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RSL CLASSICAL

PIANO

SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION 2020

DEBUT - GRADE 8



Awarding the
Contemporary Arts





Classical Piano

Syllabus Specification

2020 Edition

Rockschool | RSL Classical | Stageschool | Vocational Qualifications | Creative Qualifications

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Contents

3 Acknowledgements

4 Table of Contents

5 Preface

6 Introduction

6 The Value Of RSL Qualifications

6 RSL & UCAS

6 Period Of Operation

6 Examinations

7 Overview

10 Qualification Summary

10 Aims & Broad Objectives

10 Progression

10 Qualification Structure

10 Entry Requirements

11 Assessment Information

11 Assessment Methodology

11 Assessment Timings

12 Marking Schemes

13 General Notes

13 Quality Assurance

13 Candidate Access and Registration

13 Access and Registration

13 Recommended Prior Learning

14 Further Information & Contact

14 Guidance on Free Choice Pieces

14 Equal Opportunities

14 Contacts for Help & Support

15 RSL Classical PIANO EXAMINATIONS

16 Examinations Overview

20 GRADING CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS

21 Graded Examinations

23 Graded Certificates

24 Performance Certificates

24 Definitions

25 UNIT SPECIFICATIONS

26 Debut

31 Grade 1

36 Grade 2

41 Grade 3

47 Grade 4

53 Grade 5

59 Grade 6

65 Grade 7

71 Grade 8

77 Revision History

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the RSL Awards 2020 syllabus for Classical Piano. This syllabus guide is designed to give teachers, learners and candidates practical information on the graded examinations run by RSL Awards.

The RSL Awards 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 to Grade 8
- Graded Certificates Debut to Grade 8
- Performance Certificates Debut to 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 listed on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in England and Northern Ireland by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). RSL is committed to maintaining and improving its reputation for excellence by providing high quality education and training through its syllabuses, 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 RSL Classical Piano Grade Examinations, Graded Certificates and Performance Certificates from September 2020.

Examinations

RSL Classical offers three types of graded music examination: Graded Examination, Graded Certificates & Performance Certificate.

Qualifications At A Glance

GRADE EXAMINATIONS

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

PREPARED WORK	UNPREPARED WORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3 Performance Pieces: Debut to Grade 8 ■ Technical Exercises: Debut to Grade 8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sight Reading or Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation: Debut to Grade 8 ■ Ear Tests: Debut to Grade 8 ■ General Musicianship Questions: Debut to Grade 8

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

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

PREPARED WORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Five Performance Pieces: Debut to Grade 8

GRADED CERTIFICATES

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

PREPARED WORK

- 3 Performance Pieces: Debut to Grade 8
- Technical Exercises: Debut to Grade 8

OVERVIEW

Qualification titles and sizes

GRADED EXAMINATIONS IN POPULAR MUSIC PERFORMANCE

Qualification title	QAN	Total number of units	Guided learning hours (GLH)	Credit	Total qualification time (TQT)
RSL Entry Level Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Entry 3)	501/0370/2	1	8	4	40
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance - Grade 1	5501/0391/X	1	12	6	60
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance - Grade 2	501/0646/6	1	18	9	90
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance - Grade 3	501/0647/8	1	18	12	120
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance - Grade 4	501/0389/1	1	24	15	150
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance - Grade 5	501/0643/0	1	24	18	180
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance - Grade 6	501/0390/8	1	36	22	220
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance - Grade 7	501/0645/4	1	48	27	270
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance - Grade 8	501/0648/X	1	54	32	320

GRADED CERTIFICATES IN POPULAR MUSIC PERFORMANCE

Qualification title	QAN	Total number of units	Guided learning hours (GLH)	Credit	Total qualification time (TQT)
RSL Entry Level Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance (Entry 3)	610/4760/0	1	8	4	40
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 1	610/4761/2	1	12	6	60
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 2	610/4762/4	1	18	9	90
RSL Level 1 Award in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 3	610/4763/6	1	18	12	120
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 4	610/4764/8	1	24	15	150
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 5	610/4765/X	1	24	18	180
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 6	610/4766/1	1	36	22	220
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 7	610/4767/3	1	48	27	270
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Graded Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 8	610/4768/5	1	54	32	320

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES IN POPULAR MUSIC PERFORMANCE

Qualification title	QAN	Total number of units	Guided learning hours (GLH)	Credit	Total qualification time (TQT)
RSL Entry Level Award in Performance Certificate in Music Performance (Entry 3)	610/4770/3	1	8	4	40
RSL Level 1 Award in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 1	610/4771/5	1	12	6	60
RSL Level 1 Award in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 2	610/4772/7	1	18	9	90
RSL Level 1 Award in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 3	610/4773/9	1	18	12	120
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 4	610/4774/0	1	24	15	150
RSL Level 2 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 5	610/4775/2	1	24	18	180
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 6	610/4776/4	1	36	22	220
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 7	610/4777/6	1	48	27	270
RSL Level 3 Certificate in Performance Certificate in Music Performance - Grade 8	610/4778/8	1	54	32	320

Assessment Overview

Assessment

Form of assessment	All assessments are carried out by external examiners. Candidates are required to carry out a combination of practical tasks and underpinning theoretical assessment.
Assessment bands	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 reassessment of candidates' work. A team of external examiners is appointed, trained and standardised by RSL.

Learning Outcomes

Performance Certificate

Learners will be able to:

- Perform music in a range of musical styles

Graded Certificate

Learners will be able to:

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

Graded Exam

Learners will be able to:

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

QUALIFICATION SUMMARY

Aims & Broad Objectives

The aim of 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 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 Music Performance are assessed via an examination. The examination is divided into the following sections:

Technical tests covering knowledge of:

- Scales
- Arpeggios
- Technical Studies

Performance Pieces

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

Unseen Tests

- Sight Reading or Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation tests
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

The **Performance Certificates** in Music Performance are assessed via an examination. The examination is divided into the following sections:

Performance Pieces

- Five Performance pieces (three pieces can be 'Free Choice Pieces')

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: 25 minutes
- Grade 4: 25 minutes
- Grade 5: 25 minutes
- Grade 6: 30 minutes
- Grade 7: 30 minutes
- Grade 8: 30 minutes

Performance Certificates

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

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

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

Marking Schemes

GRADE EXAMS DEBUT 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
Technical Exercises	9–10 out of 15	11–12 out of 15	13+ out of 15
Ear Tests	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9+ out of 10
Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation	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%

GRADED 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
Technical Exercises	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Total Marks	60%+	75%+	90%+

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.

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), which 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

Please Note: Candidates may not perform pieces in their exam that they have previously performed for an RSL Assessment. This includes re-sits of their exams.

Recommended Prior Learning

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

FURTHER INFORMATION & CONTACT

Guidance on Free Choice Pieces

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

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

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.

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:

RSL

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

Or info@rslawards.com

RSL CLASSICAL PIANO EXAMINATIONS

EXAMINATIONS OVERVIEW

RSL Classical offers **three** types of graded music examination: Grade Examinations, Graded Certificates and Performance Certificates.

GRADE EXAMINATIONS

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

- **Three** Performance Pieces: Debut to Grade 8
- Technical Exercises: Debut to Grade 8
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation: Debut to Grade 8
- Ear Tests: Debut to Grade 8
- General Musicianship Questions: Debut to Grade 8

These elements fall into two categories:

- Prepared work: This consists of three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises
- Unprepared work: This consists of Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation (Debut to Grade 8)

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

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

- **Five** Performance Pieces

GRADED CERTIFICATES

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

- **Three** Performance Pieces: Debut to Grade 8
- Technical Exercises: Debut to Grade 8

EXAMINATION STRUCTURE

The examination structure for the Grade Examination is shown below:

Debut to Grade 8

- Performance Pieces *
- Technical Exercises *
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

EXAMINATION TIMINGS

Grade Exams

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

Performance Certificates

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

General Notes

The following general notes apply to Graded Exams and Performance Certificate Examinations:

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

FREE CHOICE PIECES

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

- Grade Examinations: **Two** Free Choice Pieces (at least one piece must be from the grade book)
- Graded Certificates: **Two** Free Choice Pieces (at least one piece must be from the grade book)
- Performance Certificates: **Three** Free Choice Pieces (at least two pieces must be from the grade book)

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

Free Choice Pieces can be performed to a backing track (without the examined part on the track), or as a solo piece (without backing track).

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

NOTATION

All notated work is to be played as written. Where a candidate wishes to perform alternative content an equivalent level of technical outcomes must be demonstrated. Otherwise, there should be no changes or arrangement (unless previously agreed with RSL Awards). Each piece is specifically written/presented carefully to achieve a number of outcomes appropriate for the grade.

Please note that fingering indications are given as guidance only. Fingering technique is not in itself assessed, only the resulting musical outcome.

Exclusions:

- At all grades, if any two handed/open voiced chords notated in the pieces are not achievable, candidates may adapt the chord voicing or play as a spread chord if stylistically appropriate.
- At all grades, candidates are free to execute voiced chords notated in the pieces with either hand or combination of hands.

ADAPTATION AND PERSONALISATION OF PIECES

Candidates should perform pieces as notated, except where they choose to embellish or rework any sections (NB. this does not apply to technical exercises or unseen tests which must be performed exactly as written). In these instances, as well as where there are performance indications to *ad lib*, *improvise*, *develop*, etc., candidates will be marked on their ability to present the personalised material in a stylistically appropriate way, commensurate with the grade level. All performances will be expected to have a clear basis in the notated material.

PIANO SPECIFICATION

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

- Acoustic Piano
- Digital Piano

A number of our exam venues in the UK have acoustic pianos. The remainder have digital pianos. Candidates are advised to contact RSL Awards to check their nearest centre if they specifically wish to perform the exam on an acoustic piano.

See also <https://www.rslawards.com/music/find-a-centre>

USING OWN EQUIPMENT

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

- **Debut:** Minimum of four octaves/49 keys, touch sensitive, sprung or weighted keys and a sustain pedal.
- **Grade 1:** Minimum of five octaves/61 keys, touch sensitive, sprung or weighted keys and a sustain pedal.
- **Grades 2–8:** 88 keys, touch sensitive, sprung or weighted keys and a sustain pedal.
- **Candidates must use a 'realistic' piano sound for their exam.**

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

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

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

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

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

MAKING NOTES IN THE EXAM

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

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

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

GRADING CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS

Graded Examinations

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

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

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

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS (GMQS)					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	5 correct responses	4 correct responses	3 correct responses	2 correct responses	0–1 correct responses

Graded Certificates

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

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

Performance Certificates

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

Definitions

DEFINITIONS	
Command of Instrument	The quality of the sound produced from the instrument, including the consistency of sound/tone, control of sound/tone commensurate with grade.
Sync or Pulse	Alignment of the performance to backing track, metronome or applied to a solo performance, observing notation markings. For unaccompanied pieces candidates should maintain a secure internal pulse and adjust the pulse where instructed within the music.
Accuracy & Understanding	Representing the written notation accurately, except by instruction through performance notes, or interpreting the written part with equivalent skills demonstrated. Secure understanding of musical structure evidenced through transitions of phrases, bars and sections.
Style & Expression	An expressive and commanding performance of the notated material dictated by the demands of the performance piece.

UNIT SPECIFICATIONS

Debut

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

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

Debut

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to play **three** Performance Pieces, and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and technical studies.

UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or a Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, and an Ear Test that begins to develop melodic recall. The final part of the exam comprises **five** General Musicianship Questions, on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

- **Performance Pieces ***
- **Technical Exercises ***
- **Sight Reading OR Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation:** Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **Ear Tests:** Candidates respond to one melodic recall test.
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

** These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for Graded Exams, Graded Certificates and Performance Certificates.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Debut there are **three** groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios/Broken Chords and Technical Studies.

- All scales and broken chords need to be played hands separately, legato, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- There is no memory requirement, and candidates may use their book for all technical sections at this grade.
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

GROUP A: SCALES

Minimum tempo: 52bpm

Range: One octave

Rhythms: Quavers (eighth) notes, finishing on a crotchet (quarter note)

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

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Minimum tempo: 92bpm

Time signatures: 3/4

Rhythms: Crotchets (quarter notes), finishing on a dotted minim (dotted half note)

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

GROUP C: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Minimum tempo: 80bpm

Candidates perform their choice of **one** of the technical studies from the grade book.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

SIGHT READING

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give the candidate a 4–6 bar melody in the key of C major, to be played unaccompanied. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask the candidate to commence the test.

- Minimum tempo ♩ = 60 bpm.
- Candidates are tested on their ability to perform previously unseen pitches and rhythms. No dynamics are shown, however, candidates should maintain an even tone quality throughout.
- While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, candidates may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout their practice time. Additionally, candidates may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key: C major

Tempo: 60bpm

Time signature: 4/4

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

Candidates may improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track. Candidates will have 90 seconds to prepare after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For the first play through, there will be four clicks. For the test, there will be a one bar count-in. During the practice time, candidates will be given the option of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

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

EAR TESTS

At Debut there is one ear test, assessing melodic recall skills. An example is shown in the grade book.

MELODIC RECALL

Tempo: 95bpm

Rhythms: Minims (half notes)

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

Credit will be given for speed of response.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

At Debut candidates will be asked five questions on topics relating to their choice of piece performed in the examination, and general musical and instrumental knowledge.

Music Knowledge:

At Debut candidates will be asked to identify:

- The treble and bass staves
- The treble and bass clefs
- Note pitch names (within treble stave only)
- Minim (half) and crotchet (quarter) note values

Instrument Knowledge:

In Debut candidates will be asked to identify:

- One of the following parts of piano: black and white keys, middle C (C4)

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces and all of the technical exercises as outlined below.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Debut there are three groups of technical work as detailed in the information for the Graded Exams. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

Grade 1

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

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

Grade 1

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to play **three** Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, broken chords and technical studies.

UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or a Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, and an Ear Test developing melodic recall skills.

The final part of the exam comprises five General Musicianship Questions, on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

- **Performance Pieces ***
- **Technical Exercises ***
- **Sight Reading OR Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation:** Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **Ear Tests:** Candidates respond to one melodic recall test.
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

** These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 1 there are **three** groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios and Technical Studies.

All scales and arpeggios need to be played hands separately, in straight feel, ascending and descending. Pentatonic scales are right hand only.

- Major scales, minor scales and broken chords need to be played hands separately, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- Groups A (scales) and Group B (broken chords) must be played from memory. Candidates may use their book for Group C (technical studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

GROUP A: SCALES

Range: Two octaves

Rhythms: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a crotchet (quarter note)

Minimum tempo: 66bpm

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ F major (right hand) | ■ E natural/harmonic/melodic minor (right hand) |
| ■ F major (left hand) | ■ E natural/harmonic/melodic minor (left hand) |
| ■ G major (right hand) | ■ F major pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ G major (left hand) | ■ G major pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ D natural/harmonic/melodic minor (right hand) | ■ D minor pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ D natural/harmonic/melodic minor (left hand) | ■ E minor pentatonic (right hand) |

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Minimum Tempo: 100bpm

Time signature: 3/4

Rhythms: Crotchets (quarter notes), finishing on a dotted minim (dotted half note)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ■ F major broken chord (right hand) | ■ D minor broken chord (right hand) |
| ■ F major broken chord (left hand) | ■ D minor broken chord (left hand) |
| ■ G major broken chord (right hand) | ■ E minor broken chord (right hand) |
| ■ G major broken chord (left hand) | ■ E minor broken chord (left hand) |

GROUP C: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Minimum tempo: 60bpm

Candidates perform their choice of **one** of the technical studies from the grade book.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

SIGHT READING

Key: F major or G major

Minimum tempo: 70bpm

Time signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Minims (half notes), crotchets (quarter notes), associated rests

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give candidates a 4–6 bar melody in the key of either G major or F major. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask candidates to commence the test.

- All sight reading tests at Grade 1 should be played at a minimum tempo of ♩=70 bpm.
- At Grade 1, candidates are tested on their ability to perform previously unseen pitches and rhythms. No dynamics are shown, however, an even tone quality should be maintained throughout.
- While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, candidates may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout their practice time. Additionally, candidates may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key: F major or G major

Tempo: 70bpm

Time signature: 4/4

In the Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give candidates a 4–6 bar chord progression in the key of either G major or F major. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩=70 bpm.

- At Grade 1, candidates have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

At Grade 1 there is one ear test, assessing melodic recall skills. An example is shown in the grade book.

MELODIC RECALL

Tempo: 95bpm

Rhythms: Whole, half notes

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

Credit will be given for speed of response.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

At Grade 1 candidates will be asked **five** questions on topics relating to their choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

Music Knowledge

In Grade 1 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The location of the time signature
- The location of treble and bass clefs
- Note pitch names (within bass and treble stave only)
- Semibreve (whole), minim (half), crotchet (quarter), quaver (eighth) note values
- The construction of a major triad (tonic, major 3rd, perfect 5th, root position only)

Instrument Knowledge

In Grade 1 candidates will be asked to identify:

- One of the following parts of piano: middle C (C4), sustain/damper pedal, hammers, strings.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces and all of the technical exercises as outlined below.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 1 there are three groups of technical work as detailed in the information for the Graded Exams. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

Grade 2

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

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

Grade 2

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to play **three** Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and technical studies.

UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to complete **either** a Sight Reading **or** a Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, and an Ear Test developing melodic recall skills. The final part of the exam comprises **five** General Musicianship Questions, on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

- **Performance Pieces ***
- **Technical Exercises ***
- **Sight Reading OR Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation:** Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **Ear Tests:** Candidates respond to one melodic recall test.
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

** These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate.

TECHNICAL WORK

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

- Major scales, minor scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Candidates must choose to play either natural minor or harmonic minor or melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. Candidates may use their book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

GROUP A: SCALES

Minimum Tempo: 66bpm

Range: Two octaves

Rhythms: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a crotchet (quarter note)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| ■ D major | ■ B harmonic minor |
| ■ B ^b major | ■ G harmonic minor |
| ■ B natural minor | |
| ■ G natural minor | |

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Minimum Tempo: 63bpm

Time signature: 3/4, 4/4

Rhythms: 3/4: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a dotted minim (dotted half note)

4/4: Quavers, finishing on a semibreve (whole note)

- D major arpeggio
- B^b major arpeggio
- B minor arpeggio
- G minor arpeggio

GROUP C: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Minimum tempo: 60bpm

Candidates perform their choice of **one** of the technical studies from the grade book.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

SIGHT READING

Key: B^b major or D major

Tempo: 60–95 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Semibreve (whole note), dotted minim (dotted half), minim (half), crotchets (quarter) notes, associated rests.

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give candidates a 4–6 bar piece in D major or B^b major, to be played unaccompanied. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask candidates to commence the test.

- All sight reading tests at Grade 2 should be played at a minimum tempo of ♩ = 80 bpm.
- At Grade 2, candidates are tested on their ability to perform previously unseen pitches, rhythms and basic dynamics (mf, mp).
- While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, candidates may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout the practice time. Additionally, candidates may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key: B^b major or D major

Tempo: 60–95 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

In the Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give candidates a 4–6 bar chord progression in the key of either D major or B^b major. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for candidates to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩ = 60–95.

- At this grade, candidates have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

At Grade 2 there is one ear test, assessing melodic recall skills. An example is shown in the grade book.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Minims (half notes)

The examiner will play a two-bar diatonic melody in the key of C major, with a range up to a fourth. There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice, each preceded by four clicks. After this, there will be a one-bar count-in and then candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. The first note of the melody will be the root.

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

At Grade 2 candidates will be asked five questions on topics relating to their choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

Music Knowledge

In Grade 2 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The location and meaning of the time signature marking
- Note pitch names (within bass and treble staves only)
- Semibreve (whole), minim (half), crotchet (quarter), quaver (eighth), semiquaver (16th) note and rest values
- The location of dynamic markings found in the piece (pp, p, mp, mf, f and ff)
- The construction of a major (tonic, major 3rd, perfect 5th) or minor (tonic, minor 3rd, perfect 5th) triad (root position only)

Instrument Knowledge

In Grade 2 candidates will be asked to identify:

- Two of the following parts of piano: middle C (C4), sustain/damper pedal, hammers, strings.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces and all of the technical exercises as outlined below.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 2 there are three groups of technical work as detailed in the information for the Graded Exams. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

Grade 3

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

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

Grade 3

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces, and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and technical studies.

UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or a Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, and an Ear Test developing melodic recall skills. The final part of the exam comprises **five** General Musicianship Questions, on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

- **Performance Pieces ***
- **Technical Exercises ***
- **Sight Reading OR Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation:** Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **Ear Tests:** Candidates respond to one melodic recall test.
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

** These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate.

TECHNICAL WORK

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

- Major scales, minor scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Candidates must choose to play either natural minor or harmonic minor or melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. Candidates may use their book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

GROUP A: SCALES

Minimum Tempo: 80 bpm

Range: Two octaves

Rhythms: Eighth notes, finishing on a quarter note

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ A major | ■ E ^b major pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ E ^b major | ■ A major pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ F [#] natural / harmonic / melodic minor | ■ C minor pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ C natural / harmonic / melodic minor | ■ F [#] minor pentatonic (right hand) |

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Minimum Tempo: 69 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Rhythms: 3/4: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a dotted minim (dotted half note).

4/4: Quavers, finishing on a semibreve (whole note).

- A major arpeggio
- E^b major arpeggio
- F[#] minor arpeggio
- C minor arpeggio

GROUP C: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Candidates perform their choice of **one** of the technical studies from the grade book.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

SIGHT READING

Key: E^b major or A major

Tempo: 60–95 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Semibreve (whole), dotted minim (dotted half), minim (half), dotted crotchet (dotted quarter), crotchet (quarter), quaver (eighth) notes, quaver ties, associated rests.

Dynamic Markings: mf, mp

Articulation: staccato, legato

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give candidates a 4–6 bar piece in A major or E^b major, to be played unaccompanied. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask candidates to commence the test. While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, candidates may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout the practice time. Additionally, candidates may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key: E^b major or A major

Tempo: 60–95 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

In the Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give candidates a 4–6 bar chord progression in the key of either A major or E^b major. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩ = 60–95.

- At this grade, candidates have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will
- start immediately.

EAR TESTS

At Grade 3 there is one ear test, assessing melodic recall skills. An example is shown in the grade book.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Minims (half notes), crotchets (quarter notes)

The examiner will play a two-bar diatonic melody in the key of C major, with a range up to a fifth. There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice, each preceded by four clicks. After this, there will be a one-bar count-in and then candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. The first note of the melody will be the root.

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

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Grade 3 candidates will be asked five questions on topics relating to their choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

Music Knowledge

At Grade 3 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The location and meaning of the time or key signature marking
- Note pitch names (bass and treble staves plus two ledger lines)
- Semibreve (whole), minim (half), crotchet (quarter), quaver (eighth), semiquaver (16th) note and rest values
- The location and meaning of dynamic markings found in the piece (pp, p, mp, mf, f and ff) and cresc. and dim. plus hairpins
- The construction of a major (tonic, major 3rd, perfect 5th) or minor (tonic, minor 3rd, perfect 5th) or dominant 7th (tonic, major 3rd, perfect 5th, flattened 7th) chords (root position only)

Instrument Knowledge

At Grade 3 candidates will be asked to:

- Identify the location and function of the sustain/damper pedal
- Explain how the sound is produced when a key is pressed

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces and all of the technical exercises as outlined below.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 3 there are three groups of technical work as detailed in the information for the Graded Exams. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

Grade 4

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

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

Grade 4

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios, and technical studies.

UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or a Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, and an Ear Test developing melodic recall skills. The final part of the exam comprises **five** General Musicianship Questions, on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

- **Performance Pieces ***
- **Technical Exercises ***
- **Sight Reading OR Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation:** Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **Ear Tests:** Candidates respond to one melodic recall test.
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

** These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate.

TECHNICAL WORK

Major and contrary motion scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, in legato feel, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.

- Candidates must choose to play either natural minor or harmonic minor or melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. Candidates may use their book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

GROUP A: SCALES

Minimum Tempo: 104 bpm

Range: Two octaves

Rhythms: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a crotchet (quarter note).

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ E major | ■ A ^b major pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ E major (contrary motion) | ■ E major pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ A ^b major | ■ F minor pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ A ^b major (contrary motion) | ■ C [#] minor pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ C [#] natural/harmonic/melodic minor | ■ Chromatic scale starting on any black key
(named by examiner) |
| ■ F natural/harmonic/melodic minor | |

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 76 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

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

- E major arpeggio
- A^b major arpeggio
- C[#] minor arpeggio
- F minor arpeggio

GROUP C: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Candidates perform their choice of one of the technical studies from the grade book.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

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

SIGHT READING

Key: A^b major or E major

Tempo: 60–130 bpm

Time Signature: simple (3/4, 4/4) or compound (6/8)

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

Dynamic Markings: *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*

Articulation: staccato, legato

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give candidates an 8 bar piece in E major or A^b major, to be played unaccompanied. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask candidates to commence the test. While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, candidates may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout the practice time. Additionally, candidates may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key: A^b major or E major

Tempo: 60–130 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give candidates a 8–12 bar chord progression in the key of either E major or A^b major. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩ = 60–130.

- At this grade, candidates have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, you will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

At Grade 4 there is one ear test, assessing melodic recall skills. An example is shown in the grade book.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Minims (half notes), crotchets (quarter notes)

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

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice, each preceded by four clicks. After this, there will be a one-bar count-in and then candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click.

The first note of the melody will be the root.

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

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

At Grade 4 candidates will be asked five questions on topics relating to their choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

Music Knowledge

In Grade 4 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The location and meaning of the time and key signature markings
- Any note pitch name (bass and treble staves plus three ledger lines)
- Any note and rest values within the chosen piece
- Repeat marks, first and second time bars, **D.C.**, **D.S.**, **al Coda** and **al Fine** markings
- The location and meaning of expressive musical marking found in the piece including dynamic markings (pp, p, mp, mf, f and ff) and cresc. and dim, hairpins, and rit. rall. a tempo, subito, simile, molto and poco a poco
- The construction of a major (tonic, major 3rd, perfect 5th) and minor (tonic, minor 3rd, perfect 5th) and dominant 7th (tonic, major 3rd, perfect 5th, flattened 7th) chords (root position, 1st and 2nd inversions)

Instrument and Stylistic Knowledge

In Grade 4 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The location and function of soft pedal and sustain pedal
- A brief explanation of the genre and historical context of the chosen piece (from fact file or own research -from memory, no use of notes or book)

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces and all of the technical exercises as outlined below.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 4 there are three groups of technical work as detailed in the information for the Graded Exams. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

Grade 5

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

There are three types of exam available at Grade 5: a **Grade Exam, Graded Certificate** or **Performance Certificate**. (Refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the differences).

Grade 5

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to play **three** Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios, and technical studies.

UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or a Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, and an Ear Test developing melodic recall skills. The final part of the exam comprises **five** General Musicianship Questions, on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

- **Performance Pieces ***
- **Technical Exercises ***
- **Sight Reading OR Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation:** Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **Ear Tests:** Candidates respond to one melodic recall test.
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

** These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate.

TECHNICAL WORK

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

- Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, in legato feel, ascending and descending, across three octaves (except contrary motion scales and pentatonics, which must be played over two octaves).
- Candidates must choose to play either natural minor or harmonic minor or melodic minor scales in the exam.
- The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared. Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. Candidates may use their book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

GROUP A: SCALES

Minimum Tempo: 126 bpm

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

Rhythms: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a crotchet (quarter note)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ B major | ■ B major pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ B major (contrary motion) (2 octaves) | ■ D ^b major pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ D ^b major | ■ G [#] minor pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ D ^b major (contrary motion) (2 octaves) | ■ B ^b minor pentatonic (right hand) |
| ■ G [#] natural/harmonic/melodic minor | ■ Chromatic scale starting on any white key chosen by the examiner |
| ■ B ^b natural/harmonic/melodic minor | |

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Minimum Tempo: 86 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Octave range: 3 octaves

Rhythms: 3/4: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a dotted minim (dotted half note).

4/4: Quavers, finishing on a semibreve (whole note).

- B major arpeggio
- D^b major arpeggio
- G[#] minor arpeggio
- B^b minor arpeggio

GROUP C: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Candidates perform their choice of **one** of the technical studies from the grade book.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

SIGHT READING

Key: D^b major or B major

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Rhythms: Semibreve (whole), dotted minim (dotted half), minim (half), dotted crotchet (dotted quarter), crotchet (quarter), quaver (eighth) notes, associated rests. Quaver and crotchet ties.

Dynamic Markings: *p*–*f*, < (crescendo) and > (decrescendo).

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give candidates an 8–16 bar example in the key of either B major or D^b major, to be played unaccompanied. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask candidates to commence the test.

While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, candidates may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout the practice time. Additionally, candidates may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key: D^b major or B major

Tempo: 60–130 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

In the Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give candidates an 8–16 bar chord progression in the key of either B major or D^b major. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩ = 60–130 bpm.

- At this grade, candidates have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

At Grade 5 there is one ear test, assessing melodic recall skills. An example is shown in the grade book..

MELODIC RECALL

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Minims (half notes), crotchets (quarter notes), quavers (eighth notes). Notes may be tied.

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

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice, each preceded by four clicks. After this, there will be a one-bar count-in and then candidates need to play the melody back to a metronome click. The first note of the melody will be either the root or fifth.

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

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

At Grade 5 candidates will be asked five questions on topics relating to their choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

Music Knowledge

In Grade 5 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The location and meaning of the time and key signature markings
- Any note pitch name (bass and treble staves plus four ledger lines)
- Any note and rest values within the chosen piece
- Repeat marks, first and second time bars, **D.C.**, **D.S.**, **al Coda** and **al Fine** markings
- The location and meaning of expressive musical marking found in the piece including dynamic markings (*pp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f* and *ff*) and *cresc.* and *dim*, hairpins, and *rit.*, *rall.*, *a tempo*, *subito*, *simile*, *molto* and *poco a poco*
- The construction of a major (tonic, major 3rd, perfect 5th) and minor (tonic, minor 3rd, perfect 5th) and dominant 7th (tonic, major 3rd, perfect 5th, flattened 7th) chords (root position, 1st and 2nd inversions)

Instrument and Stylistic Knowledge

In Grade 5 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The location and function of soft pedal and sustaining pedal.
- A brief explanation of the genre and historical context of the chosen piece (from fact file or own research - from memory, no use of notes or book).

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

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

Note: the sound check is undertaken for the first piece only.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces and all of the technical exercises as outlined below.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 5 there are three groups of technical work as detailed in the information for the Graded Exams. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

Grade 6

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

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

Grade 6

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to play **three** Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios, and technical studies.

UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to complete **either** a Sight Reading **or** a Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, and an Ear Test developing melodic recall skills. The final part of the exam comprises **five** General Musicianship Questions, on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

- **Performance Pieces ***
- **Technical Exercises ***
- **Sight Reading OR Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation:** Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **Ear Tests:** Candidates respond to one melodic recall test.
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

** These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 6 there are **three** groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios and Technical Studies.

- Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across four octaves.
- Contrary motion scales and pentatonic scales need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- The examiner may also ask for legato or staccato.
- Candidates must choose to play either natural minor or harmonic minor or melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. Candidates may use their book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

GROUP A: SCALES

Minimum Tempo: 152 bpm

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

Rhythms: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a crotchet (quarter note).

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ F# major | ■ F# major pentatonic |
| ■ F# major (contrary motion) (2 octaves) | ■ G ^b major pentatonic |
| ■ G ^b major | ■ D# minor pentatonic |
| ■ G ^b major (contrary motion) (2 octaves) | ■ E ^b minor pentatonic |
| ■ D# natural/harmonic/melodic minor | ■ Chromatic scale on any black key stated by examiner |
| ■ E ^b natural/harmonic/melodic minor | |

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 100 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Octave range: 4 octaves

Rhythms: 3/4: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a dotted minim (dotted half note).

4/4: Quavers, finishing on a minim (half note).

- F# major arpeggio
- G^b major arpeggio
- D# minor arpeggio
- E^b minor arpeggio
- G7 arpeggio
- F7 arpeggio

GROUP C: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Candidates perform their choice of **one** of the technical studies from the grade book.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 6 candidates will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Contemporary Improvisation and Interpretation. Both are previously unseen and examples of each are given in the grade book.

SIGHT READING

Key Signature: Up to six sharps or flats

Time Signature: simple or compound time

Dynamics/articulation: any

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give candidates a 12–16 bar piece, to be played unaccompanied. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will candidates to commence the test.

CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key: G^b major or F[#] major

Tempo: 60–130 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

In the Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give candidates a 12–16 bar chord progression in the key of either F[#] major or G^b major. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩ = 60–130.

- Candidates have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, Candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

At Grade 6 there is one ear test, assessing melodic recall skills. An example is shown in the grade book.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: C major

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Minims (half notes) and quavers (eighth notes)

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

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice, each time preceded by four clicks. After this, candidates will hear a one bar count-in then will need to play the melody back to a metronome click. The first note of the melody will be either the root or fifth.

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

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

The Examiner will ask five questions on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination, and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

Music Knowledge

At Grade 6 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The meaning of the tempo marking *e.g.* bpm, *allegretto*, *poco moto* etc. and key signature marking
- Any note pitch name (bass and treble staves plus all ledger lines)
- Any note and rest values within the chosen piece
- The meaning and application of any expressive musical marking found in the piece including all dynamic markings, and *rit.*, *rall.*, *a tempo*, *subito*, *simile*, *molto* and *poco a poco*
- The construction of either a perfect or imperfect cadence, in the key of C or F major. The examiner will choose one cadence from the list and state the key. The candidate must then state the chord progression as chords from the chosen key

Instrument and Stylistic Knowledge

At Grade 6 candidates will be asked to:

- Identify the location, function and use of all pedals on the piano *e.g.* soft pedal, the sostenuto pedal, and the sustain pedal
- Give a brief explanation of stylistic and technical considerations in preparation and performance of chosen piece (with demonstration – no use of notes or book)

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces and all of the technical exercises as outlined below.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 6 there are three groups of technical work as detailed in the information for the Graded Exams. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

Grade 7

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

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

Grade 7

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios, and Technical Studies.

UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or a Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, and an Ear Test developing melodic recall skills. The final part of the exam comprises **five** General Musicianship Questions, on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

- **Performance Pieces ***
- **Technical Exercises ***
- **Sight Reading OR Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation:** Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **Ear Tests:** Candidates respond to one melodic recall test.
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

** These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate.

TECHNICAL WORK

Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across four octaves.

- Contrary motion scales need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- Major scales in thirds need to be played hands separately, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- The examiner may also ask for legato or staccato.
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. Candidates may use their book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

GROUP A: SCALES

Minimum Tempo: 160 bpm (except C major in thirds: 100 bpm)

Octave range: 4 octaves (except contrary motion scales and scale in thirds: 2 octaves)

Rhythms: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a crotchet (quarter note)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ C# major | |
| ■ C# major (contrary motion) (2 octaves) | ■ C major in thirds (right hand) |
| ■ Cb major | ■ C major in thirds (left hand) |
| ■ Cb major (contrary motion) (2 octaves) | ■ C chromatic (a minor 3rd apart, starting on any black key stated by examiner) |
| ■ A# natural/harmonic/melodic minor | |
| ■ Ab natural/harmonic/melodic minor | |

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 112 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Octave range: 4 octaves

Rhythms: 3/4: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a dotted minim (dotted half note).

4/4: Quavers, finishing on a crotchet (quarter note).

- C# major arpeggio
- Cb major arpeggio
- A# minor arpeggio
- Ab minor arpeggio
- D7 arpeggio
- Bb7 arpeggio

GROUP C: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Candidates perform their choice of **one** of the technical studies from the grade book.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 7 candidates will be offered the choice between Sight Reading **or** Contemporary Improvisation and Interpretation. Both are previously unseen and examples of each are given in the grade book.

SIGHT READING

Key Signature: Up to seven sharps or flats

Time Signature: simple, compound or odd time

Dynamics/articulation: any

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give candidates a 16–20 bar piece, to be played unaccompanied. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask candidates to commence the test.

CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key: C# major or C \flat major

Tempo: 60–130 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4, swung 4/4

In the Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give candidates a 16–20 bar chord progression in the key of either C# major or C \flat major. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is for candidates to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is $\downarrow = 60-130$.

- Candidates have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

At Grade 7 there is one ear test, assessing melodic recall skills. An example is shown in the grade book.

MELODIC RECALL

Key: C major or C minor

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Crotchets (quarter notes and quavers (eighth notes))

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

There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice (each time preceded by four clicks). After this, candidates will hear a one bar count-in and will then need to play the melody back to a metronome click.

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

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

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Music Knowledge

At Grade 7 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The meaning of tempo marking *e.g.* bpm, *allegretto*, *poco moto* etc., and key signature marking
- Any note pitch name (bass and treble staves plus all ledger lines)
- Any note and rest values within the chosen piece
- The meaning and application of any expressive musical marking found in the piece including all dynamic markings, *rit.*, *rall.*, *a tempo*, *subito*, *simile*, *molto* and *poco a poco*
- The construction of two of four cadence types; perfect, imperfect, plagal and deceptive, in the key of D or G major. The examiner will choose one cadence from the list and state the key. The candidate must then state the chord progression as chords from the chosen key

Instrument and Stylistic Knowledge

At Grade 7 candidates will be asked to:

- Identify the location, function and use of any part of the instrument
- Give a brief explanation of stylistic and technical considerations in preparation and performance of chosen piece (with demonstration – no use of notes or book)

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces and all of the technical exercises as outlined below.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 7 there are three groups of technical work as detailed in the information for the Graded Exams. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

Grade 8

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

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

Grade 8

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to play three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios, chord voicings and technical studies.

UNPREPARED WORK

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or a Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, and an Ear Test developing melodic recall skills. The final part of the exam comprises **five** General Musicianship Questions, on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

- **Performance Pieces ***
- **Technical Exercises ***
- **Sight Reading OR Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation:** Candidates are given an unseen test to prepare and perform.
- **Ear Tests:** Candidates respond to one melodic recall test.
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Candidates answer five questions based on one of the pieces performed.

** These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Pieces

The pieces in the grade book can be used for both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 8 there are three groups of technical work: Scales, Arpeggios and Technical Studies.

- Candidates must prepare natural minor, harmonic minor **and** melodic minor scales
- Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios (including those from previous grades) need to be played:
 - hands together
 - ascending and descending
 - either legato or staccato articulation (as directed by the examiner)
 - across four octaves (except half-whole and whole tone scales, which must be played over two octaves)
- The examiner may also ask for legato or staccato.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. Candidates may use their book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

GROUP A: SCALES

Minimum Tempo: 176 bpm

Rhythms: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a semibreve (whole note).

- C half-whole diminished (two octaves)
- C whole tone (two octaves)

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Minimum Tempo: 132 bpm

Time Signature: 3/4, 4/4

Octave range: 4 octaves

Rhythms: 3/4: Quavers (eighth notes), finishing on a dotted minim (dotted half note).

4/4: Eighth notes, finishing on a semibreve (whole note).

- Diminished 7th arpeggio
(from the starting notes C, C \sharp or D)
- Dominant 7th arpeggio
(from the starting notes G, D, A, F, B \flat , or E \flat)

Additional Scale

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

Additional Arpeggio

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

GROUP C: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Candidates perform their choice of **one** of the technical studies from the grade book.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 8 candidates will be offered the choice between Sight Reading or Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation. Both are previously unseen and examples of each are given in the grade book.

SIGHT READING

Key: Any

Time signature: Any

Dynamics/articulation: any

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give candidates a piece of music of up to 24 bars in length, to be played unaccompanied. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask candidates to commence the test.

CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

In the Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give candidates a 16–24 bar chord progression in any key. Candidates will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is to practise and the second time is to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩ = 60–200.

Key: Any

Tempo: 60–200 bpm

Time Signature: 4/4, swung 4/4

Candidates have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track. During the preparation time, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.

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

EAR TESTS

At Grade 8 there is one ear test, assessing melodic recall skills. An example is shown in the grade book.

MELODIC RECALL

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

Tempo: 95bpm

Time Signature: 4/4

Rhythms: Minims (half notes), crotchets (quarter notes), quaver (eighth notes).

The examiner will play a two-bar diatonic melody in the key of either C major, C natural minor or C harmonic minor, with a range up to an octave. There will be a C root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice (each time preceded by four clicks). After this, candidates will hear a one bar count-in and will then need to play the melody back to a metronome click. The first note of the melody will be either the root, third or fifth. It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The piano can be used to assist at any time prior to being counted in to perform the exam version.

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

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

The Examiner will ask five questions on topics relating to the candidate's choice of piece performed in the examination, and on general musical and instrumental knowledge.

Music Knowledge

At Grade 8 candidates will be asked to identify:

- The meaning of tempo marking *e.g.* bpm, *allegretto*, *poco moto* etc. and key signature marking
- Any note pitch name (bass and treble staves plus all ledger lines)
- Any note and rest values within the chosen piece
- The meaning and application of any expressive musical marking found in the piece including all dynamic markings, *rit.*, *rall.*, *a tempo*, *subito*, *simile*, *molto* and *poco a poco*
- The construction of three of four cadence types; perfect, imperfect, plagal and deceptive, in the key of C, D, F or G major.

The examiner will choose one cadence from the list and state the key. The candidate must then state the chord progression as chords from the chosen key

Instrument and Stylistic Knowledge

At Grade 8 candidates will be asked to:

- Identify the location, function and use of any part of the instrument
- Give a brief explanation of stylistic and technical considerations in preparation and performance of chosen piece (with demonstration – no use of notes or book)

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

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

GRADED CERTIFICATE

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

EXAM STRUCTURE

Candidates choose to play three pieces and all of the technical exercises as outlined below.

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 8 there are three groups of technical work as detailed in the information for the Graded Exams. Candidates must perform all of them, as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

REVISION HISTORY

31 Mar 2022

- Page 16: Guidance around adaptation and personalisation of repertoire pieces has been updated.

31 Mar 2025

- Added information about Graded Certificate exam type, including exam information and Qualification codes.
- Learning Outcomes added to Syllabus
- Page 13: Added guidance on selection of performance pieces stipulating that candidates may not be assessed on the same performance pieces more than once

9 May 2025

- Syllabus cover updated