

rockschool[®]

GUITAR

SYLLABUS GUIDE

2012 - 2018



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	Introduction
4	Debut
6	Grade 1
8	Grade 2
10	Grade 3
12	Grade 4
15	Grade 5
18	Grade 6
21	Grade 7
24	Grade 8
27	Technical Work
29	Sight Reading
30	Quick Study Piece
31	Ear Tests
33	Assessment Criteria
35	Exam Regulations

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Rockscool 2012-2018 syllabus for Guitar. This syllabus guide is designed to give teachers, learners and candidates practical information on the graded examinations run by Rockscool.

The Rockscool website, www.rockscool.co.uk 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
- Band Exams Grades 3, 5 and 8

EXAMINATIONS

Rockscool offers two types of graded music examination; Grade Examinations and Performance Certificate.

GRADE EXAMINATIONS

Grade Examinations are available at every grade Debut - Grade 8 and consist of the following elements:

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

These elements fall into two categories: Prepared work and Unprepared work. Prepared work consists of the three pieces and technical exercises. Unprepared work consists of Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation, (Quick Study Piece at Grades 6 - 8), Ear Tests and General Musicianship Questions.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

Performance Certificates are available at every grade Debut - Grade 8 and consist of the following elements:

- 5 performance Pieces: Debut - Grade 8

BAND EXAMS

Band Exams are available for Guitar, Bass and Drums at grades 3, 5 and 8 and consist of the following elements:

- 5 Performance Pieces: Grades 3, 5 and 8

EXAMINATION STRUCTURE

The examination structure for the grade examinations is shown below:

- 1st - pieces or technical exercises
- 2nd - technical exercises or pieces
- 3rd - Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation or Quick Study Piece
- 4th - Ear Tests
- 5th - General Musicianship Questions

EXAMINATION TIMINGS

Examination Timings for Grade Exams & Performance Certificates

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

Examination Timings for Band Exams

- Grade 3: 40 minutes
- Grade 5: 40 minutes
- Grade 8: 45 minutes

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Candidates are able to play a number of free choice pieces in the examination:

- Grade Examinations: 2 free choice pieces
- Performance Certificates: 3 free choice pieces

Visit www.rockscool.co.uk for grade specific criteria. For guitar and drums, 'Hot Rock' offer examination graded pieces with specially tailored backing tracks in specific graded books.

NOTATION

All notated work is to be played as written. There should be no changes or arrangement (unless previously agreed with Rockscool). Each piece is specifically written for the grade to assess key notation issues regarding pitch, rhythm and technique. ■

DEBUT

The Debut Guitar exam is for candidates who have been learning a short time and have learnt the basic skills. There are two types of exam available at Debut, Grade Exam or Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section for an explanation of the differences.

GRADE EXAM

Prepared work: candidates play 3 pieces that last a maximum of 1 minute and Technical Exercises cover the preliminary areas.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to use their guitar for a simple sight reading test, which is rhythmic reading and two ear tests that begin to develop melodic recall and rhythmic sense. 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.

- 1st item - Pieces or Technical Exercises.
The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
- 2nd item - Technical Exercises or Pieces.
The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
- 3rd item - Sight Reading. The candidate is given a simple previously unseen test to practice and play.
- 4th item - Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two simple tests. One is melodic and one is rhythmic.
- 5th item - General Musicianship Questions.
The candidate answers 5 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, values, sound, control and sync. The pieces contain simple position work and work across strings is simple and paced.

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 three 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.

Tempo: 70 bpm

GROUP A: SCALES

- Major: C
- Minor pentatonic: A, E

GROUP B: CHORDS

Open position chords. Individual chords will be strummed once as directed by the examiner

- Major: A, D, C, G
- Minor: A, E

GROUP C: RIFF

In the exam you will be asked to play the riff from the Grade Debut book to a backing track. The riff shown in bar 1 should be played in the same shape in bars 2–4. The root note of the pattern to be played is shown in the music in each of the subsequent three bars.

SIGHT READING

Tempo: 70 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 lowest-sounding E string. An example is shown in the Debut grade book.

The test is made up of half and quarter notes, will be in 4/4. 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 which are, Melodic Recall and Rhythmic Recall.

MELODIC RECALL

Tempo: 85bpm

The examiner will play you two half notes one after the other. You will tell the examiner whether the second note is higher or lower in pitch than the first note. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar vocal count-in. Answers can be 'higher/lower' or 'up/down'.

RHYTHMIC RECALL

Key: Low E string

Tempo: 80 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar rhythm played to a drum backing on the lowest-sounding E string. You will hear the test twice. You will be asked to play the rhythm back. You will then be asked to identify the rhythm from two printed examples shown to you.

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 rhythm to the drum 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

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.

In Debut you will be asked to identify:

- The music stave and the TAB
- The treble clef
- Half and quarter note values

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Debut you will be asked to identify:

- One of the following parts of your guitar: neck, body, tuning-pegs or bridge

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute each.

FREE CHOICE PIECE/OWN CHOICE PIECE

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

- Grade exam: 2 free choice pieces
- Performance certificate: 3 free choice pieces

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website www.rockschool.co.uk. If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to info@rockschool.co.uk and a member of the Rockscool team will advise you. ■

GRADE 1

The Grade 1 Guitar exam is for candidates who have been learning between six months – one year and have mastered the key basic skills. There are two types of exam available at Grade 1, Grade Exam or Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section for an explanation of the differences.

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 continue to develop melodic recall and rhythmic sense 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 1 exam lasts 20 minutes and will be taken in the following structure.

- 1st item - Pieces or Technical Exercises.
The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
- 2nd item - Technical Exercises or Pieces.
The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
- 3rd item - Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation. The candidate is given a simple previously unseen test to practice and play.
- 4th item - Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two simple tests. One is melodic and one is rhythmic.
- 5th item - 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 three 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.

Tempo: 70 bpm

GROUP A: SCALES

- Major: C
- Natural minor: A
- Minor pentatonic: A, E
- Major pentatonic: G

GROUP B: CHORDS

- Powerchords: two-note chords to be played in a continuous sequence.
- Major: A, D, E, C, G: individual chords will be strummed once as directed by the examiner.
- Minor: A, D, E individual chords will be strummed once as directed by the examiner.

GROUP C: RIFF

Tempo: 70 bpm

In the exam you will be asked to play the riff from the Grade 1 book to a backing track. The riff shown in bar 1 should be played in the same shape in bars 2–4. The root note of the pattern to be played is shown in the music in each of the subsequent three bars.

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

Key: A minor

Tempo: 70 bpm

At Grade 1 the sight reading test is in the form of a melody consisting of half and quarter notes in 4/4. The test is 4 bars long. 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

Key: C major or A minor

Tempo: 70-80 bpm

At Grade 1 the candidate has the choice of playing a lead line or rhythm (chord) line. The test is 4 bars long and the candidate will have 30 seconds preparation time. The examiner will offer the metronome as a guide or 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, Melodic Recall and Rhythmic Recall.

MELODIC RECALL

Tempo: 85 bpm

The examiner will play you three notes in sequence. You will tell the examiner whether the second note is higher or lower in pitch than the first note and whether the third note is higher or lower than the second. You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played it is preceded by a one bar vocal count-in. Answers can be 'higher than lower' or 'up then down' (as appropriate).

RHYTHMIC RECALL

Key: Low E string

Tempo: 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar rhythm played to a drum backing on the lowest-sounding E string. You will hear the test twice. You will be asked to play the rhythm back. You will then be asked to identify the rhythm from two printed examples shown to you. 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 rhythm to the drum 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

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.

In Grade 1 you will be asked to identify:

- The treble clef
- The time signature
- Whole, Half, quarter and eighth note values
- The difference between a major and minor chord

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 1 you will be asked to identify:

- One of the following parts of your guitar: neck, fretboard, body, tuning-pegs, nut pickups or bridge
- One main guitar other than that you are playing
- Names of the open strings

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute 15 seconds each.

FREE CHOICE PIECE/OWN CHOICE PIECE

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 opportunity of playing from the Hot Rock Guitar Grade 1.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website www.rockschool.co.uk. If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to info@rockschool.co.uk and a member of the Rocks school team will advise you. ■

GRADE 2

The Grade 2 Guitar 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. There are two types of exam available at Grade 2, Grade Exam or Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section for an explanation of the differences.

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 melodic recall and rhythmic sense 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.

- 1st item - Pieces or Technical Exercises.
The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
- 2nd item - Technical Exercises or Pieces.
The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
- 3rd item - Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation. The candidate is given a simple previously unseen test to practice and play.
- 4th item - Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two simple tests. One is melodic and one is rhythmic.
- 5th item - 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 evenness 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 three 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.

Tempo: 80 bpm

GROUP A: SCALES

- Major: C, G
- Natural minor: A, E
- Minor pentatonic: C, G
- Major pentatonic: C, G

GROUP B: CHORDS

- 1: Powerchords: three-note chords to be played in a continuous sequence.
- 2: Major: C, F, G individual chords will be strummed once as directed by the examiner.
- 3: Minor 7th: A, D, E individual chords will be strummed once as directed by the examiner.
- 4: Major 7th: A, C, D individual chords will be strummed once as directed by the examiner.

GROUP C: RIFF

Tempo 80 bpm

In the exam you will be asked to play the riff from the Grade 2 book to a backing track. The riff shown in bars 1 and 2 should be played in the same shape in bars 3–8. The root note of the pattern to be played is shown in the music in each of the subsequent bars.

SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

Key: C or G major

Tempo: 70 bpm

At Grade 2 the sight reading test is in the form of a melody consisting of half, quarter eighth notes and quarter note rests in 4/4. The test is 4 bars long. 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

Key: G major or E minor

Tempo: 80-90 bpm

At Grade 2 the candidate has the choice of playing a lead line or rhythm (chord) line. The test is 4 bars long and the candidate will have 30 seconds preparation time. The examiner will offer the metronome as a guide or 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, Melodic Recall and Rhythmic Recall.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: C Minor pentatonic

Tempo: 85 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar melody with a drum backing. The first note of the melody will be the root note and the first interval will be ascending. You will play the melody back on your instrument. 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 rhythm to the drum backing.

RHYTHMIC RECALL

Key: E string

Tempo: 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar rhythm played to a drum backing on the lowest-sounding E string. You will hear the test twice. You will be asked to play the rhythm back. You will then be asked to identify the rhythm from two printed examples shown to you. 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 rhythm to the drum 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

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.

In Grade 2 you will be asked to identify:

- The pitch name of notes
- The meaning of the time signature marking
- Whole, Half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth note values
- Rest values
- The construction of a major or minor chord

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 2 you will be asked to identify:

- One of the following parts of your guitar: neck, fretboard, body, tuning-pegs, scratch plate, nut, Qpickups, jack socket or bridge
- The location of the volume and tone controls on your guitar
- Names of all open strings

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 1 minute 30 seconds each.

FREE CHOICE PIECE/OWN CHOICE PIECE

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 opportunity of playing from the Hot Rock Guitar Grade 2.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website www.rockschool.co.uk. If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to info@rockschool.co.uk and a member of the Rockscool team will advise you. ■

GRADE 3

The Grade 3 Guitar 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. There are two types of exam available at Grade 3, Grade Exam or Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section for an explanation of the differences.

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 melodic recall and rhythmic sense 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 3 exam lasts 25 minutes and will be taken in the following structure.

- 1st item - Pieces or Technical Exercises.
The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
- 2nd item - Technical Exercises or Pieces.
The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
- 3rd item - Sight Reading. The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play.
- 4th item - Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two tests. One is melodic and one is rhythmic.
- 5th item - 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, quality of sound, stylistic techniques and articulation, control, preliminary 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 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 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.

Tempo: 90 bpm

GROUP A: SCALES (TWO OCTAVES IN EIGHTH NOTES)

- Major: G, A, B
- Natural minor: G, A, B
- Minor pentatonic: G, A, B
- Major pentatonic: G, A, B
- Blues: G, A, B

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS (ONE OCTAVE IN QUARTER NOTES)

- Major: G, A, B
- Minor: G, A, B

GROUP C: CHORDS

- 1: Major and minor barre chords to be played in a continuous sequence.
- 2: Dominant 7th: A, C, D, E Individual chords will be strummed once and then picked (arpeggiated).

GROUP D: RIFF

Tempo: 90 bpm

In the exam you will be asked to play the riff from the Grade 3 book to a backing track. The riff shown in bars 1 and 2 should be played in the same shape in bars 3–8. The root note of the pattern to be played is shown in the music in each of the subsequent bars.

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

Key: G major or A minor

Tempo: 75-85 bpm

At Grade 3 the sight reading test is in the form of a melody consisting of half, quarter eighth notes and quarter note rests in 4/4. The test is 4 bars long. 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

Key: G major or A minor

Tempo: 80-90 bpm

At Grade 3 the candidate has the choice of playing a lead line or rhythm (chord) line. The test is 4 bars long. The candidate will have 30 seconds preparation time and the examiner will offer the metronome as a guide or 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, Melodic Recall and Rhythmic Recall.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: G Minor pentatonic

Tempo: 85 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar melody with a drum backing. The first note of the melody will be the root note and the first interval will be ascending. You will play the melody back on your instrument. 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 after you have heard the test for the second time. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the melody to the drum backing.

RHYTHMIC RECALL

Key: E string

Tempo: 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar rhythm played to a drum backing on the lowest-sounding E string. You will hear the test twice. You will be asked to play the rhythm back. You will then be asked to identify the rhythm from two printed examples shown to you. The test is made up of $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$ th notes and $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$ 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 rhythm to the drum 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

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.

In Grade 3 you will be asked to identify:

- The pitch name of notes
- The meaning of the time signature marking
- Whole, Half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth note values
- Rest values
- The construction of a major or minor chord

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 3 you will be asked to identify:

- One of the following parts of your guitar: neck, fretboard, body, tuning-pegs, scratch plate, nut, pickups, jack socket or bridge
- The location of the volume and tone controls on your guitar
- The location of the volume/gain controls on the amp

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes each.

FREE CHOICE PIECE/OWN CHOICE PIECE

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 opportunity of playing from the Hot Rock Guitar Grade 3.

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website www.rockschool.co.uk. If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to info@rockschool.co.uk and a member of the Rockscool team will advise you. ■

GRADE 4

The Grade 4 Guitar 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. There are two types of exam available at Grade 4, Grade Exam or Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section for an explanation of the differences.

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 descending melodic recall and rhythmic sense 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.

- 1st item - Pieces or Technical Exercises.
The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
- 2nd item - Technical Exercises or Pieces.
The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
- 3rd item - Sight Reading. The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play.
- 4th item - Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two tests. One is melodic and one is rhythmic.
- 5th item - 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 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.

Tempo: 80 bpm

GROUP A: SCALES (TWO OCTAVES IN EIGHTH NOTES)

Prepared in two fingerings from the 6th string. The examiner will ask for the same scale in the two fingerings.

- Major: A, B, C, D
- Natural minor: A, B, C, D
- Minor pentatonic A, B, C, D
- Major pentatonic A, B, C, D
- Blues: A, B, C, D

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS (ONE OCTAVE IN EIGHTH NOTES)

- Major 7th: A, B, C, D
- Minor 7th: A, B, C, D
- Dominant 7th: A, B, C, D

GROUP C: CHORDS TO BE PREPARED ON BOTH E AND A STRINGS

- Major 7th: B, C, D,
- Minor 7th: B, C, D,
- Dominant 7th: B, C, D,

Individual chords will be strummed once and then picked (arpeggiated).

GROUP D: RIFF

Tempo: 100 bpm

In the exam you will be asked to play the riff from the Grade 4 book to a backing track. The riff shown in bars 1 and 2 should be played in the same shape in bars 3–8. The root note of the pattern to be played is shown in the music in each of the subsequent bars.

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

Key: D and G major, D and A minor

Tempo: 80-90 bpm

At Grade 4 there is an element of improvisation. This is in the form of a two bar ending. The piece will be composed in the style of rock, funk or blues and will have chord symbols throughout. At Grade 4 the notation consists of half, quarter eighth notes and quarter and eighth note rests in 4/4. The test is 8 bars long. 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

Key: D or G major, D or A minor

Tempo: 90-100 bpm

In Grade 4, the improvisation and interpretation test contains a small amount of sight reading. This consists of a two bar section of rhythm (chord) notation at the beginning of the test. You will be asked to play the chords in the rhythms indicated and complete the test using an improvised line made up of chords and lead lines where indicated. This is played to a backing track of eight bars.

The candidate will have 30 seconds preparation time and the examiner will offer the metronome as a guide or 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, Melodic Recall and Rhythmic Recall.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: C Major pentatonic or B Minor pentatonic

Tempo: 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar melody with a drum backing. The first note of the melody will be the root note and the first interval will be descending. You will play the melody back on your instrument. 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 after you have heard the test for the second time. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the melody to the drum backing.

HARMONIC RECALL

Key: C major

Tempo: 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a tonic chord followed by a two bar chord sequence in the key of C major played to a bass and drum backing. The sequence will be drawn from I, IV and V chords and may occur in any combination. You will be asked to play the chord sequence to the drum backing in the rhythm shown in the Grade 4 book. This rhythm will be used in all examples of this test given in the exam. You will then be asked to identify the chord sequence you have played to the examiner. You will hear the test twice.

Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, tonic, count-in, chords. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and tonic for the third time followed by a vocal count-in then you will play the chords to the drum backing.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

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.

In Grade 4 you will be asked to identify:

- The pitch name of notes
- The meaning of the time signature and key signature marking
- Repeat marks, first and second time bars, D.C., D.S., al Coda and al Fine markings
- Whole, half, quarter, eighth note, triplet eighth notes and 16th note values
- Whole, half, quarter, eighth note and 16th note rests and rest combinations
- The construction of major, minor or dominant 7 chords
- One type of scale that can be used appropriately in the solo section of the piece you have played

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 4 you will be asked to identify:

- Any part or control on your guitar
- The function of the volume and tone controls on your guitar
- The tone settings for the piece you have played on the amp and why you have chosen these settings

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 15 seconds each.

FREE CHOICE PIECE/OWN CHOICE PIECE

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

- Grade exam: 2 free choice pieces
- Performance certificate: 3 free choice pieces

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website www.rockschool.co.uk. If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to info@rockschool.co.uk and a member of the Rockscool team will advise you. ■

GRADE 5

The Grade 5 Guitar 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. There are two types of exam available at Grade 5, Grade Exam or Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section for an explanation of the differences.

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 descending melodic recall and rhythmic sense and 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.

- 1st item - Pieces or Technical Exercises.
The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
- 2nd item - Technical Exercises or Pieces.
The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
- 3rd item - Sight Reading. The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play.
- 4th item - Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two tests. One is melodic and one is rhythmic.
- 5th item - 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. The pieces are over four pages. 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 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.

Tempo: 80 bpm

GROUP A: SCALES (TWO OCTAVES IN EIGHTH NOTES)

To be prepared in two positions. The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes F, G and A. The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes B, C and D. You may have to make adjustments for open strings in your fingerings of some scales.

- Major: F, G, A (6th string) B, C, D (5th string)
- Natural minor: F, G, A (6th string) B, C, D (5th string)
- Minor pentatonic: F, G, A (6th string) B, C, D (5th string)
- Major pentatonic: F, G, A (6th string) B, C, D (5th string)
- Blues: F, G, A (6th string) B, C, D (5th string)
- Harmonic minor: F, G, A (6th string) B, C, D (5th string)

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS (TWO OCTAVES IN EIGHTH NOTES)

- Major: F, G, A (6th string) B, C, D (5th string)
- Minor: F, G, A (6th string) B, C, D (5th string)

GROUP C: CHORDS

Major and minor triads played in three inversions on the top three strings in the key of C. To be played in a continuous sequence.

GROUP D: RIFF

Tempo: 100 bpm

In the exam you will be asked to play the riff from the Grade 5 book to a backing track. The riff shown in bars 1 and 2 should be played in the same shape in bars 3–8. The root note of the pattern to be played is shown in the music in each of the subsequent bars.

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

Key: F and G major, E and G minor

Tempo: 90 bpm

At Grade 5 there is an element of improvisation. This is in the form of a two bar ending. The piece will be composed in the style of rock, funk or blues and will have chord symbols throughout. At Grade 5 the notation consists of half, quarter eighth notes and quarter note and eighth note rests in 4/4. The test is 8 bars long. 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

Key: A or G major, E or G minor

Tempo: 90-100 bpm

In Grade 5, the improvisation and interpretation test contains a small amount of sight reading. This consists of a two bar section of rhythm (chord) notation at the beginning of the test. You will be asked to play the chords in the rhythm indicated and complete the test using an improvised line made up of chords and lead lines where indicated. This is played to a backing track of eight bars. The candidate will have 30 seconds preparation time and the examiner will offer the metronome as a guide or 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, Melodic Recall and Harmonic Recall.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: D Major pentatonic or A Minor pentatonic

Tempo: 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a two bar melody with a drum backing. The first note of the melody will be the root note and the first interval will be descending. You will play the melody back on your instrument. 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 after you have heard the test for the second time. Next you will hear a vocal count-in and you will then play the melody to the drum backing.

HARMONIC RECALL

Key: G major

Tempo 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a tonic chord followed by a four bar chord sequence in the key of G major played to a bass and drum backing. The sequence will be drawn from the I, IV, V, and vi and may occur in any combination. You will be asked to play the chord sequence to the drum backing in the rhythm shown in the example below. This rhythm will be used in all examples of this test given in the exam. You will then be asked to identify the chord sequence you have played to the examiner. You will hear the test twice.

Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, tonic, count-in, chords. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and tonic for the third time followed by a vocal count-in then you will play the chords to the drum 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

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.

In Grade 5 you will be asked to identify:

- The names of pitches
- The meaning of accidentals: # (sharp), b (flat) and \natural (natural) signs
- The meaning of the time signature, key signature and swing time markings
- Repeat marks, first and second time bars, D.C., D.S., al Coda and al Fine markings
- Hammer-ons, pull-offs, accents and vibrato markings
- The construction of minor 7, major 7 or dominant 7 chords
- One type of scale that can be used appropriately in the solo section of the piece you have played

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 5 you will be asked to identify:

- Any part or control on your guitar
- The function of the volume and tone controls on your guitar
- The tone settings for the piece you have played on the amp and why you have chosen these settings

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 30 seconds each.

FREE CHOICE PIECE/OWN CHOICE PIECE

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

- Grade exam: 2 free choice pieces
- Performance certificate: 3 free choice pieces

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website www.rockschool.co.uk. If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to info@rockschool.co.uk and a member of the Rockscool team will advise you. ■

GRADE 6

The Grade 6 Guitar 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. There are two types of exam available at Grade 6, Grade Exam or Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section for an explanation of the differences.

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 more complex melodic recall and rhythmic sense 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.

- 1st item - Pieces or Technical Exercises.
The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
- 2nd item - Technical Exercises or Pieces.
The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
- 3rd item - Quick Study Piece. The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play.
- 4th item - Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- 5th item - 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. The pieces are over four pages. 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 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.

Tempo: 100 bpm

GROUP A: SCALES/MODES

(TWO OCTAVES IN EIGHTH NOTES)

Minor pentatonic: G, B. All 5 positions to be prepared and played.

Modes: To be prepared in two positions. The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes of G-B chromatically.

The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes of C-E chromatically.

- Dorian
- Mixolydian

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS (TWO OCTAVES, TWO POSITIONS IN EIGHTH NOTES)

The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes of G-B chromatically.

The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes of C-E chromatically.

- Major 7th
- Minor 7th
- Dominant 7th

GROUP C: CHORDS

Two positions. The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes of G-B chromatically.

The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes of C-E chromatically. Chords should be strummed and then picked (arpeggiated).

- Minor 7b5
- Diminished

GROUP D: STYLISTIC STUDY

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: tapping and legato
- Funk: staccato phrasing and 16th-note strumming
- Jazz/Latin/Blues: string bends and double-stops

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 which are, Melodic Recall and Harmonic Recall.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: D major pentatonic or D minor pentatonic or G natural minor

Tempo: 90 bpm

The first note of the melody will be either the root note or fifth and the first interval will be either ascending or descending. You will play the melody back on your instrument. You will hear the test twice.

Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, root note, count-in, melody. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and root note for the third time followed by a vocal count-in and you will then play the melody to the bass and drum backing.

HARMONIC RECALL

Key: D major

Tempo: 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a tonic chord followed by a four bar chord sequence in the key of D major played to a bass and drum backing. The sequence will be drawn from the I, ii, iii, IV, V and vi chords and may occur in any combination. The test will also contain V7. You will be asked to play the root notes of the chord sequence to the drum backing in the rhythm shown in the Grade 6 book. This rhythm will be used in all examples of this test given in the exam. You will then be asked to identify the chord sequence you have played to the examiner. You will hear the test twice..

Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, tonic, count-in, chords. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and tonic for the third time followed by a vocal count-in then you will play the chords to the drum 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

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.

In Grade 6 you will be asked to identify:

- The names of pitches
- Any expressive musical marking found in the piece such as palm muting, accents, staccato, legato, vibrato
- Any dynamic marking found in the piece
- One type of scale that can be used appropriately in the solo section of the piece you have played and its relation to the underlying harmony of the piece

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

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

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

- Where to find the same pitch on two different strings
- The function of the volume and tone controls on your guitar
- The set up for the tone required for the piece you have played on the amp
- How to achieve changes in tone in a song

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 45 seconds each.

FREE CHOICE PIECE/OWN CHOICE PIECE

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

- Grade exam: 2 free choice pieces
- Performance certificate: 3 free choice pieces

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website www.rockschool.co.uk. If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to info@rockschool.co.uk and a member of the Rockscool team will advise you. ■

GRADE 7

The Grade 7 Guitar 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. There are two types of exam available at Grade 7, Grade Exam or Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section for an explanation of the differences.

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 complex melodic recall and rhythmic sense 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 7 exam lasts 30 minutes and will be taken in the following structure.

- 1st item - Pieces or Technical Exercises.
The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
- 2nd item - Technical Exercises or Pieces.
The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
- 3rd item - Quick Study Piece. The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play.
- 4th item - Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- 5th item - 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. The pieces are over four pages. 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 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.

Tempo 100BPM

GROUP A: SCALES/MODES (TWO OCTAVES IN EIGHTH NOTES)

To be prepared in two positions. The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes of G-B chromatically. The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes of C-E chromatically.

- Lydian
- Phrygian
- Jazz Melodic Minor

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS (ONE OCTAVE IN EIGHTH NOTES)

To be prepared in two positions. The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes of G-B chromatically. The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes of C-E chromatically.

- Major 9th
- Minor 9th
- Dominant 9th

GROUP C: CHORDS

To be prepared in two positions. The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes of G-B chromatically. The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes of C-E chromatically.

Chords should be strummed and then picked (arpeggiated).

- Major 9th
- Minor 9th
- Dominant 9th

GROUP D: STYLISTIC STUDY

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: pinch harmonics and natural harmonics
- Funk: chord embellishments and double-stops
- Jazz/Latin/Blues: crossing strings and octaves

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 which are, Melodic Recall and Harmonic Recall.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: A major pentatonic or C minor pentatonic or A natural minor

Tempo: 90 bpm

The first note of the melody will be either the root note or fifth and the first interval will be either ascending or descending. You will play the melody back on your instrument. You will hear the test twice.

Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, root note, count-in, melody. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and root note for the third time followed by a vocal count-in and you will then play the melody to the bass and drum backing.

HARMONIC RECALL

Key: A major

Tempo: 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a tonic chord followed by a four bar chord sequence in the key of A major played to a bass and drum backing. The sequence will be drawn from the I, ii, iii, IV, V and vi chords and may occur in any

combination. The test may also contain iim7, iiim7 and vim7. You will be asked to play the chord sequence to the drum backing in the rhythm shown in the Grade 7 book. This rhythm will be used in all examples of this test given in the exam. You will then be asked to identify the chord sequence you have played to the examiner. You will hear the test twice.

Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, tonic, count-in, chords. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and tonic for the third time followed by a vocal count-in then you will play the chords to the drum 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

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.

In Grade 7 you will be asked to identify:

- The names of pitches
- Any expressive musical marking found in the piece such as palm muting, accents, staccato, legato, vibrato
- Any dynamic marking found in the piece
- One type of scale that can be used appropriately in the solo section of the piece you have played and its relation to the underlying harmony of the piece

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

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

In Grade 7 you will be asked to explain and demonstrate:

- Where to find the same pitch on two different strings
- The function of the volume and tone controls on your guitar
- The set up for the tone required for the piece you have played on the amp
- How to achieve changes in tone in a song

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 45 seconds each.

FREE CHOICE PIECE/OWN CHOICE PIECE

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

- Grade exam: 2 free choice pieces
- Performance certificate: 3 free choice pieces

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website www.rockschool.co.uk. If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to info@rockschool.co.uk and a member of the Rockscool team will advise you. ■

GRADE 8

The Grade 8 Guitar 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. There are two types of exam available at Grade 8, Grade Exam or Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section for an explanation of the differences.

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 develop advanced melodic recall and rhythmic sense 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.

- 1st item - Pieces or Technical Exercises.
The candidate chooses to play either their pieces or their technical exercises first.
- 2nd item - Technical Exercises or Pieces.
The candidate will perform the element not chosen above.
- 3rd item - Quick Study Piece. The candidate is given a previously unseen test to practice and play.
- 4th item - Ear Tests. The candidate responds to two tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- 5th item - General Musicianship Questions.
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. The pieces are over four pages. 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 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.

Tempo: 100 bpm

GROUP A: SCALES/MODES

(TWO OCTAVES IN EIGHTH NOTES)

To be prepared in two positions. The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes of G-B chromatically. The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes of C-E chromatically.

- Whole Tone
- Diminished
- Altered

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS (ONE OCTAVE IN EIGHTH NOTES)

To be prepared in two positions. The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes of G-B chromatically. The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes of C-E chromatically.

- Dominant 7#5
- Dominant 7b5
- Minor 7b5
- Dominant 7#9
- Dominant 7b9
- Diminished

GROUP C: CHORDS

To be prepared in two positions. The first position is to be prepared on the E string from the starting notes of G-B chromatically. The second position is to be prepared on the A string from the starting notes of C-E chromatically. Chords should be strummed and then picked (arpeggiated).

- Dominant 7#5
- Dominant 7b5
- Dominant 7#9
- Dominant 7b9

GROUP D: STYLISTIC STUDY

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: crossing strings and alternate picking
- Funk: chord embellishments and muted strings
- Jazz/Latin/Blues: legato phrasing and alternate picking

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 which are, Melodic Recall and Harmonic Recall.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: E major pentatonic or F minor pentatonic or B natural minor
Tempo: 90 bpm

The first note of the melody will be either the root, third or fifth note and the first interval will be either ascending or descending. You will play the melody back

on your instrument. You will hear the test twice.

Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, root note, count-in, melody. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and root note for the third time followed by a vocal count-in and you will then play the melody to the bass and drum backing.

HARMONIC RECALL

Key: A major
Tempo: 90 bpm

The examiner will play you a tonic chord followed by a four bar chord sequence in the key of A major played to a bass and drum backing.

The sequence will be drawn from the I, ii, iii, IV, V and vi chords and may occur in any combination. The test may also contain Imaj7 and IVmaj7. You will be asked to play the chord sequence to the drum backing in the rhythm shown in the Grade 8 book. This rhythm will be used in all examples of this test given in the exam. You will then be asked to identify the chord sequence you have played to the examiner. You will hear the test twice.

Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, tonic, count-in, chords. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and tonic for the third time followed by a vocal count-in then you will play the chords to the drum 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

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.

In Grade 8 you will be asked to identify:

- The names of pitches
- Any expressive musical marking found in the piece such as palm muting, accents, staccato, legato, vibrato
- Any dynamic marking found in the piece
- One type of scale that can be used appropriately in the solo section of the piece you have played and its relation to the underlying harmony of the piece

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

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

In Grade 8 you will be asked to explain and demonstrate:

- Where to find the same pitch on two different strings
- The function of the volume and tone controls on your guitar
- The set up for the tone required for the piece you have played on the amp
- How to achieve changes in tone in a song

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The candidate chooses to play 5 pieces lasting a maximum of 2 minutes 45 seconds each.

FREE CHOICE PIECE/OWN CHOICE PIECE

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

- Grade exam: 2 free choice pieces
- Performance certificate: 3 free choice pieces

Criteria for own free choice pieces can be found by visiting the website www.rockschool.co.uk. If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, you can email it to info@rockschool.co.uk and a member of the Rockscool team will advise you. ■

TECHNICAL WORK

DEBUT GRADE 1, 2 & 3

	Debut	1	2	3
Tempo	♩ = 70	♩ = 70	♩ = 80	♩ = 90
Major	C	C	C, G	G, A, B
Natural minor	×	A	A, E	G, A, B
Minor pentatonic	A, E	A, E	C, G	G, A, B
Major pentatonic	×	G	C, G	G, A, B
Blues	×	×	×	G, A, B
Arpeggios - Major	×	×	×	G, A, B
Arpeggios - Minor	×	×	×	×
Chords - Major	A, D, C, G	A, D, E, C, G	C, F, G	×
Chords - Minor	Am, Em	Am, Dm, Em	×	×
Power/Barre	×	✓	✓	✓
7ths	×	Am ⁷ , Cmaj ⁷ , Dmaj ⁷	Am ⁷ , Dm ⁷ , Em ⁷	A ⁷ , C ⁷ , D ⁷ , E ⁷
Riff	Rock	Rock	Rock	Rock

GRADE 4 & 5

	4	5
Tempo	♩ = 80 ♪ - played	♩ = 80 ♪ - played
Key	A, B, C, D	F, G, A, B, C, D
Major	✓	✓
Natural minor	✓	✓
Minor pentatonic	✓	✓
Major pentatonic	✓	✓
Blues	✓	✓
Harmonic Minor	×	✓
Arpeggios - Major 7 th	✓	✓
Arpeggios - Minor 7 th	✓	✓
Arpeggios - Dominant 7 th	✓	✓
Chords - Major 7 th	✓	Sequence in C major & Inversions
Chords - Minor 7 th	✓	
Chords - Dominant 7 th	✓	
Riff	Blues	Funk

GRADE 6, 7 & 8

	6	7	8
Tempo	♩ = 100 ♪ - played	♩ = 100 ♪ - played	♩ = 100 ♪ - played
Key	prepared chromatically from G to B, C to E	prepared chromatically from G to B, C to E	prepared chromatically from G to B, C to E
Minor pentatonic	5 Shapes, G, B		
Modes	Dorian, Mixolydian	Lydian, Phrygian	✗
Jazz melodic minor	✗	✓	✗
Whole tone	✗	✗	✓
Diminished	✗	✗	✓
Altered	✗	✗	✓
Arpeggios	Major 7 th Minor 7 th Dominant 7 th	Major 9 th Minor 9 th Dominant 9 th	Dominant 7#5 Dominant 7b5 Dominant 7#9 Dominant 7b9 Diminished
Chords	Minor 7 ♭ 5 Diminished	Major 9 th Minor 9 th Dominant 9 th	Dominant 7#5 Dominant 7b5 Dominant 7#9 Dominant 7b9
Stylistic study	Rock/Metal Funk Jazz/Latin/Blues	Rock/Metal Funk Jazz/Latin/Blues	Rock/Metal Funk Jazz/Latin/Blues

SIGHT READING AND IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

DEBUT GRADE 1, 2 & 3

	Debut	1	2	3
Sight Reading				
Tempo	♩ = 70	♩ = 70	♩ = 70	♩ = 80
Notation	♩ ♩	♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ †	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ † †
Length (Bars)	4	4	4	4
Keys	E string	A minor	C major G major	G major A minor
Preparation/Practice	90 seconds	90 seconds	90 seconds	90 seconds
Improvisation & Interpretation				
Tempo	×	♩ = 70-80	♩ = 80-90	♩ = 80-90
Keys	×	C major A minor	G major E minor	G major A minor
Length	×	4	4	4
Preparation/Practice	×	30 seconds + 1 play through	30 seconds + 1 play through	30 seconds + 1 play through

GRADE 4 & 5

	4	5
Sight Reading		
Tempo	♩ = 80-90	♩ = 90
Notation	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ † †	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ † †
Length (Bars)	8	8
Keys	G major D major D minor A minor	G major F major E minor G minor
Preparation/Practice	90 seconds	90 seconds
Improvisation & Interpretation		
Tempo	♩ = 90-100	♩ = 90-100
Keys	G major D major A minor D minor	G major A major E minor G minor
Length	8	8
Preparation/Practice	30 seconds + 1 play through	30 seconds + 1 play through

QUICK STUDY PIECE

GRADE 6, 7 & 8

	6	7	8
Tempo	♩ = 80-200	♩ = 80-200	♩ = 80-200
Length (Bars)	12	12	12
Sight reading (Bars)	6	6	6
Solo/Improvisation (Bars)	6	6	6
Preparation/Practice	1 listen to full track + 3 minutes practice + 1 play through with backing	1 listen to full track + 3 minutes practice + 1 play through with backing	1 listen to full track + 3 minutes practice + 1 play through with backing

EAR TESTS

DEBUT GRADE 1, 2 & 3

	Debut	1	2	3
Test 1 - Melodic Recall				
Tempo	♩ = 85	♩ = 85	♩ = 85	♩ = 85
Key	Ascending / Descending Interval	Ascending / Descending Interval	C minor pentatonic	G minor pentatonic
Length (Bars)	1	2	2	2
Values	♩	♩	♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
Test 2 - Rhythmic Recall				
Tempo	♩ = 85	♩ = 90	♩ = 90	♩ = 90
Bars	2	2	2	2
Values	♩ ♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩

GRADE 4 & 5

	4	5
Test 1 - Melodic Recall		
Tempo	♩ = 90	♩ = 90
Key	C major pentatonic B minor pentatonic	D major pentatonic A minor pentatonic
Values	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
Length (Bars)	2	2
Test 2 - Harmonic Recall		
Tempo	♩ = 90	♩ = 80
Key	C major	G major
Chords	I, IV, V	I, IV, V, vi
Values	♩ ♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩
Length (Bars)	2	2

GRADE 6, 7 & 8

	6	7	8
Test 1 - Melodic Recall			
Tempo	♩ = 90	♩ = 90	♩ = 90
Key	D major pentatonic D minor pentatonic G natural minor	A major pentatonic C minor pentatonic A natural minor	E major pentatonic F minor pentatonic B natural minor
Values	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
Length (Bars)	2	2	2
Test 2 - Harmonic Recall			
Tempo	♩ = 90	♩ = 90	♩ = 90
Key	D major	A major	E major
Chords	I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi, V ⁷	I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi, iim ⁷ , iiim ⁷ , vim ⁷	I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi, I ⁷ , IV ⁷
Values	♩ ♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩	♩ ♩ ♩
Length (Bars)	2	2	2

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

PREPARED WORK

	Debut - Grade 2	Grade 3 - Grade 5	Grade 6 - Grade 8
Distinction Pieces 18-20 Technical exercises 13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and secure basic techniques • Consistent rhythm / pulse • Notation accuracy detailed throughout • Consistent sync • Highly confident and assured presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and secure techniques • Consistent rhythm / pulse • Notation / harmonic accuracy detailed throughout • Stylistic direction detailed throughout • Convincing and stylistic solo / improv • Consistent sync • Highly confident and assured stylistic performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and secure advanced techniques • Consistent rhythm / pulse • Notation / harmonic accuracy detailed throughout • Stylistic direction detailed throughout • Advanced solo / improv with stylistic conviction • Consistent sync • Comprehensive understanding of complete musical structure • Convincing communication through stylistic performance
Merit Pieces 15-17 Technical exercises 11-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure basic techniques overall • Secure rhythm / pulse overall • Notation accuracy observed overall • Mainly synchronised • Confident presentation overall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure techniques overall • Secure rhythm / pulse overall • Notation / harmonic accuracy observed overall • Stylistic direction observed overall • Stylistic solo / improv overall • Mainly synchronised • A sense of stylistic performance overall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure advanced techniques overall • Secure rhythm / pulse overall • Detailed notation / harmonic accuracy observed overall • Stylistic direction observed overall • Convincing and stylistic solo / improv overall • Mainly synchronised • Secure understanding of complete musical structure • Good sense of communication through stylistic performance
Pass Pieces 12-14 Technical exercises 9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic techniques evident • Rhythm / pulse evident • Notation accuracy evident • Sync evident • Some confidence in presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some secure techniques evident • Generally secure rhythm / pulse • Some notation / harmonic accuracy evident • Some stylistic direction evident • Adequate solo / improv • Sync evident • Some sense of stylistic performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some advanced techniques shown • Generally secure rhythm / pulse • Notation / harmonic accuracy observed • Some stylistic direction observed • Solo / improv with some stylistic conviction • Sync evident • General understanding of musical structure • Some sense of communication through stylistic performance
Below Pass 1 Pieces 6-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic techniques not shown • Rhythm/pulse largely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques hesitant and/or incorrect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced techniques hesitant and/or incorrect

Technical exercises 4-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inaccurate Notation accuracy largely inaccurate Sync not achieved Unsure in presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhythm/pulse mostly inaccurate Notation/harmonic work hesitant and /or incorrect Stylistic direction hesitant and/or incorrect Solo/improv limited in stylistic understanding Sync largely not achieved Sense of stylistic performance not achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhythm/pulse mostly inaccurate Notation/harmonic work hesitant and /or incorrect Stylistic direction hesitant and/or incorrect Solo/improv limited in stylistic understanding Sync largely not achieved Hesitant in understanding of musical structure Communicating of stylistic performance not achieved
Below Pass 2 Pieces 0-5 Technical exercises 0-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incomplete performance No attempt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incomplete performance No attempt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incomplete performance No attempt

UNPREPARED WORK

Debut - Grade 8	
Distinction Sight/Improv QSP/Ear Tests 9-10 GMQ 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notation/pitch accuracy correct throughout Consistent rhythm/pulse Convincing improv/solo throughout Consistent sync Accurate responses
Merit Sight/Improv QSP/Ear Tests 7-8 GMQ 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notation/pitch correct overall Secure rhythm/pulse overall Improv/Solo convincing overall Mainly synchronised Accurate responses overall
Pass Sight/Improv QSP/Ear Tests 6 GMQ 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notation/pitch accuracy evident Rhythm/pulse evident Improv/solo evident and generally appropriate Sync evident Adequate Responses
Below Pass 1 Sight/Improv QSP/Ear Tests 3-5 GMQ 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notation/pitch largely inaccurate Rhythm/pulse largely inaccurate Improv/solo largely absent or inappropriate Sync largely absent Responses vague or incorrect
Below Pass 2 Sight/Improv QSP/Ear Tests 0-2 GMQ 0-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No attempt Responses not offered