unseen test. An example is shown in the Grade 2 book.

### SIGHT READING

**Tempo:** 70 bpm

At Grade 2 you will be offered a Sight Reading test that is in the form of a four bar rhythm played on the snare drum. The test is made up of quarter, eighth and 16th notes and quarter and eighth note rests. The examiner will allow 90 seconds preparation and practise time and will offer the option of practising with or without a metronome. The candidate will then perform the test for the examination.

### IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

**Tempo:** 70–80 bpm

At Grade 2 the test is four bars long and the candidate will have 30 seconds preparation time. The test is in the form of a notated one bar groove that should be developed and a one bar fill. The examiner will offer the metronome as a guide throughout this time. The candidate will then have a complete practice run through with the backing track and then on the repeat, the test will be examined.

### EAR TESTS

There are two tests which are Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall.

#### Fill Playback & Recognition

**Tempo:** 70 bpm

The examiner will play you a one bar fill played on the snare drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. The test is made up of quarter, eighth and 16th notes and quarter note rests. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the fill back with the metronome backing. The candidate will then be required to identify the test from two printed examples.

#### Groove Recall

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar groove that is repeated played on the hi hat (open and closed), snare and bass drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the groove back with the metronome backing.

## GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam you will be asked five questions. Four of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be asked about your instrument.

### MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 2 you will be asked to identify:

- Drum voices on the staff
- The meaning of the time signature marking
- Quarter, dotted eighth note, eighth note and 16th note values
- Rest values
- Repeat markings including first and second time bars

### INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 2 you will be asked to identify:

- The following parts of the drum kit – bass drum, snare, high tom, medium tom, floor tom, hi-hat, ride cymbal and crash cymbal
- The following parts of the drumstick – tip, neck, shaft and butt
- Two main drum kit makes

## PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

### EXAM STRUCTURE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute 30 seconds each. There are no other elements in the Performance Certificate examination.

## GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

### EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute 30 seconds each and perform all of the technical exercises listed below.

### TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 2 there are five groups of technical work. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](http://rslawards.com)

#### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth and 16th notes alternate bars

#### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddles in 16th notes using the whole kit

#### GROUP C: FLAMS

- In quarter notes

#### GROUP D: TRIPLETS

- In eight notes with alternate sticking

#### GROUP E: FILL

In the exam you will play the Fill exercise from the Grade 2 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and must perform each fill from a set of four to be played in bar 4.

## FREE CHOICE PIECES

There is an option of playing free choice pieces in the examination

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Graded Certificate:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Performance Certificate:** 3 free choice pieces

Candidates also have the option of playing material from the RockschooL Classics (formerly Hot Rock) book – Drums Grade 2.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website:

[www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com) and a member of the RockschooL team will advise you.

# GRADE 3

The Grade 3 Drum exam is for candidates who have been learning approximately eighteen months to two years and have established the basic skills, preliminary techniques and the beginnings of stylistic awareness through articulation and the introduction of solo and improvisation work.

## GRADE EXAM

### PREPARED WORK:

Candidates perform 3 pieces that last a maximum of 2 minutes and demonstrate a selection of Technical Exercises.

### UNPREPARED WORK:

Candidates are required to play either a 4 bar sight reading test or a 4 bar Improvisation and Interpretation test. There are also two ear tests that develop fill playback and groove recall and the final part of the exam is a set of 5 questions based on the candidate's choice of piece. These are designed to explore theory and instrument knowledge.

## EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 2 exam lasts 23 minutes and will be taken in the following structure.

1. Pieces or Technical Exercises: The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first
2. Technical Exercises or Pieces: The candidate will perform the element not chosen above
3. Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation: The candidate is given a simple and previously unseen test to practice and play
4. Ear Tests: The candidate responds to two simple tests – Fill playback & recognition and Groove recall
5. General Musicianship Questions: The candidate answers 5 questions related to a piece of their choice

## PIECES

At Grade 3 the pieces last up to a maximum of 2 minutes. The length of piece is designed so the candidate can remain focused and concentrate on the requirements of notation accuracy, basic technical control, articulation, sound and sync.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

*Before playing the first piece all the way through, the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct for the candidate by asking them to play along to the backing track for the first few bars. Once the correct level has been agreed, the examiner will begin again and conduct all three pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.*

## TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 3 there are six groups of technical work. The examiner will ask a selection from each group and before you start the section you will be asked whether you would like to play the exercises along with the click or hear a single bar of click before you commence the test. Groups A–E should be played at ♩ = 75bpm

### GROUP A: SINGLE STROKES

- In eighth, eighth-note triplets and 16th notes

### GROUP B: DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth and 16th notes using snare and toms

### GROUP C: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddles in 16th notes using the whole kit

### GROUP D: FLAMS & DRAGS

- In quarter notes

### GROUP E: TRIPLETS

- In eighth notes with accents on snare and toms

### GROUP F: FILL

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

In the exam you will be asked to play the Fill exercise from the Grade 3 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and the examiner will choose one fill from a set of four to be played in bar 4.

## UNSEEN TESTS

### SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 3 you will be offered a choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation. This is a previously unseen test. An example is shown in the Grade 3 book.

#### SIGHT READING

**Tempo:** 70–80 bpm

At Grade 3 you will be offered a Sight Reading test that is in the form of a four bar rhythm played on the snare drum and is made up of quarter, eighth and 16th notes and quarter and eighth note rests. The examiner will allow 90 seconds preparation and practice time and will offer the option of practising with or without a metronome. The candidate will then perform the test for the examination.

#### IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

**Tempo:** 80–100 bpm

At Grade 3 the test is four bars long and the candidate will have 30 seconds preparation time. The test is in the form of a notated one bar groove that should be developed and a one bar fill. The examiner will offer the metronome as a guide throughout this time. The candidate will then have a complete practice run through with the backing track and then on the repeat, the test will be examined.

### EAR TESTS

There are two tests which are Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove recall.

#### FILL PLAYBACK & RECOGNITION

**Tempo:** 70 bpm

The examiner will play you a one bar fill played on the snare drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. The test is made up of quarter, eighth, eighth note triplets and 16th notes and quarter note rests. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the fill back with the metronome backing. The candidate will then be required to identify the test from two printed examples.

#### GROOVE RECALL

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar groove that is repeated played on the crash, hi hat (open and closed), snare and bass drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the groove back with the metronome backing.

## GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam you will be asked five questions. Four of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be asked about your instrument.

### MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 3 you will be asked to identify:

- Drum voices on the staff
- The meaning of the time signature marking
- Quarter, dotted eighth note, eighth note, triplet eighth notes and 16th note values
- Rest values
- Repeat markings including first and second time bars

### INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 3 you will be asked to identify:

- The following parts of the drum kit – bass drum, snare, high tom, medium tom, floor tom, hi-hat, ride cymbal and crash cymbal
- The following parts of the drumstick – tip, neck, shaft and butt
- Two main drum kit makes
- Two main cymbal makes

## PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

### EXAM STRUCTURE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes each. There are no other elements in the Performance Certificate examination.

## GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

### EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute 45 seconds each and perform all of the technical exercises listed below.

### TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 3 there are six groups of technical work. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](http://rslawards.com)

#### GROUP A: SINGLE STROKES

- In eighth, eighth-note triplets and 16th notes

#### GROUP B: DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth and 16th notes using snare and toms

#### GROUP C: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddles in 16th notes using the whole kit

#### GROUP D: FLAMS & DRAGS

- In quarter notes

#### GROUP E: TRIPLETS

- In eighth notes with accents on snare and toms

#### GROUP F: FILL

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

In the exam you will play the Fill exercise from the Grade 3 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and perform each fill from a set of four to be played in bar 4.

## FREE CHOICE PIECES

There is an option of playing free choice pieces in the examination.

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Graded Certificate:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Performance Certificate:** 3 free choice pieces

Candidates also have the option of playing material from the Rockschoo Classics (formerly Hot Rock) book – Drums Grade 3.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website:

[www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com) and a member of the Rockschoo team will advise you.

# GRADE 4

The Grade 4 Drum exam is for candidates who have been learning approximately two – two and half years and have mastered the basic skills, preliminary techniques and have acquired the beginnings of stylistic awareness. Grade 4 develops further stylistic conviction and understanding through developed solo and improvisation work and use of varied sounds.

## GRADE EXAM

### PREPARED WORK:

Candidates perform 3 pieces that last a maximum of 2 minutes 15 seconds and demonstrate a selection of Technical Exercises.

### UNPREPARED WORK:

Candidates are required to play either an 8-bar sight reading test or an 8 bar Improvisation and Interpretation test. There are also two ear tests that develop fill playback and groove recall and the final part of the exam is a set of 5 questions based on the candidate's choice of piece. These are designed to explore theory and instrument knowledge.

## EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 4 exam lasts 25 minutes and will be taken in the following structure:

1. Pieces or Technical Exercises. The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first
2. Technical Exercises or Pieces. The candidate will perform the element not chosen above
3. Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation. The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play
4. Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two tests. Fill playback & recognition and Groove recall
5. General Musicianship Questions. The candidate answers 5 questions related to a piece of their choice

## PIECES

At Grade 4 the pieces last up to a maximum of 2 minutes 15 seconds. The pieces are over two pages and are designed so the candidate can retain focus and concentration. Emphasis is on notation accuracy, stylistic sound and articulation, technical control including execution of instrumental techniques, developing solo and improvisation elements and sync.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

Before playing the first piece all the way through, the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct for the candidate by asking the candidate to play along to the backing track for the first few bars.

Once the correct level has been agreed, the examiner will begin again and conduct all three pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.

## TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 4 level there are five groups of technical work. The examiner will ask a selection from each group. All technical exercises are to be played to a click. Groups A–D should be played at  $\text{♩} = 75$ .

### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- Eighth, eighth note triplets and 16th notes. To be played first time with singles and with doubles on the repeat.

### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddle in 16th notes using the whole kit
- Triple paradiddle in 16th notes using the whole kit

### GROUP C: FLAMS AND RUFFS

- Flam tap and ruffs in quarter notes

### GROUP D: HANDS AND FEET PATTERNS

- Four patterns

### GROUP E: FILL

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

In the exam you will be asked to play the Fill exercise from the Grade 4 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and the examiner will choose one fill from a set of four to be played in bar 4. The candidate is to play the repeat.

## UNSEEN TESTS

### SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 4 you will be offered a choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation. This is a previously unseen test and an example is shown in the Grade 4 book.

#### SIGHT READING

**Tempo:** 80–90 bpm

At Grade 4 there is an element of improvisation. This is in the form of a two bar development. At Grade 4 the notation consists of quarter, dotted quarter, eighth, dotted eighth and 16th notes and quarter note and eighth note rests in 4/4. The test is 8 bars long and is on the whole kit. The examiner will allow 90 seconds preparation and practice time and will offer the option of practising with or without a metronome. The candidate will then perform the test for the examination.

#### IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

**Tempo:** 80–120 bpm

In Grade 4, the improvisation and interpretation test contains a small amount of sight reading. This consists of a two bar groove at the beginning of the test. You will be asked to play the notation as indicated and complete the test developing the groove and ending with a two bar drum solo. This is played to a backing track of eight bars.

#### EAR TESTS

There are two tests: Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall.

##### Fill Playback & Recognition

**Tempo:** 70 bpm

The examiner will play you a one bar fill played on the snare drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. The test is made up of quarter, eighth, eighth note triplets and dotted eighth and 16th notes. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the fill back with the metronome backing. The candidate will then be required to identify the test from three printed examples.

##### Groove Recall

**Tempo:** 80–120 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar groove that is repeated played on the crash, hi hat (open and closed), ride, bell of ride, snare and bass drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the groove back with the metronome backing. You will then be required to identify the style of the groove from a set of three listed by the examiner.

## GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

For this section of the exam the candidate chooses the piece to answer 5 questions on. The examiner will ask you four music knowledge questions and one instrument knowledge question.

### MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 4 you will be asked to identify/explain:

- Drum voices on the snare
- The meaning of the time signature marking
- The meaning of bpm markings
- Repeat marks, first and second time bars, DC, DS al Coda, and al fine markings
- All note values in the chosen piece
- Equivalent rests
- One type of rudiment that can be used stylistically in the solo or development section of the piece
- Use of drum voices, rhythms and techniques in drum solo sections

### INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 4 you will be asked to identify:

- Any part of the drumkit and drumstick
- How to tune the drum kit
- Cross stick, choke cymbal, bell of ride and accent

## PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 15 seconds each. There are no other elements in the Performance Certificate examination.

## GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

### EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes each and perform all of the technical exercises listed below.

### TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 4 there are six groups of technical work. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](http://rslawards.com)

#### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- Eighth, eighth note triplets and 16th notes. To be played first time with singles and with doubles on the repeat.

#### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddle in 16th notes using the whole kit
- Triple paradiddle in 16th notes using the whole kit

#### GROUP C: FLAMS AND RUFFS

- Flam tap and ruffs in quarter notes

#### GROUP D: HANDS AND FEET PATTERNS

- Four patterns

#### GROUP E: FILL

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

In the exam you will play the Fill exercise from the Grade 4 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and you must perform each fill from the set of four to be played in bar 4. The candidate is to play the repeat.

## FREE CHOICE PIECES

There is an option of playing free choice pieces in the examination.

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Graded Certificate:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Performance Certificate:** 3 free choice pieces

Candidates also have the option of playing material from the RocksSchool Classics (formerly Hot Rock) book – Drums Grade 4.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website:

[www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com) and a member of the RocksSchool team will advise you.

# GRADE 5

The Grade 5 Drum exam is for candidates who have acquired the intermediate skills and techniques and have developed an increasing sense of stylistic conviction. This is demonstrated through instrumental techniques, increasing rhythmic complexity and convincing solo and improvisation work.

## GRADE EXAM

### PREPARED WORK:

Candidates perform 3 pieces that last a maximum of 2 minutes 30 seconds and demonstrate a selection of Technical Exercises.

### UNPREPARED WORK:

Candidates are required to play either an 8 bar sight reading test or an 8 bar Improvisation and Interpretation test. There are also two ear tests that continue to develop fill playback and groove recall. The final part of the exam is a set of 5 questions based on the candidate's choice of piece. These explore theory and instrument knowledge.

## EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 5 exam lasts 25 minutes and will be taken in the following structure.

1. Pieces or Technical Exercises: The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
2. Technical Exercises or Pieces: The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
3. Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation: The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play.
4. Ear Tests: The candidate responds to two tests – Fill playback & recognition and Groove recall.
5. General Musicianship Questions: The candidate answers 5 questions related to a piece of their choice.

## PIECES

At Grade 5 the pieces last up to a maximum of 2 minutes 30 seconds. Emphasis is on notation accuracy, execution of stylistic techniques, technical control, developing solo and improvisation elements and communication of the music.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

*Before playing the first piece all the way through, the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct for the candidate by asking them to play along to the backing track for the first few bars. Once the correct level has been agreed, the examiner will begin again and conduct all three pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.*

## TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 5 level there are six groups of technical work. The examiner will ask a selection from each group. All technical exercises are to be played to a click.

### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Eighth, eighth note triplets and 16th notes. To be played first time with singles and with doubles on the repeat

### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Single paradiddle in 16th notes using the whole kit (bass drum follows the right hand)
- Triple Paradiddle 16th notes using the whole kit (bass drum follows the right hand)

### GROUP C: FLAMS AND RUFFS

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Flam accent and single drag tap

### GROUP D: ROLLS

**Tempo:** 75 bpm

- Five stroke roll phrase

### GROUP E: HANDS AND FEET PATTERNS

**Tempo:** 90 bpm

- Four patterns

### GROUP F: FILL

**Tempo:** 90 bpm

In the exam you will be asked to play the Fill exercise from the Grade 5 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and the examiner will choose one fill from a set of four to be played in bar 4. The candidate is to perform the repeat.

## UNSEEN TESTS

### SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 5 you will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation. This is a previously unseen test. An example is shown in the Grade 5 book.

#### SIGHT READING

**Tempo:** 80–120 bpm

At Grade 5 there is an element of improvisation. This is in the form of a two bar development. At Grade 5 the notation consists of quarter, dotted quarter, eighth, dotted eighth and sixteenth notes and quarter note and eighth note rests in 4/4. The test is 8 bars long and is on the whole kit. The examiner will allow 90 seconds preparation and practice time and will offer the option of practising with or without a metronome. The candidate will then perform the test for the examination.

#### IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

**Tempo:** 80–120 bpm

In Grade 5, the improvisation and interpretation test contains a small amount of sight reading. This consists of a two bar groove at the beginning of the test. You will be asked to play the notation as indicated and complete the test developing the groove and ending with a two bar drum solo. This is played to a backing track of eight bars.

#### EAR TESTS

There are two tests: Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall

##### Fill Playback & Recognition

**Tempo:** 70 bpm

The examiner will play you a one bar fill played on the snare drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. The test is made up of quarter, eighth, eighth note triplets, dotted eighth and 16th notes. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the fill back with the metronome backing. The candidate will then be required to identify the test from three printed examples.

##### Groove Recall

**Tempo:** 80–120 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar groove that is repeated played on the crash, hi hat (open and closed), ride, bell of ride, cross stick, snare and bass drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the groove back with the metronome backing. You will then be required to identify the style of the groove from a set of three listed by the examiner.

## GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam you will be asked five questions. Four of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be asked about your instrument.

### MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 5 you will be asked to identify/explain:

- Drum voices on the stave
- The meaning of the time signature marking
- The meaning of bpm markings
- Repeat marks, first and second time bars, D.C., D.S., al Coda and al fine markings
- Stylistic drum notation
- All note values used in the chosen piece
- Equivalent rests
- One type of rudiment that can be used stylistically in the solo or development section of the piece
- Use of drum voices, rhythms and techniques in drum solo sections

### INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 5 you will be asked to identify:

- Any part of the drum kit and drumstick
- How to tune the drum kit
- Cross stick, choke cymbal, bell of ride and accent

## PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

### EXAM STRUCTURE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 30 seconds each. There are no other elements in the Performance Certificate examination.

## GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

### EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 30 seconds each and perform all of the technical exercises listed below.

### TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 5 there are six groups of technical work. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](http://rslawards.com)

#### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Eighth, eighth note triplets and 16th notes. To be played first time with singles and with doubles on the repeat

#### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Single paradiddle in 16th notes using the whole kit (bass drum follows the right hand)
- Triple Paradiddle 16th notes using the whole kit (bass drum follows the right hand)

#### GROUP C: FLAMS AND RUFFS

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Flam accent and single drag tap

## GRADE 5

### GROUP D: ROLLS

**Tempo:** 75 bpm

- Five stroke roll phrase

### GROUP E: HANDS AND FEET PATTERNS

**Tempo:** 90 bpm

- Four patterns

### GROUP F: FILL

**Tempo:** 90 bpm

In the exam you will play the Fill exercise from the Grade 5 book to a backing track. The groove is shown in bars 1–3 and you must perform each fill from the set of four to be played in bar 4. The candidate is to perform the repeat.

## FREE CHOICE PIECES

There is an option of playing free choice pieces in the examination.

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Graded Certificate:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Performance Certificate:** 3 free choice pieces

Candidates also have the option of playing material from the Rockschoo! Classics (formerly Hot Rock) book – Drums Grade 5.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website:

[www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com) and a member of the Rockschoo! team will advise you.

# GRADE 6

The Grade 6 Drum exam is for candidates who have begun to develop advanced technical control and a competent grasp of stylistic techniques. At Grade 6 this is shown through mature stylistic conviction, execution of rhythmic complexity, creative and stylistic solo and improvisation work as well as a secure sense of communication and performance.

## GRADE EXAM

### PREPARED WORK:

Candidates perform 3 pieces that last a maximum of 2 minutes 45 seconds and demonstrate a selection of Technical Exercises.

### UNPREPARED WORK:

Candidates are required to play a 12 bar Quick Study Piece. There are also two ear tests that develop fill playback and groove recognition and the final part of the exam is a set of 5 questions based on the candidate's choice of piece. These explore and demonstrate theory and instrument knowledge.

## EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 6 exam lasts 30 minutes and will be taken in the following structure:

1. Pieces or Technical Exercises: The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
2. Technical Exercises or Pieces: The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
3. Quick Study Piece: The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play.
4. Ear Tests: The candidate responds to two tests. Fill playback & recognition and Groove recall.
5. General Musicianship Questions: The candidate answers 5 questions related to a piece of their choice.

## PIECES

At Grade 6 the pieces last up to a maximum of 2 minutes 45 seconds. Emphasis is on notation accuracy, confident execution of stylistic techniques, secure technical control, maturing solo and improvisation elements and a clear sense of ownership and communication of the music.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

*Before playing the first piece all the way through, the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct for the candidate by asking them to play along to the backing track for the first few bars. Once the correct level has been agreed, the examiner will begin again and conduct all three pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.*

## TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 6 level there are five groups of technical work. The examiner will ask a selection from each group. All technical exercises are to be played to a click. Groups A–D should be played at  $\text{♩} = 80$ .

### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- Single and double strokes in triplet eighth notes, 16th notes and 16th note sextuplets played alternately as a continuous exercise. To be played first time with singles and with doubles on the repeat.

### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

- Flam paradiddle in 16th notes and paradiddle–diddle in sextuplets

### GROUP C: RATAMACUES

- Single ratamacue

### GROUP D: ROLLS

- Five stroke roll phrase with accents on toms.
- Nine stroke roll phrase.

### GROUP E: STYLISTIC STUDIES

You will prepare a technical study from one group of styles from the list below. Your choice of style will determine the style of the Quick Study Piece. Each study concentrates on two stylistic techniques.

- Rock/Metal: half open hi-hat, busy 16th-note bass drum pattern
- Funk: snare drum ghost notes, quick open/closed hi-hats
- Jazz/Samba/Blues: polyrhythm, advanced co-ordination

## UNSEEN TESTS

### QUICK STUDY PIECE

At Grade 6 you will be asked to prepare and play a short Quick Study Piece. The style of your QSP is determined by the stylistic study you selected in the technical exercise section. You will be shown the test and played the track with the notated parts played. Any bars that require improvisation will not be demonstrated. You will then have three minutes to study the test. The backing track will be played twice more. You are allowed to practise during the first run through of the backing track, with the notated parts now absent, before playing it to the examiner on the second playing of the backing track. The QSP is in the form of a lead sheet and it is up to you to create your own interpretation of the music in the parts marked for improvisation.

### EAR TESTS

There are two tests: Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall.

#### Fill Playback And Recognition

**Tempo:** 70 bpm

The examiner will play you a one bar fill played on the snare drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. The test will be made up of all values and combinations from quarter note to 16th note sextuplet and quarter and eighth note rests. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the fill back with the metronome backing. The candidate will then be required to identify the test from three printed examples.

#### Groove Recall

**Tempo:** 80–140 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar groove that is repeated played on the whole kit with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the groove back with the metronome backing. You will then be required to identify the style of the groove from a set of four listed by the examiner.

## GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam you will be asked five questions. Four of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be asked about your instrument.

### MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 6 you will be asked to explain:

- Any notation used in the chosen piece
- Any dynamic marking found in the piece
- What makes the drum groove stylistically appropriate
- Use of drum voices, rhythms and techniques in drum solo sections

### INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

The examiner will also ask you one question regarding your instrument.

In Grade 6 you will be asked to explain and demonstrate:

- Care and maintenance of drums
- How to tune the drum kit according to the style of one of the pieces played
- How to convincingly produce: cross stick, choke cymbal, bell of ride, rim-shots, ghost notes, half open hi-hat, accents

## PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 45 seconds each. There are no other elements in the Performance Certificate examination.

## GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

### EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 45 seconds each and perform all of the technical exercises listed below.

### TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 6 there are five groups of technical work. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](http://rslawards.com)

#### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- Single and double strokes in triplet eighth notes, 16th notes and 16th note sextuplets played alternately as a continuous exercise. To be played first time with singles and with doubles on the repeat.

#### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

- Flam paradiddle in 16th notes and paradiddle-diddle in sextuplets

#### GROUP C: RATAMACUES

- Single ratamacue

#### GROUP D: ROLLS

- Five stroke roll phrase with accents on toms.
- Nine stroke roll phrase.

#### GROUP E: STYLISTIC STUDIES

You will prepare a technical study from one group of styles from the list below. Each study concentrates on two stylistic techniques.

- Rock/Metal: half open hi-hat, busy 16th-note bass drum pattern
- Funk: snare drum ghost notes, quick open/closed hi-hats
- Jazz/Samba/Blues: polyrhythm, advanced co-ordination

## FREE CHOICE PIECES

There is an option of playing free choice pieces in the examination.

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Graded Certificate:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Performance Certificate:** 3 free choice pieces

Candidates also have the option of playing material from the Grade 6 pieces in the Rockschoo! Classics compendium.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website:

[www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com) and a member of the Rockschoo! team will advise you.

# GRADE 7

The Grade 7 Drum exam is for candidates who have a developed and advanced technical control and a thorough grasp of extended stylistic techniques. At Grade 7 this is shown through mature stylistic conviction, execution of rhythmic complexity, mature and creative stylistic solo and improvisation work as well as a commanding sense of communication and performance.

## GRADE EXAM

### PREPARED WORK:

Candidates perform 3 pieces that last a maximum of 3 minutes 10 seconds and demonstrate a selection of Technical Exercises.

### UNPREPARED WORK:

Candidates are required to play a 12 bar Quick Study Piece. There are also two ear tests that develop fill playback & recognition and groove recall. The final part of the exam is a set of 5 questions based on the candidate's choice of piece. These explore and demonstrate theory and instrument knowledge.

## EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 7 exam lasts 30 minutes and will be taken in the following structure:

1. Pieces or Technical Exercises: The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first
2. Technical Exercises or Pieces: The candidate will perform the element not chosen above
3. Quick Study Piece: The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play
4. Ear Tests: The candidate responds to two tests. Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall.
5. General Musicianship Questions: The candidate answers 5 questions related to a piece of their choice

## PIECES

At Grade 7 the pieces last up to a maximum of 3 minutes 10 seconds. Emphasis is on notation accuracy, commanding execution of stylistic techniques and technical control, mature and creative solo and improvisation elements and a clear sense of ownership and communication of the music through performance.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

*Before playing the first piece all the way through, the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct for the candidate by asking them to play along to the backing track for the first few bars. Once the correct level has been agreed, the examiner will begin again and conduct all three pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.*

## TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 7 level there are six groups of technical work. The examiner will ask a selection from each group. All technical exercises are to be played to a click.

### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

**Tempo:** 65 bpm

- Single strokes in quarter notes, eighth notes, eighth-note triplets, 16th notes, quintuplet 16th notes, sextuplet 16th notes, septuplet 16th notes and 32nd notes.

### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Flam paradiddle in 16th notes and paradiddle-diddle in sextuplets with accents on toms.

### GROUP C: FLAMS

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Pataflafla

### GROUP D: RATAMACUES

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Single and double ratamacue

### GROUP E: ROLLS

**Tempo:** 85 bpm

- Seven stroke roll phrase. Nine stroke roll phrase with accents on toms

### GROUP F: STYLISTIC STUDIES

You will prepare a technical study from one group of styles from the list below. Your choice of style will determine the style of the Quick Study Piece.

- Rock/Metal: bell of ride 7/8 pattern, five stroke roll
- Funk: linear funk, nine stroke roll
- Jazz/Latin/Blues: bell of ride 6/8 pattern, splashed hi-hats

## UNSEEN TESTS

### QUICK STUDY PIECE

At Grade 7 you will be asked to prepare and play a Quick Study Piece. The style of your QSP is determined by the stylistic study you selected in the technical exercise section. You will be shown the test and played the track with the notated parts played. Any bars that require improvisation will not be demonstrated. You will then have three minutes to study the test. The backing track will be played twice more. You are allowed to practise during the first run through of the backing track, with the notated parts now absent, before playing it to the examiner on the second playing of the backing track. The QSP is in the form of a lead sheet and it is up to you to create your own interpretation of the music in the parts marked for improvisation.

### EAR TESTS

There are two tests: Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall

#### Fill Playback & Recognition

**Tempo:** 70 bpm

The examiner will play you a one bar fill played on the snare drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. The test will be made up of all values and combinations from quarter note to 16th note sextuplet and quarter, eighth and 16th note rests. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the fill back with the metronome backing. The candidate will then be required to identify the test from three printed examples.

#### Groove Recall

**Tempo:** 80–140 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar groove that is repeated played on the whole kit with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the groove back with the metronome backing. You will then be required to identify the style of the groove from a set of four listed by the examiner.

## GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam you will be asked five questions. Four of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be asked about your instrument.

### MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 7 you will be asked to explain:

- Any notation used in the chosen piece
- Any dynamic marking found in the piece
- What makes the drum groove stylistically appropriate
- Use of drum voices, rhythms and techniques in drum solo sections

### INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

The examiner will also ask you one question regarding your instrument. In Grade 7 you will be asked to explain and demonstrate:

- Care and maintenance of drums
- How to tune the drum kit according to the style of one of the pieces played
- How to convincingly produce: cross stick, choke cymbal, bell of ride, rim-shots, ghost notes, half open hi-hat, accents

## PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 3 minutes 10 seconds each. There are no other elements in the Performance Certificate examination.

## GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

### EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces lasting a maximum of 3 minutes 10 seconds each and perform all of the technical exercises listed below.

### TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 7 there are six groups of technical work. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](http://rslawards.com)

#### GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

**Tempo:** 65 bpm

- Single strokes in quarter notes, eighth notes, eighth-note triplets, 16th notes, quintuplet 16th notes, sextuplet 16th notes, septuplet 16th notes and 32nd notes.

#### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Flam paradiddle in 16th notes and paradiddle-diddle in sextuplets with accents on toms.

#### GROUP C: FLAMS

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Pataflafla

#### GROUP D: RATAMACUES

**Tempo:** 80 bpm

- Single and double ratamacue

#### GROUP E: ROLLS

**Tempo:** 85 bpm

- Seven stroke roll phrase. Nine stroke roll phrase with accents on toms

#### GROUP F: STYLISTIC STUDIES

You will prepare a technical study from one group of styles from the list below.

- Rock/Metal: bell of ride 7/8 pattern, five stroke roll
- Funk: linear funk, nine stroke roll
- Jazz/Latin/Blues: bell of ride 6/8 pattern, splashed hi-hats

## FREE CHOICE PIECES

There is an option of playing free choice pieces in the examination.

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Graded Certificate:** 2 free choice pieces
- **Performance Certificate:** 3 free choice pieces

Candidates also have the option of playing material from the Grade 7 pieces in the Rockschoo Classics compendium.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website:

[www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)

If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com) and a member of the Rockschoo team will advise you.

# GRADE 8

The Grade 8 Drum exam is for candidates who have mastered advanced technical control and have a thorough grasp of extended stylistic techniques. At Grade 8 this is shown through mature stylistic conviction, consummate execution of rhythmic complexity, mature and creative stylistic solo and improvisation work as well as a commanding sense of communication and performance.

## GRADE EXAM

### PREPARED WORK:

Candidates perform 3 pieces that last a maximum of 3 minutes 45 seconds and demonstrate a selection of Technical Exercises.

### UNPREPARED WORK:

Candidates are required to play a 12 bar Quick Study Piece. There are also two ear tests that continue to develop fill playback & recognition and groove recall, and the final part of the exam is a set of 5 questions based on the candidate's choice of piece. These explore and demonstrate theory and instrument knowledge.

## EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 8 exam lasts 30 minutes and will be taken in the following structure:

### PIECES OR TECHNICAL EXERCISES:

The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first

1. Pieces or Technical Exercises: The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first
2. Technical Exercises or Pieces: The candidate will perform the element not chosen above
3. Quick Study Piece: The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play
4. Ear Tests: The candidate responds to two tests. Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall
5. General Musicianship Question: The candidate answers 5 questions related to a piece of their choice

## PIECES

At Grade 8 the pieces last up to a maximum of 3 minutes 45 seconds. Emphasis is on complex notation accuracy, commanding execution of stylistic techniques and technical control, mature and creative solo and improvisation elements and a clear sense of ownership and communication of the music through performance.

### SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

*Before playing the first piece all the way through, the examiner will make sure the volume of the backing track is correct for the candidate by asking them to play along to the backing track for the first few bars. Once the correct level has been agreed, the examiner will begin again and conduct all three pieces. Note that this is only done for the first piece.*

## TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 8 level there are six groups of technical work. The examiner will ask a selection from each group. All technical exercises are to be played to a click.

### GROUP A: SINGLESTROKES

**Tempo:** 65 bpm

- Single strokes in quarter notes, eighth notes,
- Eighth-note triplets, 16th notes, quintuplet 16th notes,
- Sextuplet 16th notes, septuplet 16th notes, 32nd notes,
- Nontuplet 32nd notes and double quintuplet 32nd notes

### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

**Tempo:** 90 bpm

- Paradiddle-diddle and alternative paradiddle-diddle in sextuplets around the kit.

### GROUP C: TRIPLETS

**Tempo:** 85 bpm

- Swiss Army Triplet and Pataflafla

### GROUP D: RATAMACUES

**Tempo:** 85 bpm

- Triple ratamacue

### GROUP E: ROLLS

**Tempo:** 90 bpm

- Seven stroke roll phrase with accent on the toms. Combined rolls.

### GROUP F: STYLISTIC STUDIES

You will prepare a technical study from one group of styles from the list below. Your choice of style will determine the style of the Quick Study Piece.

- Rock/Metal: rhythmic displacement, 5/4 coordination
- Funk: linear funk with 32nd notes, stepped hi hat
- Jazz/Latin/Blues: 3-2 and 2-3 clave

## UNSEEN TESTS

### QUICK STUDY PIECE

At Grade 8 you will be asked to prepare and play a Quick Study Piece. The style of your QSP is determined by the stylistic study you selected in the technical exercise section. You will be shown the test and played the track with the notated parts played. Any bars that require improvisation will not be demonstrated. You will then have three minutes to study the test. The backing track will be played twice more. You are allowed to practise during the first run through of the backing track, with the notated parts now absent, before playing it to the examiner on the second playing of the backing track. The QSP is in the form of a lead sheet and it is up to you to create your own interpretation of the music in the parts marked for improvisation.

### EAR TESTS

There are two tests: Fill Playback & Recognition and Groove Recall

#### Fill Playback & Recognition

**Tempo:** 70 bpm

The examiner will play you a one bar fill played on the snare drum with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. The test will be made up of all values and combinations from quarter note to 16th note sextuplet and quarter, eighth and 16th note rests. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the fill back with the metronome backing. The candidate will then be required to identify the test from three printed examples.

#### Groove Recall

**Tempo:** 80–160 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar groove that is repeated played on the whole kit with a metronome backing. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the groove back with the metronome backing. You will then be required to identify the style of the groove from a set of four listed by the examiner.

## GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam you will be asked five questions. Four of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be asked about your instrument.

### MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 8 you will be asked to explain:

- Any notation used in the chosen piece
- Any dynamic marking found in the piece
- What makes the drum groove stylistically appropriate
- Use of drum voices, rhythms and techniques in drum solo sections

### INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

The examiner will also ask you one question regarding your instrument. In Grade 8 you will be asked to explain and demonstrate:

- Care and maintenance of drums
- How to tune the drum kit according to the style of one of the pieces played
- How to convincingly produce: cross stick, choke cymbal, bell of ride, rim-shots, ghost notes, half open hi-hat, accents

## PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 3 minutes 45 seconds each. There are no other elements in the Performance Certificate examination.

## GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

### EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces lasting a maximum of 3 minutes 45 seconds each and perform all of the technical exercises listed below.

### TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 8 there are five groups of technical work. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](http://rslawards.com)

#### GROUP A: SINGLE STROKES

**Tempo:** 65 bpm

- Single strokes in quarter notes, eighth notes,
- Eighth-note triplets, 16th notes, quintuplet 16th notes,
- Sextuplet 16th notes, septuplet 16th notes, 32nd notes,
- Nontuplet 32nd notes and double quintuplet 32nd notes

#### GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

**Tempo:** 90 bpm

- Paradiddle-diddle and alternative paradiddle-diddle in sextuplets around the kit.

#### GROUP C: TRIPLETS

**Tempo:** 85 bpm

- Swiss Army Triplet and Pataflafla

#### GROUP D: RATAMACUES

**Tempo:** 85 bpm

- Triple ratamacue

#### GROUP E: ROLLS

**Tempo:** 90 bpm

- Seven stroke roll phrase with accent on the toms. Combined rolls.

#### GROUP F: STYLISTIC STUDIES

You will prepare a technical study from one group of styles from the list below.

- Rock/Metal: rhythmic displacement, 5/4 coordination
- Funk: linear funk with 32nd notes, stepped hi hat
- Jazz/Latin/Blues: 3-2 and 2-3 clave

## FREE CHOICE PIECES

There is an option of playing free choice pieces in the examination.

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
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- **Performance Certificate:** 3 free choice pieces

Candidates also have the option of playing material from the Grade 8 pieces in the Rockschoo! Classics compendium.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website:

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If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com) and a member of the Rockschoo! team will advise you.

# REVISION HISTORY

## 29 May 2019

- Numbers of technical groups and test descriptions clarified to reflect grade book content.
- Maximum durations of performance pieces corrected for some grades.
- Some wording of unseen tests clarified.
- Examination timings clarified for Performance Certificates in Assessment Overview

## 27 April 2020

- The grading criteria tables for each unit have been removed, and replaced with one unified table within the preface section. The replacement tables include streamlined criteria each of which comprises clarified wording in a unified format, along with definitions of terms used. This is to facilitate digital mark sheet assessment whilst maintaining the recognition of knowledge skills and understanding attained at each grade level.

## 5 May 2020

- Grading criteria tables updated to include clarification of descriptors at 'Below Pass 1' band of attainment.

## 7 July 2020

- Premiere Grade (Entry Level 2) assessment information added to the Preface and Unit Specifications.

## 13 November 2020

- Qualification titles updated.

## 31 March 2022

- Page 10: QUAN codes have been updated.
- Page 17: Guidance around adaptation and personalisation of repertoire pieces has been updated.

## 9 August 2023

- Page 25: Reference to 'Let's Rock' book replaced with updated book title 'Method Book'

## 31 March 2025

- Page 9: Updated 'Scottish Qualifications Authority' to 'Qualifications Scotland'
- Syllabus updated to reflect distinction between Graded Exams, Graded Certificates and Performance Certificates
- Information about Graded Certificates added, including exam information and Qualification codes.
- Learning Outcomes added to Syllabus
- Page 19: Added guidance on selection of performance pieces stipulating that candidates may not be assessed on the same performance pieces more than once

## 8 May 2025

- Syllabus cover updated

## 2 June 2026

- Grade 6 Styles corrected - Changed 'latin' to 'samba'