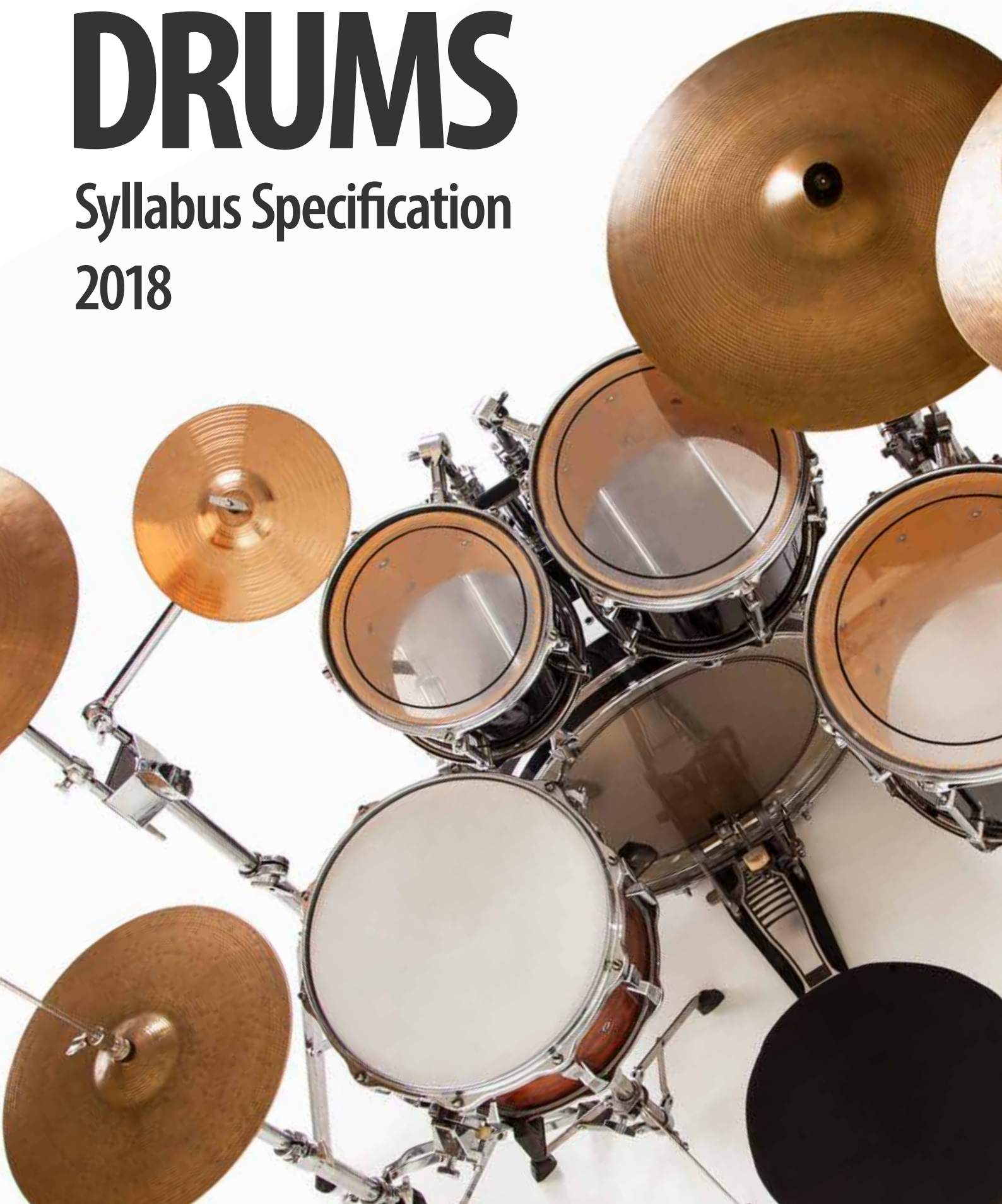


DRUMS

Syllabus Specification
2018





Graded Examinations in Popular Music Performance

DRUMS

Syllabus Specification

SEPTEMBER 2018

Revised: 31 May 2019 (see final page for revision notes)

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PREFACE

FOREWORD

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

This specification guide serves three purposes:

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

The Rockschoo! website www.rslawards.com has detailed information on all aspects of our examinations, including examination regulations, detailed marking schemes and assessment criteria as well as notated and audio examples to help you prepare for the examination.

This Syllabus Guide covers the following examinations:

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

The Value Of RSL Qualifications

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

RSL & UCAS

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

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

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

Period Of Operation

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

Examinations

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

GRADE EXAMINATIONS

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

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

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

PREPARED WORK
5 Performance Pieces: Debut – Grade 8

OVERVIEW

Unit Overview – Graded Examinations in Popular Music Performance

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

Assessment Overview

ASSESSMENT	
Form of Assessment	All assessments are carried out by external examiners. Candidates are required to carry out a combination of practical tasks and underpinning theoretical assessment.
Unit Format	Unit specifications contain the title, unit code, credit level, credit value, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, grade descriptor, and types of evidence required for the unit.
Bands of Assessment	There are four bands of assessment (distinction, merit, pass and unclassified) for the qualification as a whole.
Quality Assurance	Quality Assurance ensures that all assessments are carried out to the same standard by objective sampling and re-assessment of candidates' work. A team of external examiners is appointed, trained and standardised by RSL.

QUALIFICATION SUMMARY

Aims & Broad Objectives

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

RSL's graded qualifications motivate and encourage candidates of all ages and levels through a system of progressive mastery, enabling candidates to develop and enhance skills, knowledge and understanding in a safe and consistent way. The qualifications are beneficial for candidates wishing to progress at their own pace through smaller steps of achievement.

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

Progression

Graded qualifications provide a flexible progression route for candidates. They are a positive means of determining progress and enable candidates to learn the necessary techniques to gain entry to FE and HE courses. Graded qualifications operate according to a well-established methodology of 'progressive mastery'. They allow candidates to be tested in discrete stages in the development of a wide range of skills. They tend to be more rigorous than other types of exams and for that reason industry is confident that achievement at the highest level gained by candidates of graded qualifications will have the skills necessary to work in other areas of the business.

Qualification Structure

A graded qualification consists of a range of both practical and knowledge-based elements which are based on detailed requirements outlined in the relevant syllabus. Therefore, requirements for each grade will be set out in detail in the Unit Specifications below (page 18 and onwards) and the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each unit will require knowledge, skills and understanding of these syllabus requirements to be demonstrated at the grade entered.

Entry Requirements

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

For further details on exam dates and fees and to apply for your music performance grades please visit the RSL website at www.rslawards.com

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Assessment Methodology

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

Technical tests covering knowledge of:

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

Performance Pieces

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

Unseen Tests

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

Assessment Timings

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

GRADE EXAMS

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

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

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

Marking Schemes

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

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

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

Examination Structure

The examination structure for the grade examinations is shown below:

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

General Notes

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

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

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

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

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

The Examiner will not facilitate page turning for candidates. Candidates are allowed to photocopy relevant sheet music as necessary to alleviate page turns but all copied materials must be handed into the Examiner at the end of the examination. All tempo markings are to be observed unless otherwise stated. Each piece is designed carefully to achieve a number of outcomes appropriate for the grade.

Expectations of Knowledge, Skills and Understanding

The graded examination system is one based on the principle of 'progressive mastery': each step in the exam chain demonstrates learning, progression and skills in incremental steps. Successful learning is characterised by a mastery of the fundamentals of the skills demanded in each grade.

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

Quality Assurance

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

CANDIDATE ACCESS AND REGISTRATION

Access and Registration

The qualifications will:

- be available to everyone who is capable of reaching the required standards
- be free from any barriers that restrict access and progression
- offer equal opportunities for all wishing to access the qualifications

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

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

Recommended Prior Learning

Learners are not required to have any prior learning for these qualifications. However, learners should ensure that they are aware of the requirements and expectations of each grade prior to entering for an assessment.

FURTHER INFORMATION & CONTACT

Guidance on Free Choice Pieces

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

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

Free choice pieces must demonstrate a comparable level of technical and musical demand to the pieces given in the set selections in the grade books which can be referred to as an indication of appropriate level.

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

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

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

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

Complaints & Appeals

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

Equal Opportunities

RSL's Equal Opportunities policy can be found on the RSL website www.rslawards.com

Contacts for Help & Support

All correspondence should be directed to:

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Ground Floor
7 High Street
Teddington
Middlesex
TW11 8EE

Or info@rslawards.com

UNIT SPECIFICATIONS

DEBUT

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

Title	RSL Entry Level Award in Popular Music Performance: Debut (Entry 3)
Qualification No.	501/0370/2
Level	Entry Level 3
Credit Value	4
Guided Learning Hours	8

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING

THE CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Perform music in popular styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on the instrument through responding to set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests

At Debut level this will mean showing the following level of knowledge, skills and understanding:

PREPARED WORK (PERFORMANCE PIECES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES)

- Basic techniques
- Evident rhythm and pulse
- Accuracy of notation
- Synchronisation to backing track or click
- Confident presentation/prompt responses

UNPREPARED WORK (SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION, EAR TESTS, GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS)

- Notation accuracy
- Secure rhythm/pulse
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Responses showing understanding at this grade

GRADE EXAM

PREPARED WORK

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

UNPREPARED WORK

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

PIECES

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

SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

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

TECHNICAL WORK

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

GROUP A: SINGLE STROKES

- In eighth notes

GROUP B: DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth notes

GROUP C: PARADIDDLES

- In eighth notes

GROUP D: FILL

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

UNSEEN TESTS

SIGHT READING

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

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

EAR TESTS

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

Fill Playback & Recognition

Tempo: 70bpm

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

Groove Recall

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

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

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE:

In Debut you will be asked to identify:

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

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE:

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

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

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

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

www.rslawards.com

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

GRADING DESCRIPTORS

DEBUT		
PREPARED WORK		
Band	Mark Range	Grading Criteria
Distinction	Pieces 18–20 Technical exercises 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and secure basic techniques ■ Consistent rhythm / pulse ■ Notation accuracy detailed throughout ■ Consistent sync ■ Highly confident and assured presentation
Merit	Pieces 15–17 Technical exercises 11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure basic techniques overall ■ Secure rhythm / pulse overall ■ Notation accuracy observed overall ■ Mainly synchronised ■ Confident presentation overall
Pass	Pieces 12–14 Technical exercises 9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic techniques evident ■ Rhythm / pulse evident ■ Notation accuracy evident ■ Sync evident ■ Some confidence in presentation
Below Pass 1	Pieces 6–11 Technical exercises 4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic techniques not shown ■ Rhythm/pulse largely inaccurate ■ Notation accuracy largely inaccurate ■ Sync not achieved ■ Unsure in presentation
Below Pass 2	Pieces 0–5 Technical exercises 0–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incomplete performance ■ No attempt

[Continued on next page]

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

GRADE 1

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

Title	RSL Level 1 Award in Popular Music Performance: Grade 1
Qualification No.	501/0391/X
Level	1
Credit Value	6
Guided Learning Hours	12

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING

THE CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Perform music in popular styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on the instrument through responding to set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests

At Grade 1 level this will mean showing the following level of knowledge, skills and understanding:

PREPARED WORK (PERFORMANCE PIECES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES)

- Basic techniques
- Evident rhythm and pulse
- Accuracy of notation
- Synchronisation to backing track or click
- Confident presentation/prompt responses

UNPREPARED WORK (SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION, EAR TESTS, GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS)

- Notation accuracy
- Secure rhythm/pulse
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Responses showing understanding at this grade

GRADE EXAM

PREPARED WORK

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

UNPREPARED WORK:

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

PIECES

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

SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

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

TECHNICAL WORK

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

GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth notes alternate bars

GROUP B: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- In 16th notes alternate bars

GROUP C: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddle in 16th notes

GROUP D: FILL

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

UNSEEN TESTS

SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

SIGHT READING

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Tempo: 70–80 bpm

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

EAR TESTS

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

Fill Playback & Recognition

Tempo: 70 bpm

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

Groove Recall

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

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

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 1 you will be asked to identify:

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

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 1 you will be asked to identify:

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

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

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

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

www.rslawards.com

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

GRADING DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 1		
PREPARED WORK		
Band	Mark Range	Grading Criteria
Distinction	Pieces 18–20 Technical exercises 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and secure basic techniques ■ Consistent rhythm / pulse ■ Notation accuracy detailed throughout ■ Consistent sync ■ Highly confident and assured presentation
Merit	Pieces 15–17 Technical exercises 11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure basic techniques overall ■ Secure rhythm / pulse overall ■ Notation accuracy observed overall ■ Mainly synchronised ■ Confident presentation overall
Pass	Pieces 12–14 Technical exercises 9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic techniques evident ■ Rhythm / pulse evident ■ Notation accuracy evident ■ Sync evident ■ Some confidence in presentation
Below Pass 1	Pieces 6–11 Technical exercises 4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic techniques not shown ■ Rhythm/pulse largely inaccurate ■ Notation accuracy largely inaccurate ■ Sync not achieved ■ Unsure in presentation
Below Pass 2	Pieces 0–5 Technical exercises 0–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incomplete performance ■ No attempt

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

GRADE 2

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

Title	RSL Level1 Award in Popular Music Performance: Grade 2
Qualification No.	501/0646/6
Level	1
Credit Value	9
Guided Learning Hours	18

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING

THE CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Perform music in popular styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on the instrument through responding to set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests

At Grade 2 level this will mean showing the following level of knowledge, skills and understanding:

PREPARED WORK (PERFORMANCE PIECES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES)

- Basic techniques
- Evident rhythm and pulse
- Accuracy of notation
- Synchronisation to backing track or click
- Confident presentation/prompt responses

UNPREPARED WORK (SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION, EAR TESTS, GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS)

- Notation accuracy
- Secure rhythm/pulse
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Responses showing understanding at this grade

GRADE EXAM

PREPARED WORK:

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

UNPREPARED WORK:

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

PIECES

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

SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

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

TECHNICAL WORK

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

GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth and 16th notes alternate bars

GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddles in 16th notes using the whole kit

GROUP C: FLAMS

- In quarter notes

GROUP D: TRIPLETS

- In eighth notes with alternate sticking

GROUP E: FILL

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

UNSEEN TESTS

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

SIGHT READING

Tempo: 70 bpm

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

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Tempo: 70–80 bpm

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

EAR TESTS

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

Fill Playback & Recognition

Tempo: 70 bpm

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

Groove Recall

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

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

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 2 you will be asked to identify:

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

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 2 you will be asked to identify:

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

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

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

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

www.rslawards.com

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

GRADING DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 2		
PREPARED WORK		
Band	Mark Range	Grading Criteria
Distinction	Pieces 18–20 Technical exercises 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and secure basic techniques ■ Consistent rhythm / pulse ■ Notation accuracy detailed throughout ■ Consistent sync ■ Highly confident and assured presentation
Merit	Pieces 15–17 Technical exercises 11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure basic techniques overall ■ Secure rhythm / pulse overall ■ Notation accuracy observed overall ■ Mainly synchronised ■ Confident presentation overall
Pass	Pieces 12–14 Technical exercises 9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic techniques evident ■ Rhythm / pulse evident ■ Notation accuracy evident ■ Sync evident ■ Some confidence in presentation
Below Pass 1	Pieces 6–11 Technical exercises 4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic techniques not shown ■ Rhythm/pulse largely inaccurate ■ Notation accuracy largely inaccurate ■ Sync not achieved ■ Unsure in presentation
Below Pass 2	Pieces 0–5 Technical exercises 0–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incomplete performance ■ No attempt

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

GRADE 3

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

Title	RSL Level1 Award in Popular Music Performance: Grade 3
Qualification No.	501/0647/8
Level	1
Credit Value	12
Guided Learning Hours	18

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING

THE CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Perform music in popular styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on the instrument through responding to set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests

At Grade 3 level this will mean showing the following level of knowledge, skills and understanding:

PREPARED WORK (PERFORMANCE PIECES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES)

- Secure techniques
- Secure rhythm and pulse
- Notation accuracy
- Stylistic direction
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- A sense of stylistic performance
- Prompt responses

UNPREPARED WORK (SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION, EAR TESTS, GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS)

- Notation accuracy
- Secure rhythm/pulse
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Responses showing understanding at this grade

GRADE EXAM

PREPARED WORK:

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

UNPREPARED WORK:

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

PIECES

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

SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

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

TECHNICAL WORK

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

GROUP A: SINGLE STROKES

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

GROUP B: DOUBLE STROKES

- In eighth and 16th notes using snare and toms

GROUP C: PARADIDDLES

- Single paradiddles in 16th notes using the whole kit

GROUP D: FLAMS & DRAGS

- In quarter notes

GROUP E: TRIPLETS

- In eighth notes with accents on snare and toms

GROUP F: FILL

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

UNSEEN TESTS

SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

SIGHT READING

Tempo: 70–80 bpm

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

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Tempo: 80–100 bpm

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

EAR TESTS

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

FILL PLAYBACK & RECOGNITION

Tempo: 70 bpm

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

GROOVE RECALL

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

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

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 3 you will be asked to identify:

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

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 3 you will be asked to identify:

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

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

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

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

www.rslawards.com

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

GRADING DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 3		
PREPARED WORK		
Band	Mark Range	Grading Criteria
Distinction	Pieces 18–20 Technical exercises 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and secure techniques ■ Consistent rhythm / pulse ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy detailed throughout ■ Stylistic direction detailed throughout ■ Convincing and stylistic solo / improv ■ Consistent sync ■ Highly confident and assured stylistic performance
Merit	Pieces 15–17 Technical exercises 11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure techniques overall ■ Secure rhythm / pulse overall ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy observed overall ■ Stylistic direction observed overall ■ Stylistic solo / improv overall ■ Mainly synchronised ■ A sense of stylistic performance overall
Pass	Pieces 12–14 Technical exercises 9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some secure techniques evident ■ Generally secure rhythm / pulse ■ Some notation / harmonic accuracy evident ■ Some stylistic direction evident ■ Adequate solo / improv ■ Sync evident ■ Some sense of stylistic performance
Below Pass 1	Pieces 6–11 Technical exercises 4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Techniques hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Rhythm/pulse mostly inaccurate ■ Notation/harmonic work hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Stylistic direction hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Solo/improv limited in stylistic understanding ■ Sync largely not achieved ■ Sense of stylistic performance not achieved
Below Pass 2	Pieces 0–5 Technical exercises 0–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incomplete performance ■ No attempt

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

GRADE 4

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

Title	RSL Level 2 Certificate in Popular Music Performance: Grade 4
Qualification No.	501/0389/1
Level	2
Credit Value	15
Guided Learning Hours	24

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING

THE CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Perform music in popular styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on the instrument through responding to set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests

At Grade 4 level this will mean showing the following level of knowledge, skills and understanding:

PREPARED WORK (PERFORMANCE PIECES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES)

- Secure techniques
- Secure rhythm and pulse
- Notation accuracy
- Stylistic direction
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- A sense of stylistic performance
- Prompt responses

UNPREPARED WORK (SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION, EAR TESTS, GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS)

- Notation accuracy
- Secure rhythm/pulse
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Responses showing understanding at this grade

GRADE EXAM

PREPARED WORK:

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

UNPREPARED WORK:

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

PIECES

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

SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

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

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

TECHNICAL WORK

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

GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

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

GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

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

GROUP C: FLAMS AND RUFFS

- Flam tap and ruffs in quarter notes

GROUP D: HANDS AND FEET PATTERNS

- Four patterns

GROUP E: FILL

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

UNSEEN TESTS

SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

SIGHT READING

Tempo: 80–90 bpm

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

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Tempo: 80–120 bpm

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

EAR TESTS

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

Fill Playback & Recognition

Tempo: 70 bpm

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

Groove Recall

Tempo: 80–120 bpm

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

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

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

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

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

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 4 you will be asked to identify:

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

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

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

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

www.rslawards.com

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

GRADING DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 4		
PREPARED WORK		
Band	Mark Range	Grading Criteria
Distinction	Pieces 18–20 Technical exercises 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and secure techniques ■ Consistent rhythm / pulse ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy detailed throughout ■ Stylistic direction detailed throughout ■ Convincing and stylistic solo / improv ■ Consistent sync ■ Highly confident and assured stylistic performance
Merit	Pieces 15–17 Technical exercises 11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure techniques overall ■ Secure rhythm / pulse overall ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy observed overall ■ Stylistic direction observed overall ■ Stylistic solo / improv overall ■ Mainly synchronised ■ A sense of stylistic performance overall
Pass	Pieces 12–14 Technical exercises 9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some secure techniques evident ■ Generally secure rhythm / pulse ■ Some notation / harmonic accuracy evident ■ Some stylistic direction evident ■ Adequate solo / improv ■ Sync evident ■ Some sense of stylistic performance
Below Pass 1	Pieces 6–11 Technical exercises 4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Techniques hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Rhythm/pulse mostly inaccurate ■ Notation/harmonic work hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Stylistic direction hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Solo/improv limited in stylistic understanding ■ Sync largely not achieved ■ Sense of stylistic performance not achieved
Below Pass 2	Pieces 0–5 Technical exercises 0–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incomplete performance ■ No attempt

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

GRADE 5

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

Title	RSL Level 2 Certificate in Popular Music Performance: Grade 5
Qualification No.	501/0643/0
Level	2
Credit Value	18
Guided Learning Hours	24

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING

THE CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Perform music in popular styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on the instrument through responding to set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests

At Grade 5 level this will mean showing the following level of knowledge, skills and understanding:

PREPARED WORK (PERFORMANCE PIECES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES)

- Secure techniques
- Secure rhythm and pulse
- Notation accuracy
- Stylistic direction
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- A sense of stylistic performance
- Prompt responses

UNPREPARED WORK (SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION, EAR TESTS, GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS)

- Notation accuracy
- Secure rhythm/pulse
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Responses showing understanding at this grade

GRADE EXAM

PREPARED WORK:

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

UNPREPARED WORK:

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

PIECES

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

SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

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

TECHNICAL WORK

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

GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

GROUP C: FLAMS AND RUFFS

Tempo: 80 bpm

- Flam accent and single drag tap

GROUP D: ROLLS

Tempo: 75 bpm

- Five stroke roll phrase

GROUP E: HANDS AND FEET PATTERNS

Tempo: 90 bpm

- Four patterns

GROUP F: FILL

Tempo: 90 bpm

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

UNSEEN TESTS

SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

SIGHT READING

Tempo: 80–120 bpm

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

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Tempo: 80–120 bpm

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

EAR TESTS

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

Fill Playback & Recognition

Tempo: 70 bpm

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

Groove Recall

Tempo: 80–120 bpm

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

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

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

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

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

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 5 you will be asked to identify:

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

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

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

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

www.rslawards.com

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

GRADING DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 5		
PREPARED WORK		
Band	Mark Range	Grading Criteria
Distinction	Pieces 18–20 Technical exercises 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and secure techniques ■ Consistent rhythm / pulse ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy detailed throughout ■ Stylistic direction detailed throughout ■ Convincing and stylistic solo / improv ■ Consistent sync ■ Highly confident and assured stylistic performance
Merit	Pieces 15–17 Technical exercises 11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure techniques overall ■ Secure rhythm / pulse overall ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy observed overall ■ Stylistic direction observed overall ■ Stylistic solo / improv overall ■ Mainly synchronised ■ A sense of stylistic performance overall
Pass	Pieces 12–14 Technical exercises 9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some secure techniques evident ■ Generally secure rhythm / pulse ■ Some notation / harmonic accuracy evident ■ Some stylistic direction evident ■ Adequate solo / improv ■ Sync evident ■ Some sense of stylistic performance
Below Pass 1	Pieces 6–11 Technical exercises 4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Techniques hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Rhythm/pulse mostly inaccurate ■ Notation/harmonic work hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Stylistic direction hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Solo/improv limited in stylistic understanding ■ Sync largely not achieved ■ Sense of stylistic performance not achieved
Below Pass 2	Pieces 0–5 Technical exercises 0–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incomplete performance ■ No attempt

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

GRADE 6

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

Title	RSL Level 3 Certificate in Popular Music Performance: Grade 6
Qualification No.	501/0390/8
Level	3
Credit Value	22
Guided Learning Hours	36

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING

THE CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Perform music in popular styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on the instrument through responding to set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests

At Grade 6 level this will mean showing the following level of knowledge, skills and understanding:

PREPARED WORK (PERFORMANCE PIECES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES)

- Advanced techniques
- Secure rhythm and pulse
- Notation accuracy
- Stylistic direction
- Advanced soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Understanding of musical structure
- A sense of communication through stylistic performance
- Prompt responses

UNPREPARED WORK (SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION, EAR TESTS, GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS)

- Notation accuracy
- Secure rhythm/pulse
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Responses showing understanding at this grade

GRADE EXAM

PREPARED WORK:

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

UNPREPARED WORK:

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

PIECES

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

SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

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

TECHNICAL WORK

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

GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

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

GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

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

GROUP C: RATAMACUES

- Single ratamacue

GROUP D: ROLLS

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

GROUP E: STYLISTIC STUDIES

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

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

UNSEEN TESTS

QUICK STUDY PIECE

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

EAR TESTS

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

Fill Playback And Recognition

Tempo: 70 bpm

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

Groove Recall

Tempo: 80–140 bpm

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

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

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 6 you will be asked to explain:

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

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

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

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

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

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

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

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

www.rslawards.com

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

GRADING DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 6		
PREPARED WORK		
Band	Mark Range	Grading Criteria
Distinction	Pieces 18–20 Technical exercises 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and secure advanced techniques ■ Consistent rhythm / pulse ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy detailed throughout ■ Stylistic direction detailed throughout ■ Advanced solo / improv with stylistic conviction ■ Consistent sync ■ Comprehensive understanding of complete musical structure ■ Convincing communication through stylistic performance
Merit	Pieces 15–17 Technical exercises 11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure advanced techniques overall ■ Secure rhythm / pulse overall ■ Detailed notation / harmonic accuracy observed overall ■ Stylistic direction observed overall ■ Convincing and stylistic solo / improv overall ■ Mainly synchronised ■ Secure understanding of complete musical structure ■ Good sense of communication through stylistic performance
Pass	Pieces 12–14 Technical exercises 9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some advanced techniques shown ■ Generally secure rhythm / pulse ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy observed ■ Some stylistic direction observed ■ Solo / improv with some stylistic conviction ■ Sync evident ■ General understanding of musical structure ■ Some sense of communication through stylistic performance
Below Pass 1	Pieces 6–11 Technical exercises 4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advanced techniques hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Rhythm/pulse mostly inaccurate ■ Notation/harmonic work hesitant and /or incorrect ■ Stylistic direction hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Solo/improv limited in stylistic understanding ■ Sync largely not achieved ■ Hesitant in understanding of musical structure ■ Communicating of stylistic performance not achieved
Below Pass 2	Pieces 0–5 Technical exercises 0–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incomplete performance ■ No attempt

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

GRADE 7

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

Title	RSL Level 3 Certificate in Popular Music Performance: Grade 7
Qualification No.	501/0645/4
Level	3
Credit Value	27
Guided Learning Hours	48

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING

THE CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Perform music in popular styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on the instrument through responding to set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests

At Grade 7 level this will mean showing the following level of knowledge, skills and understanding:

PREPARED WORK (PERFORMANCE PIECES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES)

- Advanced techniques
- Secure rhythm and pulse
- Notation accuracy
- Stylistic direction
- Advanced soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Understanding of musical structure
- A sense of communication through stylistic performance
- Prompt responses

UNPREPARED WORK (SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION, EAR TESTS, GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS)

- Notation accuracy
- Secure rhythm/pulse
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Responses showing understanding at this grade

GRADE EXAM

PREPARED WORK:

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

UNPREPARED WORK:

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

PIECES

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

SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

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

TECHNICAL WORK

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

GROUP A: SINGLE AND DOUBLE STROKES

Tempo: 65 bpm

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

GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

Tempo: 80 bpm

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

GROUP C: FLAMS

Tempo: 80 bpm

- Pataflafla

GROUP D: RATAMACUES

Tempo: 80 bpm

- Single and double ratamacue

GROUP E: ROLLS

Tempo: 85 bpm

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

GROUP F: STYLISTIC STUDIES

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

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

UNSEEN TESTS

QUICK STUDY PIECE

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

EAR TESTS

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

Fill Playback & Recognition

Tempo: 70 bpm

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

Groove Recall

Tempo: 80–140 bpm

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

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

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 7 you will be asked to explain:

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

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

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

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

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

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

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

www.rslawards.com

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

GRADING DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 7		
PREPARED WORK		
Band	Mark Range	Grading Criteria
Distinction	Pieces 18–20 Technical exercises 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and secure advanced techniques ■ Consistent rhythm / pulse ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy detailed throughout ■ Stylistic direction detailed throughout ■ Advanced solo / improv with stylistic conviction ■ Consistent sync ■ Comprehensive understanding of complete musical structure ■ Convincing communication through stylistic performance
Merit	Pieces 15–17 Technical exercises 11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure advanced techniques overall ■ Secure rhythm / pulse overall ■ Detailed notation / harmonic accuracy observed overall ■ Stylistic direction observed overall ■ Convincing and stylistic solo / improv overall ■ Mainly synchronised ■ Secure understanding of complete musical structure ■ Good sense of communication through stylistic performance
Pass	Pieces 12–14 Technical exercises 9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some advanced techniques shown ■ Generally secure rhythm / pulse ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy observed ■ Some stylistic direction observed ■ Solo / improv with some stylistic conviction ■ Sync evident ■ General understanding of musical structure ■ Some sense of communication through stylistic performance
Below Pass 1	Pieces 6–11 Technical exercises 4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advanced techniques hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Rhythm/pulse mostly inaccurate ■ Notation/harmonic work hesitant and /or incorrect ■ Stylistic direction hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Solo/improv limited in stylistic understanding ■ Sync largely not achieved ■ Hesitant in understanding of musical structure ■ Communicating of stylistic performance not achieved
Below Pass 2	Pieces 0–5 Technical exercises 0–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incomplete performance ■ No attempt

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

GRADE 8

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

Title	RSL Level 3 Certificate in Popular Music Performance: Grade 8
Qualification No.	501/0648/X
Level	3
Credit Value	32
Guided Learning Hours	54

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING

THE CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Perform music in popular styles
- Demonstrate technical ability on the instrument through responding to set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests

At Grade 8 level this will mean showing the following level of knowledge, skills and understanding:

PREPARED WORK (PERFORMANCE PIECES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES)

- Advanced techniques
- Secure rhythm and pulse
- Notation accuracy
- Stylistic direction
- Advanced soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Understanding of musical structure
- A sense of communication through stylistic performance
- Prompt responses

UNPREPARED WORK (SIGHT READING OR IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION, EAR TESTS, GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS)

- Notation accuracy
- Secure rhythm/pulse
- Soloing/improvisation appropriate to style
- Synchronisation
- Responses showing understanding at this grade

GRADE EXAM

PREPARED WORK:

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

UNPREPARED WORK:

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

PIECES OR TECHNICAL EXERCISES:

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

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

PIECES

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

SETTING THE LEVEL OF THE BACKING TRACK

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

TECHNICAL WORK

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

GROUP A: SINGLE STROKES

Tempo: 65 bpm

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

GROUP B: PARADIDDLES

Tempo: 90 bpm

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

GROUP C: TRIPLETS

Tempo: 85 bpm

- Swiss Army Triplet and Pataflafla

GROUP D: RATAMACUES

Tempo: 85 bpm

- Triple ratamacue

GROUP E: ROLLS

Tempo: 90 bpm

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

GROUP F: STYLISTIC STUDIES

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

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

UNSEEN TESTS

QUICK STUDY PIECE

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

EAR TESTS

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

Fill Playback & Recognition

Tempo: 70 bpm

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

Groove Recall

Tempo: 80–160 bpm

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

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

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

In Grade 8 you will be asked to explain:

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

INSTRUMENT KNOWLEDGE

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

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

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

- **Grade Exam:** 2 free choice pieces
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GRADING DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 8		
PREPARED WORK		
Band	Mark Range	Grading Criteria
Distinction	Pieces 18–20 Technical exercises 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and secure advanced techniques ■ Consistent rhythm / pulse ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy detailed throughout ■ Stylistic direction detailed throughout ■ Advanced solo / improv with stylistic conviction ■ Consistent sync ■ Comprehensive understanding of complete musical structure ■ Convincing communication through stylistic performance
Merit	Pieces 15–17 Technical exercises 11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure advanced techniques overall ■ Secure rhythm / pulse overall ■ Detailed notation / harmonic accuracy observed overall ■ Stylistic direction observed overall ■ Convincing and stylistic solo / improv overall ■ Mainly synchronised ■ Secure understanding of complete musical structure ■ Good sense of communication through stylistic performance
Pass	Pieces 12–14 Technical exercises 9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some advanced techniques shown ■ Generally secure rhythm / pulse ■ Notation / harmonic accuracy observed ■ Some stylistic direction observed ■ Solo / improv with some stylistic conviction ■ Sync evident ■ General understanding of musical structure ■ Some sense of communication through stylistic performance
Below Pass 1	Pieces 6–11 Technical exercises 4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advanced techniques hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Rhythm/pulse mostly inaccurate ■ Notation/harmonic work hesitant and /or incorrect ■ Stylistic direction hesitant and/or incorrect ■ Solo/improv limited in stylistic understanding ■ Sync largely not achieved ■ Hesitant in understanding of musical structure ■ Communicating of stylistic performance not achieved
Below Pass 2	Pieces 0–5 Technical exercises 0–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incomplete performance ■ No attempt

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

REVISION HISTORY

Revised 29 May 2019

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