

rockschool[®]

Piano Syllabus Guide

2015-2018

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Introduction

Welcome to the Rockscool 2015-2018 syllabus for Piano. This syllabus guide is designed to give teachers, students and candidates practical information on the graded examinations run by Rockscool.

The Rockscool website, www.rslawards.com/, as well as the Rockscool Australia site, www.rockscool.com.au/, has detailed information on all aspects of our examinations, detailed marking schemes and assessment criteria as well as notated and audio examples to help candidates prepare for the examination.

All candidates are required to read the Rockscool Exam Regulations which can be found via the following link: www.rslawards.com/about-us/regulations

This Syllabus Guide covers the following examinations:

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

Examinations

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

Note: Piano can also be performed as part of a Rockscool Band Exam: www.rslawards.com/music/graded-music-exams/band-exam

Grade Examinations

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

- 3 Performance Pieces: Debut - Grade 8
- Technical Exercises: Debut - Grade 8
- Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation: Debut - 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

Piano Performance Certificates are available from Debut to Grade 8 and consist of the following elements:

- 5 Performance Pieces only: Debut - Grade 8

Examination Structures

The examination structure for the Grade Examination 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

The examination structure for the Performance Certificate is shown below:

- 1st – All five Pieces
(There is no other prepared or unprepared content).

Examination Timings

Grade Exams

- 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

Performance Certificates

- Debut: 12 minutes
- Grade 1: 15 minutes
- Grade 2: 15 minutes
- Grade 3: 18 minutes
- Grade 4: 22 minutes
- Grade 5: 22 minutes
- Grade 6: 25 minutes
- Grade 7: 25 minutes
- Grade 8: 28 minutes

General Notes

The following general notes apply to both Grade and Performance Certificate Examinations:

Free Choice Pieces

For all piano grades, candidates are able to play a number of free choice pieces in the examination:

- Grade Examinations: Two free choice pieces (min. one piece must be from the grade book)
- Performance Certificates: Three free choice pieces (min. two pieces must be from the grade book)

Visit www.rslawards.com/ for grade specific Free Choice Criteria and wider requirements which need to be observed in full to be eligible for use in the exam. Prior approval is not required but any deviation/simplification/omissions from any aspect of the criteria or requirements may be reflected in the marks awarded.

If there is any doubt or questions about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, it would be acceptable to email it to info@rslawards.com and a member of the Rockscool team will advise.

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/presented carefully to achieve a number of outcomes appropriate for the grade.

Exclusions:

- At Debut and Grade 1, if any three or four voiced chords notated in the pieces are unachievable, candidates may either reduce the amount of notes in the voicing or play as a spread chord if stylistically appropriate.
- At all grades, if any two handed/open voiced chords notated in the pieces are not achievable, candidates may either reduce the amount of notes in the voicing or play as a spread chord if stylistically appropriate.
- At all grades, candidates are free to execute voiced chords notated in the pieces with either hand or combination of hands.
- In any Level 3 piece containing chord symbols, voicings may be presented as deemed appropriate.

Musical Interpretation

For all piano grades, Rockscool encourages individual musicality, articulation, expression and use of dynamics when performing. This would include for example own legato/staccato, pedaling, dynamic levels, accentuation, cresc/dim, phrasing etc. This also applies anywhere in the exam, whether within a performance piece or any other prepared/unprepared element.

Musical Interpretation is assessed as a requirement at all grades in both the Full Grade Exam and Performance Certificate.

Note: where there is notated articulation, expression, dynamic or pedal markings, these have been specifically written and must be observed.

Piano Specification

The following instruments are accepted for use in Piano exams, at all grades.

- Acoustic Piano
- Digital Piano

A number of our exam centres in the UK have acoustic pianos. The remainder have digital pianos. Candidates are advised to contact Rockscool to check their nearest centre if they specifically wish to perform the exam on an acoustic piano. See also <https://www.rslawards.com/music/find-a-centre>

Using Own Equipment

Candidates may bring their own digital piano or keyboard for use in the exam, which must fit the following criteria:

- Entry Level-Grade 4: Minimum of five octaves, touch sensitive, weighted keys and a sustain pedal.
- Grades 5-8: 88 note keyboard, touch sensitive, weighted keys and a sustain pedal.
- Candidates must use a 'realistic' piano sound for their exam.

Candidates will need to note on the application form that they wish to use their own equipment when applying to take the exam. Owing to scheduling constraints and the potential impact on subsequent exam times, the absence of prior notification to Rockscool will result in the examiner refusing candidates own equipment on the day.

Rockscool also recommends that candidates who wish to bring in their own equipment contact their exam centre to make any practical arrangements beforehand and also bring their own assistance to carry the equipment in/out of the exam room.

Own equipment needs to be practicable and reasonably portable so as not to impact on exam timings.

Note also that whilst it is acceptable for candidates to use their own equipment for use in the exam, if any outcomes required at a particular grade either cannot be demonstrated or are demonstrated less securely as a result of the equipment, this may be reflected in the marks awarded. Rockscool cannot advise whether or not candidates use their own equipment. A decision to do so is entirely at a candidate's discretion/risk on this basis.

Candidates cannot use either pre-programmed backing tracks or internally generated, pre-programmed rhythms.

Making Notes in the Exam

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

With the exception of Technical Exercises where memory requirements apply, it is permitted to use grade books which contain notes made during the course of a candidate's study.

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

Debut

The Debut Piano exam is for candidates who have been learning a short time and have developed elementary skills, techniques, co-ordination and musical understanding. There is also an opportunity for basic improvisation.

There are two types of exam available at Debut, either a **Grade Exam** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade Exam

Prepared work: candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and chord voicings.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to play either a Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation test and two Ear Tests that begin to develop melodic recall and chord recognition. The final part of the exam comprises five questions which are designed to explore simple harmony, melody, rhythmic, technical and stylistic knowledge.

Exam Structure

The Debut exam lasts **15 minutes** and is taken in the following order:

- **1st item** - Pieces or Technical Exercises: Candidates choose to play either pieces or technical exercises first.
- **2nd item** - Technical Exercises or Pieces: Candidates will perform the element not chosen above.
- **3rd item** - Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation: Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **4th item** - Ear Tests: Candidates respond to two aural tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- **5th item** - General Musicianship Questions: Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. At Debut they are short, typically up to one minute in duration. The expectation and length of pieces are designed so candidates can concentrate on the requirements of notation accuracy, values, evenness of sound, tone quality/consistency, technical control and sync at a beginner level.

Setting the Level of the Backing Track

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place along to the backing track. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

Technical Work

At Debut there are three groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios/Broken Chords and Chord Voicings.

All exercises need to be played hands separately, in straight feel, ascending and descending.

The examiner will ask for a selection from each group and Groups A and B need to be played to a compulsory metronome click. Group C does not require a metronome and can be played at a tempo of the candidate's choice.

The book can be used in the exam for Groups A and B. Group C needs to be played from memory. For Group C, candidates will be required to close their grade books or ensure the information on the KR player is out of view.

Note: the use of any notes or any reading from the grade book when performing Group C will result in a deduction of marks for this element. (See Assessment Criteria).

Any fingerings shown in the grade book are for suggestions only.

Group A: Scales

Tempo: 52 bpm

Range: One octave

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a quarter note.

- C major (right hand)
- C major (left hand)
- A minor (right hand)
- A minor (left hand)

Group B: Arpeggios/Broken Chords

Tempo: 92 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4

Rhythms: Quarter notes, finishing on a dotted half note.

- C major broken chord (right hand)
- C major broken chord (left hand)
- A minor broken chord (right hand)
- A minor broken chord (left hand)

C: Chord Voicings

Candidates will be asked to play one voicing of both the following chords (2 total):

- C major
- C minor

Candidates need to choose and perform the voicing, one for each chord, from memory, from three options given for each chord in the grade book. The three options comprise right hand, left hand and both hands. In the exam, there will be no need to state which one beforehand.

There will be no requirement to present the chosen voicing to a particular tempo or a backing / metronome click but the examiner will be looking for speed of response.

Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation

At Debut candidates will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Sight Reading

Key: C major

Tempo: 60 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, half, quarter notes, associated rests

The Sight Reading test is in the form of a 4-6 bar melody.

Candidates are required to play hands separately and only single notes will be required to be played with both left and right hands.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Improvisation and Interpretation

Key: C major

Tempo: 60 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

The Improvisation test is in the form of a 4-6 bar chord progression, with all chord symbols indicated.

Candidates are required to improvise single note melodies with either left or right hand. It is permissible to play chord voicings, or use both hands, but marks will only be awarded for melodic content.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Ear Tests

At Debut there are two ear tests: Melodic Recall and Chord Recognition. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Melodic Recall

Tempo: 95bpm

Rhythms: Half notes

The examiner will play two half notes one after the other. Candidates are to state whether the second note is higher or lower in pitch than the first note. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a one-bar count-in. There will also be a C root note at the beginning of the test for reference. For this exercise, candidates are to use the words 'higher' or 'lower'.

Credit will be given for speed of response.

Chord Recognition

Tempo: 95 bpm

Rhythms: Whole notes

The examiner will play two chords, each with a C root note. Candidates are to state which chord played was major and which chord played was minor. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a one-bar count-in.

Credit will be given for speed of response.

General Musicianship Questions

At debut candidates will be asked five questions, one from each of the following groups:

- One question relating to harmony.
- One question relating to melody.
- One question relating to rhythms.
- One question relating to technical requirements.
- One question relating to genre.

Candidates can choose the piece on which basis the questions will be asked. It must be one of the pieces performed in the exam. The exact bars or phrases will be chosen by the examiner.

The questions will cover the following topics:

Group 1: Harmony

Identification of major / minor triad chord symbols.

Group 2: Melody

A pitch in the treble clef within the stave.

Group 3: Rhythm

Whole / half / quarter notes.

Group 4: Technical

Fingering used in a crotchet length phrase. (Either hand)

Group 5: Genre

Genre of the piece.

Performance Certificate

The candidate plays five pieces in their preferred chosen order. The exam will last **12 minutes**.

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

Grade 1

The Grade 1 Piano exam is for candidates who have been typically learning for six months to one year. They have mastered the key basic debut level skills and have since acquired greater use of technique, rhythms, co-ordination and musical understanding. There is also an opportunity to build on basic improvisation.

There are two types of exam available at Grade 1, either a **Grade Exam** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade Exam

Prepared work: candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and chord voicings.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to play either a Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation test and two Ear Tests that begin to develop melodic recall and chord recognition. The final part of the exam comprises five questions which are designed to explore simple harmony, melody, rhythmic, technical and stylistic knowledge.

Exam Structure

The Grade 1 exam lasts **20 minutes** and is taken in the following order:

- **1st item** - Pieces or Technical Exercises: Candidates choose to play either pieces or technical exercises first.
- **2nd item** - Technical Exercises or Pieces: Candidates will perform the element not chosen above.
- **3rd item** - Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation: Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **4th item** - Ear Tests: Candidates respond to two aural tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- **5th item** - General Musicianship Questions: Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. At Grade 1 they are short, typically one to one and a half minutes in duration. The expectation and length of pieces are designed so candidates can concentrate on the requirements of notation accuracy, values, evenness of sound, tone quality/consistency, technical control and sync at a beginner level.

Setting the Level of the Backing Track

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place along to the backing track. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

Technical Work

At Grade 1 there are three groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios and Chord Voicings.

All exercises need to be played hands separately, in straight feel, ascending and descending.

The examiner will ask for a selection from each group and Groups A and B need to be played to a compulsory metronome click. Group C does not require a metronome and can be played at a tempo of the candidate's choice.

The book can be used in the exam for Groups A and B. Group C needs to be played from memory. For Group C, candidates will be required to close their grade books or ensure the information on the KR player is out of view.

Note: the use of any notes or any reading from the grade book when performing Group C will result in a deduction of marks for this element. (See Assessment Criteria).

Any fingerings shown in the grade book are for suggestions only.

Group A: Scales

Tempo: 60 bpm

Range: One octave

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a quarter note.

- *F major (right hand)*
- *F major (left hand)*
- *G major (right hand)*
- *G major (left hand)*
- *D natural minor (right hand)*
- *D natural minor (left hand)*
- *E natural minor (right hand)*
- *E natural minor (left hand)*
- *C dorian (right hand)*
- *C dorian (left hand)*
- *C harmonic minor (right hand)*
- *C harmonic minor (left hand)*

Group B: Arpeggios

Tempo: 100 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4

Rhythms: Quarter notes, finishing on a dotted half note.

- *F major broken chord (right hand)*
- *F major broken chord (left hand)*
- *G major broken chord (right hand)*
- *G major broken chord (left hand)*
- *D minor broken chord (right hand)*
- *D minor broken chord (left hand)*
- *E minor broken chord (right hand)*
- *E minor broken chord (left hand)*
- *C augmented arpeggio (right hand)*
- *C augmented arpeggio (left hand)*
- *C diminished arpeggio (right hand)*
- *C diminished arpeggio (left hand)*

C: Chord Voicings

Candidates will be asked to play one voicing of both the following chords (2 total):

- *C diminished*
- *C augmented*

Candidates need to choose and perform the voicing, one for each chord, from memory, from three options given for each chord in the grade book. The three options comprise right hand, left hand and both hands. In the exam, there will be no need to state which one beforehand.

There will be no requirement to present the chosen voicing to a particular tempo or a backing / metronome click but the examiner will be looking for speed of response.

Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation

At Grade 1 candidates will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation. Both are previously unseen and examples of each are given in the grade book.

Sight Reading

Key: F major or G major

Tempo: 70 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, half, quarter notes, associated rests

The Sight Reading test is in the form of a 4-6 bar melody.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Improvisation and Interpretation

Key: F major or G major

Tempo: 70 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

The Improvisation test is in the form of a 4-6 bar chord progression, with all chord symbols indicated.

Candidates are required to improvise single note melodies with either left or right hand. It is permissible to play chord voicings, or use both hands, but marks will only be awarded for melodic content.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Ear Tests

At Grade I there are two ear tests: Melodic Recall and Chord Recognition. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Melodic Recall

Tempo: 95bpm

Rhythms: Whole, half notes

The examiner will play three notes one after the other. Candidates are to state whether the second note is higher or lower in pitch than the first and whether the third note is higher or lower in pitch than the second. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a one-bar count-in. There will also be a C root note at the beginning of the test for reference. For this exercise, candidates are to use the words 'higher' or 'lower'.

Credit will be given for speed of response.

Chord Recognition

Tempo: 95 bpm

Rhythms: Whole notes

The examiner will play a sequence of chords each with a C root note, then ask the candidate to state the chord quality of each chord from a choice of major, minor, diminished or augmented. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a one-bar count-in.

Credit will be given for speed of response.

General Musicianship Questions

At Grade I candidates will be asked five questions, one from each of the following groups:

- One question relating to harmony.
- One question relating to melody.
- One question relating to rhythms.
- One question relating to technical requirements.
- One question relating to genre.

Candidates can choose the piece on which basis the questions will be asked. It must be one of the pieces performed in the exam. The exact bars or phrases will be chosen by the examiner.

The questions will cover the following topics:

Group 1: Harmony

Interval construction of major / minor / augmented / diminished triad chords.

Group 2: Melody

Pitches in the bass clef within the stave.

Group 3: Rhythm

Whole, half, quarter, eighth notes, associated rests. Eighth note triplets.

Group 4: Technical

Fingering used in a minim length phrase. (Either hand)

Group 5: Genre

Different artists from the same genre as the piece chosen.

Performance Certificate

The candidate plays five pieces in their preferred chosen order. The exam will last **15 minutes**.

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

Grade 2

The Grade 2 Piano exam is for candidates who have been typically learning for one year to eighteen months. They have mastered the key basic skills up to Grade 1 and since acquired greater use of technique, rhythms, co-ordination and musical understanding. There is also the continuing opportunity to develop improvisation skills.

There are two types of exam available at Grade 2, either a **Grade Exam** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade Exam

Prepared work: candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and chord voicings.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to play either a Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation test and two Ear Tests that continue to develop melodic recall and chord recognition. The final part of the exam comprises five questions which are designed to explore growing harmony, melody, rhythmic, technical and stylistic knowledge.

Exam Structure

The Grade 2 exam lasts **20 minutes** and is taken in the following order:

- **1st item** - Pieces or Technical Exercises: Candidates choose to play either pieces or technical exercises first.
- **2nd item** - Technical Exercises or Pieces: Candidates will perform the element not chosen above.
- **3rd item** - Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation: Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **4th item** - Ear Tests: Candidates respond to two aural tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- **5th item** - General Musicianship Questions: Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. At Grade 2 they are becoming longer, typically one to two minutes in duration. The expectation and length of pieces are designed so candidates can increase their understanding and execution of notation accuracy, values, evenness of sound, tone quality/consistency, technical control, articulation, expression and sync at a beginner level.

Setting the Level of the Backing Track

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place along to the backing track. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

Technical Work

At Grade 2 there are three groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios and Chord Voicings.

All exercises need to be played in straight feel, ascending and descending, hands together (except for the chromatic scales and arpeggios which need to be played hands separately).

The examiner will ask for a selection from each group and Groups A and B need to be played to a compulsory metronome click. Group C does not require a metronome and can be played at a tempo of the candidate's choice.

The book can be used in the exam for Groups A and B. Group C needs to be played from memory. For Group C, candidates will be required to close their grade books or ensure the information on the KR player is out of view.

Note: the use of any notes or any reading from the grade book when performing Group C will result in a deduction of marks for this element. (See Assessment Criteria).

Any fingerings shown in the grade book are for suggestions only.

Group A: Scales

Tempo: 66 bpm

Range: Two octaves (chromatic one octave)

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a quarter note.

- D major
- Bb major
- B natural minor
- G natural minor
- B harmonic minor
- G harmonic minor
- C mixolydian
- C melodic minor
- D chromatic (right hand)
- D chromatic (left hand)
- Bb chromatic (right hand)
- Bb chromatic (left hand)

Group B: Arpeggios

Tempo: 63 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Rhythms: 3/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a dotted half note. 4/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a whole note.

- D major arpeggio (right hand)
- D major arpeggio (left hand)
- Bb major arpeggio (right hand)
- Bb major arpeggio (left hand)
- B minor arpeggio (right hand)
- B minor arpeggio (left hand)
- G minor arpeggio (right hand)
- G minor arpeggio (left hand)
- C dominant 7th arpeggio (right hand)
- C dominant 7th arpeggio (left hand)

C: Chord Voicings

Candidates will be asked to play one voicing of both the following chords (2 total):

- *C dominant 7*
- *C minor 6*

Candidates need to choose and perform the voicing, one for each chord, from memory, from three options given for each chord in the grade book. The three options comprise right hand, left hand and both hands. In the exam, there will be no need to state which one beforehand.

There will be no requirement to present the chosen voicing to a particular tempo or a backing / metronome click but the examiner will be looking for speed of response.

Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation

At Grade 2 candidates will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation. Both are previously unseen and examples of each are given in the grade book.

Sight Reading

Key: Bb major or D major

Tempo: 60-95 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, dotted half, half, quarter, eighth notes, associated rests.

The Sight Reading test is in the form of a 4-6 bar melody.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Improvisation and Interpretation

Key: Bb major or D major

Tempo: 60-95 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

The Improvisation test is in the form of a 4-6 bar chord progression, with all chord symbols indicated.

Candidates are required to improvise single note melodies with either left or right hand. It is permissible to play chord voicings, or use both hands, but marks will only be awarded for melodic content.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Ear Tests

At Grade 2 there are two ear tests: Melodic Recall and Chord Recognition. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Melodic Recall

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, half, quarter notes

The examiner will play a 2 bar diatonic melody in the key of C major, with a range up to a fourth.

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice. After this, candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. Both playings of the melody and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

The first note of the melody will be the root.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Chord Recognition

Tempo: 95 bpm

Rhythms: Whole notes

The examiner will play a sequence of chords each with a C root note, then ask the candidate to state the chord quality of each chord from a choice of major, minor, diminished, augmented or dominant 7. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a one-bar count-in.

The same chord quality may appear more than once within the sequence.

Credit will be given for speed of response.

General Musicianship Questions

At Grade 2 candidates will be asked five questions, one from each of the following groups:

- One question relating to harmony.
- One question relating to melody.
- One question relating to rhythms.
- One question relating to technical requirements.
- One question relating to genre.

Candidates can choose the piece on which basis the questions will be asked. It must be one of the pieces performed in the exam. The exact bars or phrases will be chosen by the examiner.

The questions will cover the following topics:

Group 1: Harmony

Interval construction of major / minor triad, augmented / diminished triad, dom7 / sus4 chords.

Group 2: Melody

Pitches in the treble clef within the stave.

Group 3: Rhythm

Whole, half, quarter, eighth notes, dotted quarters and eighth notes, associated rests. Eighth note triplets and associated rests.

Group 4: Technical

Fingering used in a bar length phrase. (Either hand)

Group 5: Genre

Different song titles from the same genre as the piece chosen.

Performance Certificate

The candidate plays five pieces in their preferred chosen order. The exam will last **15 minutes**.

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

Grade 3

The Grade 3 Piano exam is for candidates who have been typically learning for eighteen months to two years and who are ready to consolidate their final stage as a beginner player. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 2 and since acquired greater use of technique, rhythms, co-ordination and musical understanding. Improvisation phrasing is now confident and articulate and candidates have started to develop the beginnings of stylistic awareness.

There are two types of exam available at Grade 3, either a **Grade Exam** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade Exam

Prepared work: candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and chord voicings.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to play either a Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation test and two Ear Tests that continue to develop melodic recall and chord recognition. The final part of the exam comprises five questions which are designed to explore harmony, melody, rhythmic, technical and stylistic knowledge at Grade 3 level.

Exam Structure

The Grade 3 exam lasts **25 minutes** and is taken in the following order:

- **1st item** - Pieces or Technical Exercises: Candidates choose to play either pieces or technical exercises first.
- **2nd item** - Technical Exercises or Pieces: Candidates will perform the element not chosen above.
- **3rd item** - Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation: Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **4th item** - Ear Tests: Candidates respond to two aural tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- **5th item** - General Musicianship Questions: Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. At Grade 3 they are becoming longer, typically in the region of two minutes in duration. The expectation and length of pieces are designed so candidates can continue their understanding and execution of notation accuracy, values, evenness of sound, tone quality/consistency, technical control, expression, articulation and sync at a high beginner level. At Grade 3 pieces also introduce the needs for stylistic awareness as part of the assessment.

Setting the Level of the Backing Track

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place along to the backing track. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

Technical Work

At Grade 3 there are three groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios and Chord Voicings.

All exercises need to be played ascending and descending, hands together (except for the chromatic scales and extended arpeggios which need to be played hands separately) in either straight or swung feel, as directed by the examiner.

All exercises need to be played hands separately, in straight feel, ascending and descending.

The examiner will ask for a selection from each group and Groups A and B need to be played to a compulsory metronome click. Group C does not require a metronome and can be played at a tempo of the candidate's choice.

The book can be used in the exam for Groups A and B. Group C needs to be played from memory. For Group C, candidates will be required to close their grade books or ensure the information on the KR player is out of view.

Note: the use of any notes or any reading from the grade book when performing Group C will result in a deduction of marks for this element. (See Assessment Criteria).

Any fingerings shown in the grade book are for suggestions only.

Group A: Scales

Tempo: 80 bpm

Range: Two octaves

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a quarter note.

- A major
- A major (contrary motion)
- Eb major
- Eb major (contrary motion)
- F# natural minor
- C natural minor
- F# harmonic minor
- C harmonic minor
- C lydian
- A chromatic (right hand)
- A chromatic (left hand)
- Eb chromatic (right hand)
- Eb chromatic (left hand)

Group B: Arpeggios

Tempo: 69 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Rhythms: 3/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a dotted half note. 4/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a whole note.

- A major arpeggio
- Eb major arpeggio
- F# minor arpeggio
- C minor arpeggio
- C major seventh arpeggio
- C major ninth sharp eleven arpeggio (right hand)
- C major ninth sharp eleven arpeggio (left hand)

C: Chord Voicings

Candidates will be asked to play one voicing of both the following chords (2 total):

- C major 7
- C dominant 9 sus 4

Candidates need to choose and perform the voicing, one for each chord, from memory, from three options given for each chord in the grade book. The three options comprise right hand, left hand and both hands. In the exam, there will be no need to state which one beforehand.

There will be no requirement to present the chosen voicing to a particular tempo or a backing / metronome click but the examiner will be looking for speed of response.

Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation

At Grade 3 candidates will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation. Both are previously unseen and examples of each are given in the grade book.

Sight Reading

Key: Eb major or A major

Tempo: 60-95 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, dotted half, half, dotted quarter, quarter, eighth notes, eighth note ties, associated rests.

The Sight Reading test is in the form of a 4-8 bar melody.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Improvisation and Interpretation

Key: *Eb major or A major*

Tempo: *60-95 bpm*

Time Signature: *4/4*

The Improvisation test is in the form of a 4-8 bar chord progression, with all chord symbols indicated.

Candidates are required to improvise single note melodies with either left or right hand. It is permissible to play chord voicings, or use both hands, but marks will only be awarded for melodic content.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Ear Tests

At Grade 3 there are two ear tests: Melodic Recall and Chord Recognition. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Melodic Recall

Key: *C major*

Tempo: *95bpm*

Time Signature: *4/4*

Rhythms: *Whole, half, quarter notes*

The examiner will play a 2 bar diatonic melody in the key of C major, with a range up to a fifth.

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice. After this, candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. Both playings of the melody and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

The first note of the melody will be the root.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

Chord Recognition

Tempo: 95 bpm

Rhythms: Whole notes

The examiner will play a sequence of chords each with a C root note, then ask the candidate to state the chord quality of two of the chords from a choice of major, minor, diminished, augmented, dominant 7 and major 7th. The examiner will select which two chords.

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a one-bar count-in.

Credit will be given for speed of response.

General Musicianship Questions

At debut candidates will be asked five questions, one from each of the following groups:

- One question relating to harmony.
- One question relating to melody.
- One question relating to rhythms.
- One question relating to technical requirements.
- One question relating to genre.

Candidates can choose the piece on which basis the questions will be asked. It must be one of the pieces performed in the exam. The exact bars or phrases will be chosen by the examiner.

The questions will cover the following topics:

Group 1: Harmony

Chord degrees of the scale.

Group 2: Melody

Identification of pitches in the bass clef within the stave.

Group 3: Rhythm

Whole, half, quarter, eighth and associated dotted notes/rests, quarter/eighth note triplets and associated rests within one crotchet length.

Group 4: Technical

Fingering used in a bar length phrase. (Both hands)

Group 5: Genre

Different artists and song titles from the same genre as the piece chosen.

Performance Certificate

The candidate plays five pieces in their preferred chosen order. The exam will last **18 minutes**.

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

Grade 4

The Grade 4 Piano exam is for candidates who have been typically learning for two to three years and who are ready for intermediate level playing. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 3 and since acquired greater use of technique, more complex rhythms, co-ordination and musical understanding. Candidates will be developing a sense of expression and continuing to broaden their stylistic awareness, and there is also the opportunity to improvise which will be growing in assurance and articulation.

There are two types of exam available at Grade 4, either a **Grade Exam** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade Exam

Prepared work: candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and chord voicings.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to play either a Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation test and two Ear Tests, the first continuing to develop melodic recall and the second introducing harmonic recall. The final part of the exam comprises five questions which are designed to explore harmony, melody, rhythmic, technical and stylistic knowledge at Grade 4 level.

Exam Structure

The Grade 4 exam lasts **25 minutes** and is taken in the following order:

- **1st item** - Pieces or Technical Exercises: Candidates choose to play either pieces or technical exercises first.
- **2nd item** - Technical Exercises or Pieces: Candidates will perform the element not chosen above.
- **3rd item** - Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation: Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **4th item** - Ear Tests: Candidates respond to two aural tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- **5th item** - General Musicianship Questions: Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. At Grade 4 they are typically in the region of two to two and a half minutes in duration. The expectation and length of pieces are designed so candidates can acquire a solid understanding and execution of notation accuracy, values, evenness of sound, tone quality/consistency, technical control, articulation, expression, style awareness and sync at an early intermediate level.

Setting the Level of the Backing Track

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place along to the backing track. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

Technical Work

At Grade 4 there are three groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios and Chord Voicings.

All exercises need to be played ascending and descending, hands together (except for the extended arpeggio which needs to be played hands separately), in either straight or swung feel, as directed by the examiner.

The examiner will ask for a selection from each group and Groups A and B need to be played to a compulsory metronome click. Group C does not require a metronome and can be played at a tempo of the candidate's choice.

In this grade, all Technical Exercises need to be played from memory. Candidates will be required to close their grade books or ensure the information on the KR player is out of view.

Note: the use of any notes or any reading from the grade book during the technical exercises will result in a deduction of overall marks for this section. (See Assessment Criteria).

Any fingerings shown in the grade book are for suggestions only.

Group A: Scales

Tempo: 104 bpm

Range: Two octaves

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a quarter note.

- E major
- E major (contrary motion)
- Ab major
- Ab major (contrary motion)
- C# natural minor
- F natural minor
- C# harmonic minor
- F harmonic minor
- C phrygian
- E chromatic
- Ab chromatic

Group B: Arpeggios

Tempo: 76 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Rhythms: 3/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a dotted half note. 4/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a whole note.

- E major arpeggio
- Ab major arpeggio
- C# minor arpeggio
- F minor arpeggio
- C minor seventh arpeggio
- C minor eleventh arpeggio (right hand)
- C minor eleventh arpeggio (left hand)

C: Chord Voicing

Candidates will be asked to play two voicings of both the following chords (4 total):

- *C dominant 9*
- *C minor 7*

Candidates need to choose and perform the two voicings for each chord, from memory, from three options given for each chord in the grade book. The three options comprise right hand, left hand and both hands. In the exam, there will be no need to state which ones beforehand.

There will be no requirement to present the chosen voicings to a particular tempo or a backing / metronome click but the examiner will be looking for speed of response.

Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation

At Grade 4 candidates will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation. Both are previously unseen and examples of each are given in the grade book.

Sight Reading

Key: Ab major or E major

Tempo: 60-130 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, dotted half, half, dotted quarter, quarter, eighth notes, associated rests. Eighth/quarter note ties.

The Sight Reading test is in the form of a 8-16 bar melody, with possible geographical instruction.

At Grade 4, there is an element of improvisation within the sight reading test. Candidates are required to play all notation and create appropriate parts to chord symbols. This is a graduation towards the Quick Study pieces at Grades 6-8 which combine sight reading and improvisation as a compulsory test.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Improvisation and Interpretation

Key: Ab major or E major

Tempo: 60-130 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

The Improvisation test is in the form of a 8-16 bar chord progression with all chord symbols indicated.

Candidates are required to improvise diatonic single note melodies with right hand and chords in left hand.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Ear Tests

At Grade 4 there are two ear tests: Melodic Recall and Harmonic Recall. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Melodic Recall

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Half, quarter, eighth notes

The examiner will play a 2 bar diatonic melody in the key of C major, with a range up to a sixth.

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice. After this, candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. Both playings of the melody and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

The first note of the melody will be the root.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

Harmonic Recall

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Whole notes

The examiner will play a chord progression containing chords I, IV, V in any order or combination in the key of C major. Candidates will hear the test twice, then play the chords back to a metronome click. Both playings of the initial test and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

Note: there is no requirement for the chords to be voicing specific but the diatonic progression needs to be correct.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

General Musicianship Questions

At Grade 4 candidates will be asked five questions, one from each of the following groups:

- One question relating to harmony.
- One question relating to melody.
- One question relating to rhythms.
- One question relating to technical requirements.
- One question relating to genre.

Candidates can choose the piece on which basis the questions will be asked. It must be one of the pieces performed in the exam. The exact bars or phrases will be chosen by the examiner.

The questions will cover the following topics:

Group 1: Harmony

Identification of note intervals relative to a chord symbol. (Root/3rd/5th/7th).

Group 2: Melody

Identification of pitches within the staff. (Treble or bass clef)

Group 3: Rhythm

Whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth and associated dotted notes/rests and quarter/eighth note triplets and associated rests, up to one crotchet length.

Group 4: Technical

Fingering used to play the 3rd/5th/7th note of a chord.

Group 5: Genre

Melodic / harmonic / rhythmic devices indicative of the genre chosen.

Performance Certificate

The candidate plays five pieces in their preferred chosen order. The exam will last 22 **minutes**.

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

Grade 5

The Grade 5 Piano exam is for candidates who have been typically learning for three years or more and who have fully consolidated their intermediate level playing. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 4 and since acquired a greater use of appropriate technique, more complex rhythms, co-ordination and musical understanding. Candidates will have developed a good sense of expression, have a strong grasp of stylistic awareness, and there is also the opportunity to improvise which is now individual, assured, accurate and expressive.

There are two types of exam available at Grade 4, either a **Grade Exam** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade Exam

Prepared work: candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and chord voicings.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to play either a Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation test and there are also two Ear Tests which continue to develop melodic and harmonic recall. The final part of the exam comprises five questions which are designed to explore harmony, melody, rhythmic, technical and stylistic knowledge at Grade 5 level.

Exam Structure

The Grade 5 exam lasts **25 minutes** and is taken in the following order:

- **1st item** - Pieces or Technical Exercises: Candidates choose to play either pieces or technical exercises first.
- **2nd item** - Technical Exercises or Pieces: Candidates will perform the element not chosen above.
- **3rd item** - Sight Reading or Improvisation/Interpretation: Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **4th item** - Ear Tests: Candidates respond to two aural tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- **5th item** - General Musicianship Questions: Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. At Grade 5 they remain typically in the region of two to two and a half minutes in duration. The expectation and length of pieces are designed so candidates can acquire a growing security and execution of notation accuracy, values, evenness of sound, tone quality/consistency, technical control, articulation, expression, style awareness and sync at intermediate level.

Setting the Level of the Backing Track

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place along to the backing track. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

Technical Work

At Grade 5 there are three groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios and Chord Voicings.

All exercises need to be played ascending and descending, hands together, in either straight or swung feel, as directed by the examiner.

The examiner will ask for a selection from each group and Groups A and B need to be played to a compulsory metronome click. Group C does not require a metronome and can be played at a tempo of the candidate's choice.

In this grade, all Technical Exercises need to be played from memory. Candidates will be required to close their grade books or ensure the information on the KR player is out of view.

Note: the use of any notes or any reading from the grade book during the technical exercises will result in a deduction of overall marks for this section. (See Assessment Criteria).

Any fingerings shown in the grade book are for suggestions only.

Group A: Scales

Tempo: 126 bpm

Octave range: 3 octaves (except contrary motion scales - 2 octaves)

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a quarter note

- B major
- B major (contrary motion) (2 octaves)
- Db major
- Db major (contrary motion) (2 octaves)
- G# natural minor
- Bb natural minor
- G# harmonic minor
- Bb harmonic minor
- C locrian
- B chromatic
- Db chromatic

Group B: Arpeggios

Tempo: 88 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Octave range: 3 octaves

Rhythms: 3/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a dotted half note. 4/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a whole note.

- B major arpeggio
- Db major arpeggio
- G# minor arpeggio
- Bb minor arpeggio
- C minor seventh flat five (or C half diminished) arpeggio
- C diminished seventh arpeggio

C: Chord Voicings

Candidates will be asked to play two voicings of both the following chords (4 total):

- *C diminished 7*
- *C minor 7b5*

Candidates need to choose and perform the two voicings for each chord, from memory, from three options given for each chord in the grade book. The three options comprise right hand, left hand and both hands. In the exam, there will be no need to state which ones beforehand.

There will be no requirement to present the chosen voicings to a particular tempo or a backing / metronome click but the examiner will be looking for speed of response.

Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation

At Grade 5 candidates will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Improvisation and Interpretation. Both are previously unseen and examples of each are given in the grade book.

Sight Reading

Key: Db major or B major

Tempo: 60-130 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, dotted half, half, dotted quarter, quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes, associated rests. Eighth, quarter, sixteenth note ties.

Dynamic Markings: p-f

The Sight Reading test is in the form of a 8-16 bar melody, with possible geographical instruction.

At Grade 5, there is an element of improvisation within the sight reading test. Candidates are required to play all notation and create appropriate parts to chord symbols. This is a graduation towards the Quick Study pieces at Grades 6-8, which combine sight reading and improvisation as a compulsory test.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Improvisation and Interpretation

Key: Db major or B major

Tempo: 60-130 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

The Improvisation test is in the form of a 8-16 bar chord progression with all chord symbols indicated.

Candidates are required to improvise diatonic single note melodies with right hand and chords in left hand.

Candidates will have 90 seconds to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track to practise during the 90 seconds.

Ear Tests

At Grade 5 there are two ear tests: Melodic Recall and Harmonic Recall. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Melodic Recall

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Half, quarter, eighth notes. (Notes may be tied)

The examiner will play a 2 bar diatonic melody in the key of C major, with a range up to an octave.

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice. After this, candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. Both playings of the melody and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

The first note of the melody will be either the root or fifth.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

Harmonic Recall

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Half notes.

The examiner will play a chord progression containing chords I, II, IV, V, VI in any order or combination in the key of C major. At this grade, seventh chords are introduced. Candidates will hear the test twice, then play the chords back to a metronome click. Both playings of the initial test and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

Note: there is no requirement for the chords to be voicing specific but the diatonic progression needs to be correct.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

General Musicianship Questions

At Grade 5 candidates will be asked five questions, one from each of the following groups:

- One question relating to harmony.
- One question relating to melody.
- One question relating to rhythms.
- One question relating to technical requirements.
- One question relating to genre.

Candidates can choose the piece on which basis the questions will be asked. It must be one of the pieces performed in the exam. The exact bars or phrases will be chosen by the examiner.

The questions will cover the following topics:

Group 1: Harmony

Identification of intervals relative to a chord symbol. (Root/3rd/5th/7th/9th/11th/13th).

Group 2: Melody

Identification of pitches in the within the stave. (Treble or bass clef)

Group 3: Rhythm

Whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth and associated dotted notes/rests and quarter, eighth and sixteenth note triplets and associated rests up to one crotchet length.

Group 4: Technical

Fingering used to play the 3rd/5th/7th/9th note of a chord.

Group 5: Genre

Melodic / harmonic / rhythmic devices indicative of the genre chosen.

Performance Certificate

The candidate plays five pieces in their preferred chosen order. The exam will last 22 **minutes**.

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

Grade 6

The Grade 6 Piano exam is for candidates who have been typically learning in the region of four or more years and who have reached the first stage of advanced level playing. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 5 and have since developed appropriate technique, expressive devices, rhythmic complexity, co-ordination and musical understanding. Candidates will have an increased extent of individuality, enhanced stylistic awareness and will be able to improvise with convincing shape and articulation. There will be good understanding of form and structure with clear musical communication.

There are two types of exam available at Grade 6, either a **Grade Exam** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade Exam

Prepared work: candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios, chord voicings and stylistic studies.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to prepare and perform a Quick Study Piece which incorporates both sight reading and improvisation, and there are also two Ear Tests which continue to develop melodic and harmonic recall. The final part of the exam comprises five questions which are designed to explore harmony, melody, rhythmic, technical and stylistic knowledge at Grade 6 level.

Exam Structure

The Grade 6 exam lasts 30 minutes and is taken in the following order:

- **1st item** - Pieces or Technical Exercises: Candidates choose to play either pieces or technical exercises first.
- **2nd item** - Technical Exercises or Pieces: Candidates will perform the element not chosen above.
- **3rd item** - Quick Study Piece: Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **4th item** - Ear Tests: Candidates respond to two aural tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- **5th item** - General Musicianship Questions: Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. At Grade 6 they are longer, typically in the region of two and a half to three minutes in duration. The expectation and length of pieces are designed so candidates can confidently understand and execute notation accuracy, values, evenness of sound, tone quality/consistency, technical control, articulation, style awareness and sync at an early advanced level. There will be assured presentation of musical structure with clear, convincing expressive communication.

Setting the Level of the Backing Track

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place along to the backing track. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

Technical Work

At Grade 6 there are four groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios, Chord Voicings, Stylistic Studies.

All exercises need to be played ascending and descending, hands together, in either straight or swung feel as directed by the examiner and with either normal or legato articulation as directed by the examiner.

The examiner will ask for a selection from each group and Groups A and B need to be played to a compulsory metronome click. Group C does not require a metronome and can be played at a tempo of the candidate's choice. Group D is played to the backing track.

In this grade, all Technical Exercises (including the stylistic study) need to be played from memory. Candidates will be required to close their grade books or ensure the KR player is out of view.

Note: the use of any notes or any reading from the grade book during the technical exercises will result in a deduction of overall marks for this section. (See Assessment Criteria).

Any fingerings shown in the grade book are for suggestions only.

Group A: Scales

Tempo: 152 bpm

Octave range: 4 octaves (except contrary motion scales - 2 octaves)

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a quarter note.

- F# major
- F# major (contrary motion) (2 octaves)
- Gb major
- Gb major (contrary motion) (2 octaves)
- D# natural minor
- Eb natural minor
- D# harmonic minor
- Eb harmonic minor
- C Lydian dominant
- C altered scale
- F# chromatic

Group B: Arpeggios

Tempo: 100 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Octave range: 4 octaves (except extended arpeggios - 2 octaves).

Rhythms: 3/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a dotted half. 4/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a half note.

- F# major arpeggio
- Gb major arpeggio
- D# minor arpeggio
- Eb minor arpeggio
- C 13#11 arpeggio (2 octaves)
- C 7#5#9 arpeggio (2 octaves)

C: Chord Voicings

Candidates will be asked to play three voicings of both the following chords (6 total):

- *C dominant7#11*
- *C altered*

The three voicings required for each chord are shown in in the grade book and comprise right hand, left hand and both hands.

In the exam, there is no requirement to present the voicings to a particular tempo or a backing / metronome click, but the test is played from memory and the examiner will be looking for speed of response.

D: Stylistic Studies

Tempo: 65-240 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4, 12/8, 7/8

Candidates will need to choose and prepare one of the stylistic studies given in the grade book, from the list of styles below. The stylistic study will be played back in full to the backing track.

- Pop and Rock
- Jazz, Blues and Soul
- Film and Musical Theatre

Quick Study Piece

Key: Gb major, F# major, Eb minor, D# minor

Time Signature: Simple or compound

At Grade 6 candidates will need to prepare and perform a short Quick Study Piece (QSP) to a backing track. The QSP is in the form of a lead sheet and includes both sight-reading and the creation of improvised parts where directed.

The piece will be between 16-24 bars in length and rhythms and chords will be indicated, with written notation, articulation, expressive/dynamic markings and musical directions. At Grade 6, note lengths and rhythm values will typically be Grade 4 standard.

Candidates will need to choose the style grouping from the list below. It is acceptable if candidates wish to choose the same group as the stylistic study.

- Pop and Rock
- Jazz, Blues and Soul
- Film and Musical Theatre

First, the examiner will give the lead sheet to the candidate. Then the candidate will hear a full mix version of the piece, including both the notated parts and an example version of the improvised parts. After the full mix, candidates will have three minutes to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice, with the piano parts now absent. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in.

During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track (without piano parts) to practise during the 90 seconds.

Ear Tests

At Grade 6 there are two ear tests: Melodic Recall and Harmonic Recall. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Melodic Recall

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Half, quarter, eighth notes.

The examiner will play a 2 bar diatonic melody in the key of C major, with a range up to an octave.

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice. After this, candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. Both playings of the melody and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

The first note of the melody will be either the root or fifth.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

Harmonic Recall

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, half notes

The examiner will play a chord progression containing chords I, II, III, IV, V, VI in any order or combination in the key of C major, including seventh chords. Candidates will hear the test twice, then play the chords back to a metronome click. Both playings of the initial test and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

Note: there is no requirement for the chords to be voicing specific but the diatonic progression needs to be correct.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

General Musicianship Questions

At Grade 6 candidates will be asked five questions, one from each of the following groups:

- One question relating to harmony.
- One question relating to melody.
- One question relating to rhythms.
- One question relating to technical requirements.
- One question relating to genre.

Candidates can choose the piece on which basis the questions will be asked. It must be one of the pieces performed in the exam. The exact bars or phrases will be chosen by the examiner.

The questions will cover the following topics:

Group 1: Harmony

Appropriate modes which can be played over maj7 / min7 / dom7 / sus4 / 9sus4 / maj9 # chords.

Group 2: Melody

Interval of any note relative to the chord symbol.

Group 3: Rhythm

Whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, thirty-second notes, any dotted notes, triplets, any associated rests up to one crotchet length.

Group 4: Technical

Fingering used to play the 3rd/5th/7th/9th/11th note of a chord.

Group 5: Genre

Melodic / harmonic / rhythmic devices indicative of the genre chosen.

Performance Certificate

The candidate plays five pieces in their preferred chosen order. The exam will last 25 **minutes**.

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

Grade 7

The Grade 7 Piano exam is for candidates who have been typically learning for four to five years and have extended their advanced level playing. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 6 and developed notable security of appropriate technique, use of expressive devices, rhythmic complexity, fluency and musical understanding. Candidates will be able to improvise with conviction and personality plus demonstrate strong musical form and structure. There will be mature and authentic stylistic awareness, with developing individuality and communication.

There are two types of exam available at Grade 7, either a **Grade Exam** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade Exam

Prepared work: candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios, chord voicings and stylistic studies.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to prepare and perform a Quick Study Piece which incorporates both sight reading and improvisation, and there are also two Ear Tests which continue to develop melodic and harmonic recall. The final part of the exam comprises five questions which are designed to explore harmony, melody, rhythmic, technical and stylistic knowledge at Grade 7 level.

Exam Structure

The Grade 7 exam lasts 30 minutes and is taken in the following order:

- **1st item** - Pieces or Technical Exercises: Candidates choose to play either pieces or technical exercises first.
- **2nd item** - Technical Exercises or Pieces: Candidates will perform the element not chosen above.
- **3rd item** - Quick Study Piece: Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **4th item** - Ear Tests: Candidates respond to two aural tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- **5th item** - General Musicianship Questions: Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. At Grade 7 they are longer, typically up to three minutes in duration. The expectation and length of pieces are designed so candidates can convincingly understand and execute notation accuracy, values, evenness of sound, tone quality/consistency, technical control, articulation, style awareness and sync at an advanced level. There will be highly assured presentation of musical structure with fluent, individually shaped and highly expressive communication.

Setting the Level of the Backing Track

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place along to the backing track. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

Technical Work

At Grade 7 there are four groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios, Chord Voicings, Stylistic Studies.

All exercises need to be played ascending and descending, hands together, in either straight or swung feel as directed by the examiner and with either staccato or legato articulation as directed by the examiner.

The examiner will ask for a selection from each group and Groups A and B need to be played to a compulsory metronome click. Group C does not require a metronome and can be played at a tempo of the candidate's choice. Group D is played to the backing track.

In this grade, all Technical Exercises (including the stylistic study) need to be played from memory. Candidates will be required to close their grade books or ensure the KR player is out of view.

Note: the use of any notes or any reading from the grade book during the technical exercises will result in a deduction of overall marks for this section. (See Assessment Criteria).

Any fingerings shown in the grade book are for suggestions only.

Group A: Scales

Tempo: 160 bpm

Octave range: 4 octaves (except contrary motion scales - 2 octaves)

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a quarter/dotted half note.

- C# major
- C# major (contrary motion) (2 octaves)
- Cb major
- Cb major (contrary motion) (2 octaves)
- A# natural minor
- Ab natural minor
- A# harmonic minor
- Ab harmonic minor
- C wholetone

Group B: Arpeggios

Tempo: 112 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Octave range: 4 octaves (except extended arpeggio - 1 octave).

Rhythms: 3/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a dotted half note. 4/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a whole/half note.

- C# major arpeggio
- Cb major arpeggio
- A# minor arpeggio
- Ab minor arpeggio
- D Dim7 arpeggio
- Bb Dim7 arpeggio
- G7 arpeggio
- F7 arpeggio
- D7 arpeggio
- Bb7 arpeggio
- C9#5 arpeggio (1 octave)

C: Chord Voicings

Candidates will be asked to play three voicings of two of the following three chords (6 total). The examiner will select which two:

- C dominant 7b9
- C dominant 7#5
- C dominant 9#5

The three voicings required for each chord are shown in the grade book, comprising right hand, left hand and both hands. In the exam, there is no requirement to present the voicings to a particular tempo or a backing / metronome click, but the test is played from memory and the examiner will be looking for speed of response.

D: Stylistic Studies

Tempo: 90-140 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4, 12/8

Candidates will need to choose and prepare one of the stylistic studies given in the grade book, from the list of styles below. The stylistic study will be played back in full to the backing track.

- Pop and Rock
- Jazz, Blues and Soul
- Film and Musical Theatre

Quick Study Piece

Key: Any key

Time Signature: Simple or compound

At Grade 7 candidates will need to prepare and perform a short Quick Study Piece (QSP) to a backing track. The QSP is in the form of a lead sheet and includes both sight-reading and the creation of improvised parts where directed.

The piece will be between 14-28 bars in length and rhythms and chords will be indicated, with written notation, articulation, expressive/dynamic markings and musical directions. At Grade 7, note lengths and rhythm values will typically be Grade 5 standard.

Candidates will need to choose the style grouping from the list below. It is acceptable if candidates wish to choose the same group as the stylistic study.

- Pop and Rock
- Jazz, Blues and Soul
- Film and Musical Theatre

First, the examiner will give the lead sheet to the candidate. Then the candidate will hear a full mix version of the piece, including both the notated parts and an example version of the improvised parts. After the full mix, candidates will have three minutes to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice, with the piano parts now absent. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in.

During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track (without piano parts) to practise during the 90 seconds.

Ear Tests

At Grade 7 there are two ear tests: Melodic Recall and Harmonic Recall. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Melodic Recall

Key: C major or C minor

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Half, quarter, eighth notes.

The examiner will play a 2 bar diatonic melody in the key of either C major or C minor, with a range up to an octave.

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice. After this, candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. Both playings of the melody and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

The first note of the melody will be either the root or fifth.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

Harmonic Recall

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, half notes

The examiner will play a chord progression containing any combination of chords from the C major scale, including seventh chords. Candidates will hear the test twice, then play the chords back to a metronome click. Both playings of the initial test and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

Note: there is no requirement for the chords to be voicing specific but the diatonic progression needs to be correct.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

General Musicianship Questions

At Grade 7 candidates will be asked five questions, one from each of the following groups:

- One question relating to harmony.
- One question relating to melody.
- One question relating to rhythms.
- One question relating to technical requirements.
- One question relating to genre.

Candidates can choose the piece on which basis the questions will be asked. It must be one of the pieces performed in the exam. The exact bars or phrases will be chosen by the examiner.

The questions will cover the following topics:

Group 1: Harmony

Scales / modes which are being played.

Group 2: Melody

Intervallic construction of melodic phrases within the piece up to crotchet length.

Group 3: Rhythm

Whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, thirty-second notes, any dotted notes, triplets or any associated rests up to one minim length.

Group 4: Technical

Fingering used to play the 3rd/5th/7th/9th/11th/13th note of a chord.

Group 5: Genre

Melodic / harmonic / rhythmic devices indicative of the genre chosen.

Performance Certificate

The candidate plays five pieces in their preferred chosen order. The exam will last 25 **minutes**.

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

Grade 8

The Grade 8 Piano exam is for candidates who have been typically learning for five years or more and have now consolidated their playing to a high level. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 7 and developed heightened technique, use of expressive devices, rhythmic complexity, fluency, co-ordination and musical understanding. Candidates will be able to improvise to an advanced level with effortless assurance and personality plus demonstrate seamless musical form and structure. There will be an innate stylistic conviction and distinctive musicality with strong individuality. Communication will be commanding.

There are two types of exam available at Grade 8, either a **Grade Exam** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade Exam

Prepared work: candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios, chord voicings and stylistic studies.

Unprepared work: candidates are required to prepare and perform a Quick Study Piece which incorporates both sight reading and improvisation, and there are also two Ear Tests which continue to develop melodic and harmonic recall. The final part of the exam comprises five questions which are designed to explore harmony, melody, rhythmic, technical and stylistic knowledge at Grade 7 level.

Exam Structure

The Grade 8 exam lasts 30 minutes and is taken in the following order:

- **1st item** - Pieces or Technical Exercises: Candidates choose to play either pieces or technical exercises first.
- **2nd item** - Technical Exercises or Pieces: Candidates will perform the element not chosen above.
- **3rd item** - Quick Study Piece: Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **4th item** - Ear Tests: Candidates respond to two aural tests. One is melodic and one is harmonic.
- **5th item** - General Musicianship Questions: Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. At Grade 8 they are longer, typically in the region of three to three and a half minutes in duration. The expectation and length of pieces are designed so candidates can demonstrate complete ownership of notation accuracy, values, evenness of sound, tone quality/consistency, technical control, articulation, style awareness and sync at an advanced level. There will be instinctive presentation of musical structure with effortlessly fluent, maturely expressive communication.

Setting the Level of the Backing Track

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to play the first few bars of the first chosen piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place along to the backing track. Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

Technical Work

At Grade 8 there are four groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios, Chord Voicings, Stylistic Studies.

All exercises need to be played ascending and descending, hands together, in either straight or swung feel as directed by the examiner and with either staccato or legato articulation as directed by the examiner.

The examiner will ask for a selection from each group and Groups A and B need to be played to a compulsory metronome click. Group C does not require a metronome and can be played at a tempo of the candidate's choice. Group D is played to the backing track.

In this grade, all Technical Exercises (including the stylistic study) need to be played from memory. Candidates will be required to close their grade books or ensure the KR player is out of view.

Note: the use of any notes or any reading from the grade book during the technical exercises will result in a deduction of overall marks for this section. (See Assessment Criteria).

Any fingerings shown in the grade book are for suggestions only.

Group A: Scales

Tempo: 176 bpm

Octave range: 4 octaves

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a whole note.

- C half-whole diminished
- C whole-half diminished

Group B: Arpeggios

Tempo: 132 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Octave range: 4 octaves (except extended arpeggio shown below, 1 octave)

Rhythms: 3/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a dotted half note. 4/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a whole note.

- A7 arpeggio
- Eb7 arpeggio
- E7 arpeggio
- Ab7 arpeggio
- B7 arpeggio
- Db7 arpeggio
- F#7 arpeggio
- Gb7 arpeggio
- C13b9#11 arpeggio (1 octave)

Additional Scale

Candidates will be asked to perform **one** additional scale from any of the Group A exercises in any of the previous grades, selected by the examiner. The scale will need to be played ascending and descending, in eighth notes and hands together. The examiner will confirm the scale, number of octaves, whether straight or swung, tempo and time signature.

Additional Arpeggio

Candidates will be asked to perform **one** additional arpeggio from any of the Group B exercises in any of the previous grades, selected by the examiner. The scale will need to be played ascending and descending, in eighth notes and hands together. The examiner will confirm the scale, number of octaves, whether straight or swung, tempo and time signature.

C: Chord Voicings

Candidates will be asked to play three voicings of both the following chords (6 total):

- *C dominant 13b9*
- *C diminished major 7*

The three voicings required for each chord are shown in in the grade book and comprise right hand, left hand and both hands.

In the exam, there is no requirement to present the voicings to a particular tempo or a backing / metronome click, but the test is played from memory and the examiner will be looking for speed of response.

D: Stylistic Studies

Tempo: 75-170 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Candidates will need to choose and prepare one of the stylistic studies given in the grade book, from the list of styles below. The stylistic study will be played back in full to the backing track.

- Pop and Rock
- Jazz, Blues and Soul
- Film and Musical Theatre

Quick Study Piece

Key: Any key

Time Signature: Simple or compound

At Grade 8 candidates will need to prepare and perform a short Quick Study Piece (QSP) to a backing track. The QSP is in the form of a lead sheet and includes both sight-reading and the creation of improvised parts where directed.

The piece will be between 14-28 bars in length and rhythms and chords will be indicated, with written notation, articulation, expressive/dynamic markings and musical directions. At Grade 8, note lengths and rhythm values will typically be Grade 6 standard.

Candidates will need to choose the style grouping from the list below. It is acceptable if candidates wish to choose the same group as the stylistic study.

- Pop and Rock
- Jazz, Blues and Soul
- Film and Musical Theatre

First, the examiner will give the lead sheet to the candidate. Then the candidate will hear a full mix version of the piece, including both the notated parts and an example version of the improvised parts. After the full mix, candidates will have three minutes to practise after which the examiner will play the backing track twice, with the piano parts now absent. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in.

During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

The backing track is continuous so once the first playthrough has finished the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Note: it is acceptable for candidates to also ask for additional playing(s) of the backing track (without piano parts) to practise during the 90 seconds.

Ear Tests

At Grade 8 there are two ear tests: Melodic Recall and Harmonic Recall. Both are previously unseen and an example of each is shown in the grade book.

Melodic Recall

Key: C major, C natural minor or C harmonic minor

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Half, quarter, eighth notes.

The examiner will play a 2 bar diatonic melody in the key of either C major, C natural minor or C harmonic minor, with a range up to an octave.

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice. After this, candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. Both playings of the melody and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

The first note of the melody will be either the root, third or fifth.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

Harmonic Recall

Key: C major or C minor

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Whole, half notes

The examiner will play a chord progression containing any combination of chords from either the C major or C minor scale, including seventh chords. Candidates will hear the test twice, then play the chords back to a metronome click. Both playings of the initial test and the metronome backing for the exam version will be preceded by a one bar count-in.

Note: there is no requirement for the chords to be voicing specific but the diatonic progression needs to be correct.

It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

Note: the 10 seconds is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in for the exam version may begin while candidates are still practising.

General Musicianship Questions

At Grade 8 candidates will be asked five questions, one from each of the following groups:

- One question relating to harmony.
- One question relating to melody.
- One question relating to rhythms.
- One question relating to technical requirements.
- One question relating to genre.

Candidates can choose the piece on which basis the questions will be asked. It must be one of the pieces performed in the exam. The exact bars or phrases will be chosen by the examiner.

The questions will cover the following topics:

Group 1: Harmony

Scales / modes which are being played.

Group 2: Melody

Intervallic construction of melodic phrases within the piece up to crotchet length.

Group 3: Rhythm

Whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, thirty-second notes, any dotted notes, triplets or any associated rests up to one bar length.

Group 4: Technical

Fingering required to execute voice leading between two consecutive chord voicings.

Group 5: Genre

Melodic / harmonic / rhythmic devices indicative of the genre chosen.

Performance Certificate

The candidate plays five pieces in their preferred chosen order. The exam will last 28 **minutes**.

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

Assessment Criteria

Performance Pieces

The following Performance Piece criteria applies to both Full Grade and Performance Certificate exams.

	Debut - Grade 3	Grade 4 - Grade 5	Grade 6 - Grade 8
Distinction 18-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very secure basic techniques • Strong timing / pulse • Strong use of rhythm / duration and phrasing • Strong sync / continuity • Secure notation accuracy. • Good use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Confident presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluent techniques • Exact timing / pulse • Musical use of rhythm / duration and phrasing • Very good sync/continuity • Notation accuracy detailed throughout • Very good use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Highly confident • High degree of stylistic awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effortless techniques • Distinctively musical timing / pulse, use of rhythm / duration and phrasing • Seamless sync / continuity • Notation accuracy consistently detailed throughout • Musical articulation, expression, use of dynamics throughout • Highly assured presentation • Innate level of style awareness • Comprehensive understanding of complete musical structure • Convincing communication
Merit 15-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure basic techniques • Almost always secure timing / pulse • Almost always secure use of rhythm / duration and phrasing • Secure sync / continuity, occasional slip • Mostly consistent notation accuracy observed • Fair use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Largely confident presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure techniques • Secure timing / pulse • Secure use of rhythm / duration and phrasing • Accurate sync / continuity • Notation accuracy almost always very detailed. Small slips • Good use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Confident presentation • Fair degree of stylistic awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly secure techniques • Consistently secure timing / pulse • Consistently secure use of rhythm / duration and phrasing • Strong sync / continuity • Strong notation accuracy • Very good use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Assured presentation • Secure level of style awareness • Mostly fluent understanding of complete musical structure • Largely convincing communication
Pass 12-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally secure basic techniques • Mainly consistent, secure timing / pulse, with slips • Generally secure use of rhythm / duration and phrasing • Mainly secure sync / continuity, with slips requiring re-alignment • Notation slips / some small deviations / occasional simplification • Evidence of articulation, expression and dynamics • Mainly confident presentation with slips. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally secure techniques • Generally consistent, secure timing / pulse, with some slips • Largely secure use of rhythm / duration and phrasing • Generally secure sync / continuity, with some slips requiring re-alignment • Notation slips / some small deviations • Some use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Generally confident presentation with minor slips. • Evidence of stylistic awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure techniques for the most part • Largely consistent, secure timing / pulse, with minor slips • Secure use of rhythm / duration and phrasing for the most part • Mostly secure sync / continuity, with occasional slips requiring re-alignment • Notation almost always accurately observed • Clear use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Generally assured with minor slips • Some style awareness • Clear understanding of complete musical structure • Secure communication

Below Pass 1 6-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecure basic techniques • Inconsistent timing / pulse • Insecurity of rhythmic control • Insecure sync / continuity • Insecure notation accuracy • No evidence of articulation, expression or dynamics • Largely hesitant presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecure techniques • Numerous timing / pulse errors • Unsatisfactory rhythmic control • Sync / continuity deviations. • A number of notation accuracy deviations / simplifications • Limited / no evidence of articulation, expression or dynamics • Generally hesitant presentation • Limited / no stylistic awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecure techniques • Timing / pulse errors • Errors / insecure rhythmic control • Some sync/continuity deviation • Accumulated notation accuracy deviations / simplifications • Limited evidence of articulation expression or dynamics • Hesitant, tentative presentation • Limited style awareness • Limited / insecure understanding of complete musical structure • Insecure / unconvincing communication
Below Pass 2 0-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly insecure • Incomplete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly insecure • Incomplete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly insecure • Incomplete

Technical Exercises

Debut - 8		
Distinction 13-15	<p><u>Mark Weighting Guidance</u></p> <p>Grade Debut-5 Scales: c.6 marks Arpeggios: c.6 marks Chord Voicings: c.3 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluent, musical level of technical / notation accuracy • Exact sense of pulse • Always prompt responses • Excellent memory recall
Merit 11-12	<p>Grade 6-8 Scales: c.2 marks Arpeggios: c.2 marks Chord Voicings: c.2 marks Stylistic Study: c.9 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost always technically accurate • Strong sense of pulse • Generally prompt responses • Strong memory recall
Pass 9-10	<p><u>Memory Note</u></p> <p><i>If a candidate uses any notes or reads from the grade book during the technical exercise, this will result in the following deductions from the overall technical exercises mark:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally technically accurate • Largely consistent tempo • Some prompt responses • Reliable memory recall, minor slips promptly recovered.
Below Pass 1 6-8	<p>Debut-Grade 3: Deduct 2 marks. Grade 4-8: Deduct up to 5 marks, according to extent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical errors • Inconsistent / incorrect tempo • Hesitant responses • Memory lapses evident • Not all tests attempted.
Below Pass 2 0-5	<p><i>Credit will be given for the level of musicality shown when presenting all technical responses.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly insecure • Not all tests attempted.

	Sight Reading Debut - Grade 5	Improv & Interp Debut - Grade 5	Quick Study Piece Grade 6-8
Distinction 9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluent, musical level of technical / notation accuracy • Exact pulse / sync • Clear use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Highly confident presentation • Strong use of appropriate melody / harmony / rhythmic shaping in improvisation (Grades 4-5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assured melodic and harmonic accuracy. • Strong use of rhythms and phrasing • Exact pulse / sync • Good use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Highly confident presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluent, musical level of technical / notation accuracy • Very strong sense of accurate melody / harmony / rhythmic shaping in improvisation • Strong sense of style awareness • Exact pulse / sync • Very good use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Highly assured presentation
Merit 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure technical / notation accuracy • Secure timing / pulse for the very most part • Some use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Confident presentation • Secure use of appropriate melody / harmony / rhythmic shaping in improvisation (Grades 4-5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure harmonic / melodic accuracy • Secure use of rhythms and phrasing • Secure pulse / sync for the very most part • Some good use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Confident presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure technical / notation accuracy • Secure use of appropriate melody / harmony / rhythmic shaping in improvisation • Clear style awareness • Accurate pulse / sync • Good use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Mostly assured presentation
Pass 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally secure technical / notation accuracy, with slips • Generally accurate pulse / sync, with slips • Evidence of articulation, expression and dynamics • Mainly confident presentation with slips. • Some use of appropriate melody / harmony / rhythmic shaping in improvisation (Grades 4-5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General harmonic / melodic accuracy • Generally secure use of rhythms and phrasing • Generally accurate pulse / sync, with slips • Evidence of articulation, expression and dynamics • Mainly confident presentation with slips. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally secure technical / notation accuracy, with slips • Mostly secure use of appropriate melody / harmony / rhythmic shaping in improvisation • Satisfactory style awareness • Largely accurate pulse / sync, with slips • Some good use of articulation, expression and dynamics • Generally assured with slips
Below Pass 1 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical / notation insecurity • Inconsistent pulse / sync. • No evidence of articulation, expression or use of dynamics • Hesitant presentation • Limited / no use of appropriate melody, harmony, rhythmic shaping in improv. (Grades 4-5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited / no harmonic, melodic accuracy • Inconsistent / insecure use of rhythms and phrasing • Inconsistent pulse / sync. • No evidence of articulation, expression or use of dynamics • Hesitant presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical / notation errors • Limited use of appropriate melody, harmony, rhythmic shaping in improv. • Limited / no style awareness • Inconsistent pulse / sync. • Limited / no evidence of effective articulation, expression or use of dynamics • Hesitant, tentative presentation
Below Pass 2 0-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly insecure • Incomplete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly insecure • Incomplete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly insecure • Incomplete.

	Debut	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4-8
Distinction 9-10	Melodic recall (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Immediate recall Chord Recognition (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Immediate recall 	Melodic recall (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Immediate recall Chord Recognition (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Immediate recall 	Melodic recall (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Strong sync Chord Recognition (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Immediate recall 	Melodic recall (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Strong sync Chord Recognition (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Immediate recall 	Melodic recall: (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Strong sync Harmony recall (5 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Strong sync
Merit 7-8	Melodic recall (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Near immediate Chord Recognition (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Prompt recall 	Melodic recall (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Near immediate Chord Recognition (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Prompt recall 	Melodic recall (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 error • Close sync Chord Recognition (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 error • Prompt recall 	Melodic recall (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 errors • Close sync Chord Recognition (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Prompt recall 	Melodic recall (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 errors • Close sync Harmony recall (4 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 error • Close sync
Pass 6	Melodic recall (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Generally prompt Chord Recognition (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Generally prompt 	Melodic recall (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Generally prompt Chord Recognition (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Generally prompt 	Melodic recall (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 errors • Generally sync'd Chord Recognition (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 errors • Generally prompt 	Melodic recall (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 errors • Generally sync'd Chord Recognition (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct • Generally prompt 	Melodic recall (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 errors • Generally sync'd Harmony recall (3 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 errors • Generally sync'd
Below Pass 1 3-5	Melodic recall (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorrect Chord Recognition (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both incorrect 	Melodic recall (2 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 correct Chord Recognition (2 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 correct 	Melodic recall (1-2 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3+ errors • Insecure sync Chord Recognition (1-2 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3+ errors 	Melodic recall (1-2 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4+ errors • Insecure sync Chord Recognition (2 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 correct 	Melodic recall (1-2 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3+ errors • Insecure sync Harmony recall (1-2 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3+ errors • Insecure sync
Below Pass 2 0-2	Melodic recall (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response Chord Recognition (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response 	Melodic recall (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response • Both incorrect Chord Recognition (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response • Both incorrect 	Melodic recall (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response Chord Recognition (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response 	Melodic recall (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response Chord Recognition (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response • Both incorrect 	Melodic recall (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response Harmony recall (0 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response