Music at Key Stage 4
ROCKSCHOOL IS ABOUT BRINGING TALENTED, ENTHUSIASTIC MUSICIANS INTO THE EDUCATION WORLD, SO THAT YOUNG PLAYERS CAN BENEFIT FROM THEIR EXPERTISE AND ADVICE.

FOUNDER, NORTON YORK
NEW SPECIFICATIONS AT GCSE HAVE OPENED UP THE OPTIONS AND FLEXIBILITY FOR MUSIC TEACHING AT KEY STAGE 4.

BUT HOW CAN WE SUPPORT ALL OF THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF MUSIC STUDENT, AND ALL THEIR VARIOUS ABILITIES AND INTERESTS? WHAT SUPPORT IS OUT THERE FOR TEACHERS TO DO THIS?

OCR GET ASKED ALL THE TIME:

- How to choose performance pieces for coursework?
- What kind of score has to be submitted?
- Where can we find these?
- What teaching tools are there to help with composition and theory?
- How do we make the case for Music as a valuable subject at options evenings?

Rockschool graded exam pieces at all levels, and the materials that support them, can be used to support preparation for GCSE and key stage 4 Music assessments.

Rockschool have ready-to-go resources that can inform lesson planning and lesson content and save time for teachers.

This document explains how examination board RSL have mapped Rockschool graded pieces to the OCR GCSE difficulty criteria, and how Rockschool can support composing and listening, using Grade 3 as an example.
ROCKSCHOOL QUALIFICATIONS

ROCKSCHOOL GRADED MUSIC EXAMS ARE AN EXCELLENT WAY TO GAIN A QUALIFICATION, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON PRACTICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH BOTH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND TECHNOLOGY.

The structure of the graded music exams, means they can easily be adapted to support other qualifications, whether delivered in your organisation or elsewhere:

- The Performance Pieces, Technical Exercises, Ear Tests and General Musicianship sections are all designed to create a well-rounded musician.
- The improvisation sections at grades 1-5 are an excellent way to introduce composition to the individual, small groups and entire classes.
- The Fact Files and General Musicianship sections support conceptual understanding and provide a clear link to listening and appraising skills.
- The performance pieces can be used as standalone tracks for solo and ensemble performance at GCSE, A-Level and Vocational Qualifications.
- Each piece in our syllabus is available as an individual download. This includes the backing track, full audio and score; meaning that they fulfil the coursework submission requirements for all the major exam boards.
- Each piece can be used as a differentiated resource for use in whole class teaching, as you can learn aurally, through notation, tab and chord charts.
- As each track has a specific grade, these can be mapped against the criteria for Level 2 (GCSE) and Level 3 (A-Level).
- In Music Production; the practical, written and listening tasks provide opportunities to deliver benchmarked tasks for individuals, small groups and whole classes, in-line with the curriculum.
- The exams support students in performance and composition using music technology, as well as those looking to gain experience working behind the mic.
- The whole suite of graded music exams support countless vocational qualification units linked to a myriad of opportunities in the creative industries.

The diagram opposite shows how each aspect of the graded music exam works to support holistic musical learning.
Wherever and however you are learning, our qualifications support progress from one level to the next and can help bring together the learning that happens both inside and outside the classroom, formally and informally.

**GRADED MUSIC EXAMS** **SUPPORTING MUSICAL PROGRESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1 (KS2/3)</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE PIECES (60%)</th>
<th>SIGHT READING, INTERPRETATION &amp; IMPROVISATION / QUICK STUDY PIECE (15%)</th>
<th>EAR TESTS (15%)</th>
<th>TECHNICAL EXERCISES (15%)</th>
<th>GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP (5%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 2 (GCSE/VQ)</td>
<td>SOLO AND ENSEMBLE PERFORMING</td>
<td>COMPOSITION DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>DEVELOPING LISTENING</td>
<td>INSTRUMENT SPECIFIC SKILLS AND MUSIC THEORY</td>
<td>MUSICAL CONCEPTS AND UNDERSTANDING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 3 (A LEVEL/VQ)</td>
<td>LEVEL 3 (A LEVEL/VQ)</td>
<td>LEVEL 3 (A LEVEL/VQ)</td>
<td>LEVEL 3 (A LEVEL/VQ)</td>
<td>LEVEL 3 (A LEVEL/VQ)</td>
<td>LEVEL 3 (A LEVEL/VQ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For further details on exam structure check the grading structure found on our website.*

**PROGRESSION ROUTES**

![Diagram of progression routes](#)
USING ROCKSCHOOL GRADES CAN SUPPORT GCSE PREPARATION IN A NUMBER OF AREAS:

SOLO PERFORMANCE
- OCR suggest that Rockschool pieces at Grade 3 can exhibit the level of challenge to achieve higher marks for the difficulty criteria within GCSE music.
- The resources supplied by Rockschool allow students to learn their pieces with or without the support of a private tutor.
- Backing tracks available and the written score provide all the necessary material for submission, to meet the GCSE requirements.
- Backing tracks and audio can be used to learn pieces by ear.

ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE
- Adding extra live performers to the Rockschool pieces makes them suitable for ensemble submission.
- OCR suggests that the score provided in the Rockschool pieces is suitable for submission for all instruments involved in the ensemble.
- The backing tracks can be used as a resource for students preparing their individual parts.

COMPOSITION
- Improvisation elements within the Rockschool Graded syllabuses are a stimulus to support composing activities in the classroom.
- The Rockschool quick study pieces at Grades 6 to 8 can be used to support students’ stylistic awareness as they enhance their composition skills.

LISTENING
- General Musicianship Questions that feature in all Rockschool grades help prepare students for the listening exam elements of the GCSE qualification. OCR’s listening exam features unprepared questions that reflects the Rockschool approach.
- Factfiles that accompany Rockschool pieces focus learners towards the understanding Style and Context required at GCSE.
- Walkthroughs that accompany Rockschool pieces help learners identify musical characteristics and improve their aural perception.
- Consider using the Rockschool’s popular music theory workbooks.
SUMMARY

THE INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TEACHING MUSIC CAN REALLY IMMERSE THE STUDENT IN THEIR LEARNING.

Linking classroom teaching to instrumental teaching can provide many benefits. Students preparing with instrument teachers can use their exam pieces for their GCSE coursework. Equally, students who learn pieces from Rockschool’s syllabi for their GCSE performances could be entered for a grade certificate as well. This added value can improve perception of Music as a subject and double the sense of achievement for students.

Progression can be mapped too - using the grade 1 and 2 material and moving up to 3, then 4 - the above principles can all be applied. You can also choose the grade that meets your students’ abilities freely.

MAPPED PIECES FROM GRADE 3 AS EXAMPLES:

IDENTIFYING DIFFICULTY:

OCR does not specifically state graded exam standards for GCSE performances; instead, 6 of the 30 marks for each performance are for difficulty.

When determining a mark out of 6 for difficulty bear in mind the advice on page 50 of the OCR specification; briefly, the way a piece is executed can affect the difficulty – adding or embellishing; reducing or simplifying. Don’t only use the score as the artefact to determine the difficulty. Use of best fit also applies!

These are guidelines based on the skills demonstrated as in the printed Rock School books and the accompanying CDs.

The full difficulty descriptors for OCR can be found in the specification from page 50.
Otis Redding - Sittin' On The Dock Of The Bay from Piano Grade 3 contains the following that reflects the characteristics in the higher mark descriptors of the OCR difficulty criteria:

- **Pitch:** A more difficult key; more difficult melody in range and/or leaps
- **Duration:** Rhythmically more difficult
- **Dynamics:** Clear dynamic contrasts*
- **Tempo:** Use of tempo requiring more control and/or dexterity*
- **Timbre:** Sensitivity of touch; use of pedal(s)
- **Structure:** The addition of contrasting sections or new demands
- **Phrasing:** Appropriate articulation and sensitivity of touch highlights the musical shape of the piece*

- **Style:** More complex in its requirements
- The assessed part has increased difficulty and independence in relation to any other parts
- Use of syncopated, dotted or other complex rhythms
- Use of dynamic contrast, including gradation of volume*
- Some independence of parts

*Would need to be listened for as part of the performance as no specific markings on the score – students will need to ensure they can demonstrate this.
Otis Redding - Sittin’ On The Dock Of The Bay from Piano Grade 3 contains the following that reflects the characteristics in the higher mark descriptors of the OCR difficulty criteria:

- **Pitch:** A more difficult key; more difficult melody in range and/or leaps
- **Duration:** Rhythmically more difficult; quicker chord changes*
- **Tempo:** Requires more control and/or dexterity*
- **Timbre:** Good use/control of sound bank*
- **Timbre:** More complex chords; fingered chords
- **Structure:** The addition of contrasting sections or new demands; use of fill-ins
- **Phrasing:** Appropriate articulation and control of touch sensitivity to create the musical shape of the piece*
- **Style:** More complex in its requirements
- **The assessed part has increased difficulty and independence in relation to any other parts**
- **A wide range of notes and changes in hand position; use of harmony in the right hand**
- **Complex rhythmic patterns, such as syncopation and/or dotted rhythms**
- **Quicker chord changes and a wider range of chords**
- **Challenges posed by the speed of the part**
- **A good use of the technology is required***
- **Dynamic contrast through touch sensitivity and registration changes***

*Would need to be listened for as part of the performance as no specific markings on the score – students will need to ensure they can demonstrate this.
Santana - Smooth from Drums Grade 3, contains the following that reflects the characteristics in the higher mark descriptors of the OCR difficulty criteria:

- **Duration**: Rhythmically more difficult; use of rolls, flams and other rudiments
- **Dynamics**: Clear dynamic range and contrasts*
- **Tempo**: Requires more control and/or dexterity
- **Timbre**: Use of the different timbres available from the instrument
- **Texture**: The number of sound sources used and consideration of their complexity
- **Structure**: The addition of contrasting sections or new demands
- **Phrasing**: Appropriate articulation and stick/hand control to create the musical shape of the piece*
- **Style**: More complex in its requirements

- A part requiring rhythmical dexterity; perhaps more dotted rhythms, and some syncopation
- Good use of dynamic contrast through effective control of drumsticks (or hand and finger dexterity), including gradation of volume*
- Use of syncopated, dotted or other complex rhythms
- Challenges posed by the speed of the part
- Contrasting sections, perhaps including an improvisatory section
- The assessed part has significant difficulty and independence in relation to any other parts

*Would need to be listened for as part of the performance as no specific markings on the score – students will need to ensure they can demonstrate this.
Creedence Clear Water Revival - Proud Mary from Guitar Grade 3 contains the following that reflects the characteristics in the higher mark descriptors of the OCR difficulty criteria:

- **Pitch:** A more difficult key; more difficult chords
- **Duration:** More frequent chord changes; more complicated rhythm
- **Dynamics:** Clear dynamic range and contrasts*
- **Tempo:** Requires more control and/or dexterity
- **Timbre:** Use of the different timbres available from the instrument
- **Texture:** Density of the chords; more intricate strumming
- **Structure:** The addition of contrasting sections or new demands
- **Phrasing:** Strumming patterns and articulation indicate the musical shape of the piece*
- **Style:** More complex in its requirements

The assessed part has increased difficulty and independence in relation to any other parts

- A part in a more difficult key, with modulations
- A wide range of chords, including extension chords
- Dynamic contrasts including gradations in volume*
- Use of syncopated, dotted or other complex rhythms
- Requires left-hand dexterity - chord changes are more rapid and complex; position changes are frequent and use a wide range of the fret board
- A range of right-hand techniques are evident, thus showing a range of articulation and some challenging rhythmic accompaniment figurations

*Would need to be listened for as part of the performance as no specific markings on the score – students will need to ensure they can demonstrate this.
ACOUSTIC GUITAR

*USE THE CHORDS STYLE / CLASSICAL STYLE DESCRIPTORS AND CROSS REFERENCE TO APPLY TO THE DIFFERENT TYPES AND STYLES OF GUITAR*

Ed Sheeran – Thinking Out Loud from Acoustic Guitar Grade 3 contains the following that reflects the characteristics in the higher mark descriptors of the OCR difficulty criteria:

- **Pitch:** A more difficult key; more difficult in range and/or leaps; some position work

- **Duration:** Rhythmically more difficult

- **Dynamics***: Clear dynamic range and contrasts

- **Tempo:** Requires more control and/or dexterity

- **Timbre:** Use of the different timbres available from the instrument

- **Texture:** Addition of polyphony and/or homophony and consideration of its complexity

- **Structure:** The addition of contrasting sections or new demands

- **Phrasing:** Use of appropriate articulation to create the musical shape of the piece*

- **Style:** More complex in its requirements

- The assessed part has increased difficulty and independence in relation to any other parts

- **Dynamics***: Dynamic contrast and gradation of volume is required*

- The addition of an independent second part and/or chords

- Requires left-hand dexterity – position changes are frequent and use a wide range of the fret board

- **A range of right-hand techniques are evident, thus showing a range of articulation and phrasing**

*Would need to be listened for as part of the performance as no specific markings on the score – students will need to ensure they can demonstrate this.*
Dire Straits - Money for Nothing from Bass Grade 3 contains the following that reflects the characteristics in the higher mark descriptors of the OCR difficulty criteria:

- **Pitch**: A more difficult key; more difficult in range and/or leaps; some position work

- **Duration**: Rhythmically more difficult

- **Dynamics***: Clear dynamic range and contrasts

- **Tempo**: Requires more control and/or dexterity

- **Timbre**: Use of the different timbres available from the instrument

- **Texture**: Addition of polyphony and/or homophony and consideration of its complexity

- **Structure**: The addition of contrasting sections or new demands

- **Phrasing**: Use of appropriate articulation to create the musical shape of the piece*

- **Style**: More complex in its requirements

- The assessed part has increased difficulty and independence in relation to any other parts

- A wide range of notes with frequent leaps

- Use of syncopated, dotted or other complex rhythms

- Dynamic contrast and gradation of volume is required*

- Requires left-hand dexterity – position changes are frequent and use a wide range of the fret board

- A range of right-hand techniques are evident, thus showing a range of articulation and phrasing

*Would need to be listened for as part of the performance as no specific markings on the score – students will need to ensure they can demonstrate this.
Taylor Swift - 22 from Female Vocals Grade 3 contains the following that reflects the characteristics in the higher mark descriptors of the OCR difficulty criteria:

- **Pitch**: More difficult melody in terms of range and/or leaps
- **Duration**: Rhythmically more difficult
- **Dynamics**: Clear dynamic range and contrasts*
- **Tempo**: Greater breath control to sustain a slower pace, or the technical dexterity to articulate a faster moving part
- **Timbre**: Good tone and expressive control of the sounds across the vocal range
- **Structure**: The addition of contrasting sections or new demands
- **Phrasing**: Use of vocal technique, diction and breath control to create the musical shape of the piece*
- **Style**: More complex in its requirements
- Increased difficulty in relation to other parts e.g. lack of support from any accompaniment present
- The assessed part has increased difficulty and independence in relation to any other parts
- A part with a wider range of notes (beyond a 10th), and some leaps, resulting in challenges in pitching and intonation
- Use of syncopated, dotted or other complex rhythms
- Use of dynamic contrast, including gradation of volume*
- Good breath control to sustain and phrase a slow-moving melody, or challenges posed by the speed of the part and therefore requiring vocal dexterity
- Clear use of phrasing with a range of articulation

*Would need to be listened for as part of the performance as no specific markings on the score – students will need to ensure they can demonstrate this.
RESOURCES

- **Individual Tracks**
  rslawards.com/shop

- **Supporting Tests**
  rslawards.com/shop

- **Syllabus Specifications**
  rslawards.com

- **Centre Support**
  rslawards.com/find-a-centre

- **Find a Teacher**
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  www.rslawards.com

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*Available in Rockschool Electric Guitar, Acoustic Guitar, Piano and drums.*
Progress 8

It is often highlighted that learning a musical instrument has significant benefits academically, psychologically and socially, and there is no doubt that being part of a musical performance feels good both as a performer and, generally, as a member of the audience. It’s not surprising that a lot of time is spent by committed students and teachers preparing for musical performances throughout the year and that this has obvious benefits for the school community. However, if you do need further evidence of the benefits learning a musical instrument brings, the following sets out how Rockschool music exams attract UCAS points and contributes to whole school accountability measures through Progress 8.

The Music Exams That Are Included Are:

- Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Grades 6-8)
- Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Popular Music Theory (Grades 6-8)

UCAS Points

As a Level 3 qualification, a practical grade exam at grades 6 – 8 represents a significant achievement and investment in time and energy and so carries significant points for University entrance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>UCAS Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSL Awards Level 3 in Music Grade 6</td>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MERIT</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DISTINCTION</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSL Awards Level 3 in Music Grade 7</td>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MERIT</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DISTINCTION</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSL Awards Level 3 in Music Grade 8</td>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MERIT</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DISTINCTION</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROGRESS 8 MEASURE:

Level 3 qualifications can contribute to a students’ Progress 8 measure through the ‘open element’ which means Grades 6 – 8 can be used as one of the three other subjects alongside any other Level 2 qualification in Music.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADED MUSIC LEVEL</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>2016 POINTS</th>
<th>2017, 2018 AND 2019 POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRADE 8</td>
<td>DISTINCTION</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>8.50</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MERIT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>8.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRADE 7</td>
<td>DISTINCTION</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MERIT</td>
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<tr>
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<td>PASS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RSL Level 2 Qualifications also contribute to whole school accountability measures and more information can be found here - [www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)
MUSIC PRODUCTION
SUPPORTING NATIONAL CURRICULUM MUSIC

The syllabus is built around practical tasks which allow students to demonstrate an understanding of how to use music software to create high quality musical outcomes. As the syllabus sits within the National Qualifications Framework, each grade has been benchmarked to ensure the skills and knowledge acquired create logical progression and map across to the levels of musicianship.

Music Production Graded Music Exams can complement the National Curriculum at Key Stage Two and Three; and the Learning Outcomes for GCSE and A-Level.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NQF</th>
<th>PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT (60%)</th>
<th>LISTENING TEST (15%)</th>
<th>THEORETICAL WRITTEN EXAM (25%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 1 (GRADES 1 – 3) (KS2/3)</td>
<td>SOLO PERFORMING AND COMPOSITION WORKING AS A PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN</td>
<td>MUSIC THEORY, STYLISTIC AWARENESS, DETAILED LISTENING</td>
<td>UNDERSTANDING OF RECORDING, LISTENING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 2 (GRADES 4 AND 5) (KS4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEVEL 3 (GRADES 6 – 8) (KS5)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

RSL AWARDING THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS
### Key Stage 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 Points</th>
<th>Rockschool Music Production Grade Five Exam Syllabus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perform with Technical Control, Expression and Interpretation</strong></td>
<td>Use MIDI Technologies such as synths, samplers, controller keyboards, MIDI pickups, electronic drum triggers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compose and Develop Musical Ideas with Technical Control and Coherence</strong></td>
<td>Coursework task requires a good understanding of contemporary musical styles and features and an ability to replicate pre-recorded material; create own material and use production tools to create high quality musical outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrate and Apply Musical Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Understand music production and recording techniques, such as compressors, gates, side-chaining, multitrack and live mic recording in own work and in recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognise and use major, minor, blues, chromatic and whole tone sales; 7th chords; swung rhythms in 4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand contemporary music styles or Pop, Rock, Soul, Country and Funk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use Appraising Skills to Make Evaluative and Critical Judgements about Music</strong></td>
<td>Use increasingly sophisticated listening skills and understanding of music production techniques and theory to be able to make judgements about music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For information on other Key Stages please visit [www.rslawards.com](http://www.rslawards.com)