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VOCALS

SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION 2021

DEBUT – GRADE 8



Awarding the
Contemporary Arts

Welcome to the Rockschool 2021 syllabus for Vocals

This syllabus guide is designed to give teachers, learners and candidates practical information on the graded qualifications run by RSL Awards.

This syllabus guide covers the following qualifications

- Graded Examinations: Debut to Grade 8
- Graded Certificates: Debut to Grade 8
- Performance certificates: Debut to Grade 8

Period of operation

This syllabus specification covers graded qualifications in Vocals from 2021.



VOCALS

SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION

2021 Edition

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CONTENTS

I	COVER	23	GRADE EXAMINATION
II	WELCOME	26	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE
III	TITLE PAGE	27	GRADED CERTIFICATE
IV	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		
V	CONTENTS		
VI	PREFACE	28	GRADE 1
1	QUALIFICATIONS AT A GLANCE	29	GRADE EXAMINATION
2	QUALIFICATIONS AT A GLANCE	33	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE
3	QUALIFICATIONS AT A GLANCE	33	GRADED CERTIFICATE
4	THE VALUE OF RSL QUALIFICATIONS		
4	QUALIFICATION SUMMARY	35	GRADE 2
5	FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT	36	GRADE EXAMINATION
5	INFORMATION AND SUPPORT	40	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE
		40	GRADED CERTIFICATE
6	EXAM GUIDELINES	42	GRADE 3
7	GENERAL GUIDELINES	43	GRADE EXAMINATION
7	PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES	47	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE
8	FREE CHOICE PIECES	48	GRADED CERTIFICATE
9	GRADE EXAMINATIONS	49	GRADE 4
10	EXAM ELEMENTS	50	GRADE EXAMINATION
10	EXAM DURATIONS	54	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE
10	ASSESSMENT INFORMATION	55	GRADED CERTIFICATE
11	MARKING SCHEME		
11	ATTAINMENT BANDS		
12	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES	56	GRADE 5
13	EXAM ELEMENTS	57	GRADE EXAMINATION
13	EXAM DURATIONS	62	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE
13	ASSESSMENT INFORMATION	62	GRADED CERTIFICATE
13	MARKING SCHEME		
13	ATTAINMENT BANDS		
14	GRADED CERTIFICATES	64	GRADE 6
15	EXAM ELEMENTS	65	GRADE EXAMINATION
15	ASSESSMENT INFORMATION	69	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE
		69	GRADED CERTIFICATE
16	ASSESSMENT AND GRADING CRITERIA	71	GRADE 7
17	LEARNING OUTCOMES	72	GRADE EXAMINATION
17	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	76	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE
18	GRADING CRITERIA	76	GRADED CERTIFICATE
22	DEBUT	78	GRADE 8
		79	GRADE EXAMINATION
		83	PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE
		83	GRADED CERTIFICATE

PREFACE

QUALIFICATIONS AT A GLANCE

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	501/0391/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

QUALIFICATIONS AT A GLANCE

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

QUALIFICATIONS AT A GLANCE

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.

THE VALUE OF RSL QUALIFICATIONS

RSL qualifications

We are committed to maintaining and improving our reputation for excellence by providing high quality education and training through our syllabuses, examinations, music and resources. We advocate an open access approach to qualifications, providing a range of syllabuses, 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).

Progression routes

RSL's 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 industry, and to further education (FE) and higher education (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 employers are confident that candidates with graded qualifications will have the necessary skills to work in a variety of different areas.

UCAS points

For students applying for work or university, many potential employers and institutions see graded exams in a very positive way. Recognised qualifications demonstrate an ability to dedicate commitment to extracurricular activities, providing evidence of versatility, which many students find beneficial within UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) applications and for university entrance interviews. Our qualifications at Level 3 (Grades 6 to 8) carry allocated points on the UCAS tariff. For full details relating to the allocation of UCAS points please see [rslawards.com/about-us/ucas-points](https://www.rslawards.com/about-us/ucas-points).

QUALIFICATION SUMMARY

Aims and broad objectives

The aim of graded 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.

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.

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 (pages 18 to 71) 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.

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

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.

Entry requirements

These qualifications are open to everyone who is capable of reaching the required standard; there are no entry requirements. However, candidates should be aware that the content at the higher grades will require a level of knowledge and understanding covered in previous qualifications. At the point of application, RSL will ensure that all candidates are fully informed about the requirements and demands of the qualification.

Age groups

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

Recommended prior learning (RPL)

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.

Exam entry

Candidates may enter online for any of the qualifications at various points in the calendar year in territories throughout the world. For further details on exam dates and fees, and to enter for a graded exam, visit the RSL website at: [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com).

FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT

Information and support

The RSL website [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com) has detailed information on all aspects of RSL examinations, including examination regulations, detailed marking schemes and assessment criteria as well as examples to help you prepare for our qualifications.

Complaints and appeals

All procedural complaints and appeals, including malpractice and requests for reasonable adjustments / special considerations, can be made through the website: [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com).

Equal opportunities

RSL's Equal Opportunities policy can be found on the website: [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com).

Contacts for help and support

All correspondence should be directed to info@rslawards.com: or to:

RSL

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7 High Street
Teddington
Middlesex
TW11 8EE

EXAM GUIDELINES

GENERAL GUIDELINES

RSL grade books

RSL publishes individual grade books for each grade. Each book contains ten popular songs in contemporary musical styles, arranged for the grade level, all of the required technical work for the grade, and examples and guidance of the other exam elements. Backing tracks are available for the songs from [rslawards.com/downloads](https://www.rslawards.com/downloads) using the download code included in the grade book. Also available from the download site are full recordings of each arrangement, featuring a professional vocalist's interpretation of the score.

Candidate notes

It is permitted to use grade books that contain handwritten notes made during the course of a candidate's study. However, for General Musicianship Questions that ask about a specific piece from the grade book, if the candidate's copy of the score contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the piece as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Photocopying pages

Candidates are allowed to photocopy relevant pages of sheet music as necessary to alleviate page turns but all copied materials must be handed to the examiner at the end of the examination. The examiner will not facilitate page turning for the candidate during their performance.

Microphone use

At Debut to Grade 5 the use of a microphone is optional – candidates may perform with a microphone if they feel it will enhance their performance. At Grades 6 to 8 all sections of the exam are to be performed with a microphone. A microphone and lead will be provided by the centre, but candidates can use their own microphone in the exam should they prefer.

For guidance on using microphones in Recorded Digital Exams, please visit our website here: [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com)

PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

Repertoire

Candidates taking a Grade Examination or Graded Certificate must perform at least one piece from the relevant grade book. Candidates taking a Performance Certificate must perform at least two pieces from the relevant grade book. Candidates are allowed to perform a number of 'free choice' pieces – guidelines on the selection and performance of these is given in the next section of this syllabus.

Performing from memory

Candidates are permitted to perform any or all of their pieces from their sheet music or from memory. Performing from memory is not compulsory and no additional marks will be awarded for doing so.

Adaptation and personalisation

Candidates should perform pieces as notated, except where they choose to embellish or rework any sections. 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. Note that Technical Exercises and unseen tests must be performed exactly as written.

Transposition to suit vocal range

Candidates are permitted to change the key of any song according to their vocal range. Each piece in the grade book is presented with a MIDI accompaniment file for candidates to use if they require the key of the piece to be adjusted. Candidates are responsible for bringing the audio file of the transposed accompaniment to the exam. The accompaniment should be using a standard piano sound. No further adaptation must be made to the file in the form of tempo or arrangement changes.

Setting levels

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check by asking the candidate to perform the opening bars of their first performance piece. This will set the levels for the exam and will take place alongside the backing track. No further sound checks will be undertaken.

Accompaniment

All songs must be performed to a backing track or with live accompaniment (including self-accompaniment). Where live accompaniment is selected, this must replicate the tempo, feel and style of the grade book arrangement as closely as possible. Where candidates use an alternative arrangement to the one provided in the grade book, this will be treated as a free choice piece (see guidance below). Candidates should inform RSL in advance if they are using a piano accompanist, and check with the examination centre for the availability of a piano ahead of their scheduled exam.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Overview

Candidates taking a Grade Examination or Graded Certificate are allowed to perform up to two 'free choice' pieces (pieces which aren't included in the relevant RSL grade book. Candidates taking a Performance Certificate are allowed to perform up to three free choice pieces. Free choice pieces must be available in fully notated sheet music and candidates must bring a copy of the sheet music for the examiner to refer to during the examination. This material will be retained by the examiner at the end of the examination.

Selection of free choice pieces

Free choice pieces must be in a modern popular genre such as pop, rock, jazz, country, blues, soul, reggae, film and musical theatre. Own compositions are acceptable. 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. Pieces should be selected carefully to ensure that they provide suitable opportunity for candidates to demonstrate the relevant assessment criteria. If a chosen free choice piece does not meet these requirements this may impact on the level of achievement possible within the examination.

Performance of free choice pieces

Free choice pieces can be performed to a backing track (without the examined part on the track), with live accompaniment (including self-accompaniment) or unaccompanied. If performing to a backing track the candidate must provide a device containing the audio. This can be any device with a 3.5mm jack output (e.g. mp3 player, portable CD player, phone or tablet). We recommend that where possible two different sources are brought, so there is a backup. Note that audio cannot be streamed as we cannot guarantee that good internet connectivity will be available in all venues.

Further guidance

A list of wider repertoire for Vocals is available at [rslawards.com/free-choice-pieces](https://www.rslawards.com/free-choice-pieces). This page also contains grade-specific free choice criteria and wider requirements which need to be observed in full to be eligible for use in the exam. Prior approval is not required, but any deviation/simplification/omissions from any aspect of the criteria or requirements may be reflected in the marks awarded. If there is doubt about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, advice on its suitability is available by emailing freechoicepieces@rslawards.com.

GRADE EXAMINATIONS

EXAM ELEMENTS

Grade Examinations consist of the following elements:

Grade	Prepared work	Unprepared work
Debut to Grade 5	- Performance Pieces (x3) - Technical Exercises	- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation - Ear Tests - General Musicianship Questions
Grades 6 to 8	- Performance Pieces (x3) - Technical Exercises	- Quick Study Pieces - Ear Tests - General Musicianship Questions

EXAM DURATIONS

Exam	Debut	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Duration (minutes)	15	20	20	25	27	27	32	32	32

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Assessment methodology

Grade Examinations in Vocals are assessed via an examination. All assessment of these is external and is undertaken by RSL Examiners. The assessment is divided into the following sections, the first two of which are prepared in advance, the following three are unseen until the exam. Candidates can choose to perform the Technical Exercises first if they wish – at the beginning of the exam, the examiner will ask the candidate if they want to begin with Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises.

1. Performance Pieces (60%)

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be 'free choice'.

2. Technical Exercises (15%)

Candidates will perform prepared technical tests covering knowledge of scales, arpeggios and intervals (from Grade 1), and perform prepared studies and backing vocals (Grades 4 to 8).

3. Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation / Quick Study Piece (10%)

At Debut to Grade 5 candidates have a choice of performing a piece of sight reading or a test of improvisation and interpretation. At Grades 6 to 8 all candidates will be asked to perform a quick study piece, which will include elements of sight reading and improvisation.

4. Ear Tests (10%)

Candidates will be asked a selection of ear tests assessing playback/recognition and/or recall of rhythms, melody and/or harmony.

5. General Musicianship Questions (5%)

Candidates will be asked five general musicianship questions.

MARKING SCHEME

Grade Examinations are marked out of 100. The marks available are as follows:

Exam element and total marks available	Attainment band and mark range		
	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Performance Piece 1 (20 marks)	18–20	15–17	12–14
Performance Piece 2 (20 marks)	18–20	15–17	12–14
Performance Piece 3 (20 marks)	18–20	15–17	12–14
Technical Exercises (15 marks)	18–20	11–12	9–10
Ear Tests (10 marks)	9–10	7–8	6
Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation (Debut to Grade 5) Quick Study Piece (Grades 6 to 8) (10 marks)	9–10	7–8	6
General Musicianship Questions (5 marks)	5 correct responses	4 correct responses	3 correct responses

ATTAINMENT BANDS

The attainment bands for Grade Examinations are as follows:

Attainment band	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Mark range	90–100	74–89	60–73
Percentage	90–100%	74–89%	60–73%

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

EXAM ELEMENTS

Performance Certificates are available from Debut to Grade 8. They consist of five performance pieces, performed in any order. There is no unprepared work.

EXAM DURATIONS

Exam	Debut	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Duration (minutes)	15	20	20	25	25	25	27	27	30

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Assessment methodology

Performance Certificates are assessed via an examination. All assessment of these is external and is undertaken by RSL Examiners. Candidates perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be 'free choice'.

MARKING SCHEME

Performance Certificates are marked out of 100. The marks available are as follows:

Exam element and total marks available	Attainment band and mark range		
	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Performance Piece 1 (20 marks)	18-20	15-17	12-14
Performance Piece 2 (20 marks)	18-20	15-17	12-14
Performance Piece 3 (20 marks)	18-20	15-17	12-14
Performance Piece 4 (20 marks)	18-20	15-17	12-14
Performance Piece 5 (20 marks)	18-20	15-17	12-14

ATTAINMENT BANDS

The attainment bands for Performance Certificates are as follows:

Attainment band	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Mark range	90-100	74-89	60-73
Percentage	90-100%	74-89%	60-73%

GRADED CERTIFICATES

EXAM ELEMENTS

Graded Certificates consist of the following elements:

Grade	Prepared work
Debut to Grade 8	▪ Performance Pieces (x3) ▪ Technical Exercises

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Assessment methodology

Grade Examinations in Vocals are assessed via an examination. All assessment of these is external and is undertaken by RSL Examiners. The assessment is divided into the following sections, the first two of which are prepared in advance, the following three are unseen until the exam. Candidates can choose to perform the Technical Exercises first if they wish – at the beginning of the exam, the examiner will ask the candidate if they want to begin with Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises.

▪ 1. Performance Pieces (75%)

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be 'free choice'.

▪ 2. Technical Exercises (25%)

Candidates will perform prepared technical tests covering knowledge of scales, arpeggios and intervals (from Grade1), and perform prepared studies and backing vocals (Grades 4 to 8).

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING CRITERIA

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes describe the skills and knowledge that candidates will be able to demonstrate during the exam. Grade Examinations reference all three learning outcomes below, whereas Performance Certificates only require the first outcome to be met:

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 presonding 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 presonding an unseen selection of set technical demands
- Demonstrate musical understanding through a range of an unseen selection of set tests

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The following assessment criteria are used to assess the learning outcomes:

Assessment criteria	Definition
Command of Instrument	The quality of the sound produced from the instrument, including the consistency of sound/tone and 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 and 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 and Expression	An expressive and commanding performance of the notated material dictated by the demands of the performance piece.

The assessment criteria that apply to each element of the exam are shown in the following tables. Assessment criteria within each element are equally weighted: for example, in the Performance Pieces each assessment criteria makes up 25% of the total marks, whereas in the Ear Tests the Accuracy and Understanding criteria makes up 100% of the marks.

GRADING CRITERIA

Performance Pieces

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (18–20)	Merit (15–17)	Pass (12–14)	Below Pass 1 (6–11)	Below Pass 2 (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 and Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
	Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time	Understanding of musical structure not evidenced	
Style and 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

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (13–15)	Merit (11–12)	Pass (9–10)	Below Pass 1 (4–8)	Below Pass 2 (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 and Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
	Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time	Understanding of musical structure not evidenced	

Sight Reading / Improvisation & Interpretation / Quick Study Piece

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (9–10)	Merit (7–8)	Pass (6)	Below Pass 1 (3–5)	Below Pass 2 (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 and Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
	Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time	Understanding of musical structure not evidenced	

Ear Tests

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (9–10)	Merit (7–8)	Pass (6)	Below Pass 1 (3–5)	Below Pass 2 (0–2)
Accuracy and Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
	Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time	Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time	Understanding of musical structure not evidenced	

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING CRITERIA

General Musicianship Questions

Assessment criteria	Grading criteria and mark range				
	Distinction (5)	Merit (4)	Pass (3)	Below Pass 1 (2)	Below Pass 2 (0-1)
Responses to questions	5 correct responses	4 correct responses	3 correct responses	2 correct responses	0-1 correct responses

DEBUT

The Debut Vocals exam is for candidates who have been learning a short time and have developed elementary skills, techniques, coordination and musical understanding.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios and Rhythmic Studies. The scale and arpeggio are to be performed to a click track, the rhythmic study to a backing track. The exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major scale	Candidate's choice	Up to the 5th	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major arpeggio	Candidate's choice	Up to the 5th	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Rhythmic Studies

Candidates are to perform the rhythmic study from the grade book. Candidates will hear a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 80bpm.

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces. The grade book contains the following pieces:

Artist	Piece
Shakira	Try Everything
John Lennon	Imagine
Camila Cabello	Havana
One Direction	That's What Makes You Beautiful
Little Mix	Change Your Life
Bob Marley	Try Everything
Post Malone	Only Wanna Be with You (Pokémon 25 version)
The Crystals	Da Doo Ron Ron (When He Walked Me Home)
Bill Withers	Lean on Me
Junior Senior	Move Your Feet

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING

Requirements

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen rhythm to perform, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The rhythm will be 4 bars long, all on the note C4. Candidates may sing in any octave. The tempo will be 70bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Requirements

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression, over which they will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The chord progression will be 4 bars long, based on chords I, IV and V, starting and finishing on the root chord (C). The tempo will be 70bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track three times. Candidates can rehearse during the first and second playthroughs, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their improvisation over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Rhythmic Recall

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play two notes. Candidates will be asked to identify whether the second note is higher or lower than the first. The notes will be in the key of A minor, starting on the root note. The notes will both be whole notes at 80bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat vocal count in. After the second playthrough candidates will give their answer. Candidates should use the words 'higher' or 'lower' in their answer.

TEST 2: RHYTHMIC RECALL

There are two parts to this test: Rhythm Recall and Identification.

Part 1: Rhythm Recall**Requirements**

The examiner will play a 2-bar rhythm. Candidates will be asked to sing the rhythm back, on any pitch, using 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds. The rhythm will be played on a single note, to a drum backing based on half notes, quarter notes and eighth notes. The tempo will be 80bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing the rhythm back. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

Part 2: Identification

Requirements

Candidates will be asked to identify the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

Process

Candidates will be shown two notated rhythms. They will be asked to identify one which matches the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- The treble clef
- The time signature
- The rhythmic value of one note, from the following:
 - Whole note
 - Half note
 - Quarter note
- A rest (of any value)

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- Where is your jaw?
- Where are your lungs?
- Why is it important to warm up before singing?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE**PERFORMANCE PIECES**

Candidates will perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be free choice pieces. There is no unprepared work.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are three groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios and Rhythmic Studies. The scale and arpeggio are to be performed to a click track, the rhythmic study to a backing track. The exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Candidates will perform all of the technical exercises in the grade book as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com)

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major scale	Candidate's choice	Up to the 5th	80bpm	Click track

The candidate will choose a starting note (they can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major arpeggio	Candidate's choice	Up to the 5th	80bpm	Click track

The candidate will choose a starting note (they can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Rhythmic Studies

Candidates are to perform the rhythmic study from the grade book. Candidates will hear a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 80bpm.

GRADE 1

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

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are four groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals and Technical Studies. The scale, arpeggio and interval are to be performed to a click track, the technical study to a backing track. The exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to prepare both of the following arpeggios, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major arpeggio Pattern 1	Candidate's choice	Up to the 5th	80bpm	Click track
Major arpeggio Pattern 2	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 2nd, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Major 3rd, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group D: Technical Studies

Candidates are to prepare both the rhythmic study and the melodic study from the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam.

Rhythmic study

If the examiner requests the rhythmic study, candidates will hear a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 110bpm.

Melodic study

If the examiner requests the melodic study, they will ask candidates which option they are going to perform (Option 1: C major or Option 2: F major). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 90bpm.

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces. The grade book contains the following pieces:

Artist	Song
Queen	We Will Rock You
Courtney Bowman	It Means Beautiful (from Everybody's Talking About Jamie)
Ziv Zaifman, Hugh Jackman and Michelle Williams	A Million Dreams (from The Greatest Showman)
Owl City	Fireflies
Ben E King	Stand by Me
Billie Eilish	I Love You
Rihanna	Please Don't Stop the Music
Auli'i Cravalho	How Far I'll Go (from Moana)
Lily Allen	Somewhere Only We Know
Kelvin Jones	Friends

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING

Requirements

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen melody to perform, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be 4 bars long, in the key of C major, covering a range of up to a major 3rd. Candidates may sing in any octave. The tempo will be 70bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Requirements

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression, over which they will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The chord progression will be 4 bars long, based on chords I, IV and V, starting and finishing on the root chord (C). The tempo will be 75bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track three times. Candidates can rehearse during the first and second playthroughs, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their improvisation over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Rhythmic Recall

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play three notes. Candidates will be asked to identify whether the last two notes are higher or lower in sequence (i.e. whether the second note is higher or lower than the first, and whether the third note is higher or lower than the second). The notes will be in the key of A minor, starting on the root note. The rhythmic values of the notes may include whole notes and half notes at 85bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat vocal count in. After the second playthrough candidates will give their answer. Candidates should use the words 'higher', 'lower', 'up' or 'down' in their answer.

TEST 2: RHYTHMIC RECALL

There are two parts to this test: Rhythm Recall and Identification.

Part 1: Rhythm Recall

Requirements

The examiner will play a 2-bar rhythm. Candidates will be asked to sing the rhythm back, on any pitch, using 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds. The rhythm will be played on a single note, to a drum backing. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing the rhythm back. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

Part 2: Identification

Requirements

Candidates will be asked to identify the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

Process

Candidates will be shown two notated rhythms. They will be asked to identify one which matches the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- The treble clef
- The time signature
- The rhythmic value of one note, from the following:
 - Whole note
 - Half note
 - Quarter note
- A rest (of any value)

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- Where is your diaphragm?
- Where is your larynx?
- What is the difference between head voice and chest voice?
- Why is it important to warm up before singing?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be free choice pieces. There is no unprepared work.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

Candidates will perform all of the technical exercises in the grade book as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com)

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to prepare both of the following arpeggios, as written in the grade book.

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major arpeggio Pattern 1	Candidate's choice	Up to the 5th	80bpm	Click track
Major arpeggio Pattern 2	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book.

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 2nd, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Major 3rd, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

Group D: Technical Studies

Candidates are to prepare both the rhythmic study and the melodic study from the grade book.

Rhythmic study

If the examiner requests the rhythmic study, candidates will hear a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 110bpm.

Melodic study

If the examiner requests the melodic study, they will ask candidates which option they are going to perform (Option 1: C major or Option 2: F major). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 90bpm.

GRADE 2

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

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are four groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals and Technical Studies. The scale, arpeggio and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the technical study to a backing track. The exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Natural minor scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to prepare both of the following arpeggios, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Minor arpeggio Pattern 1	Candidate's choice	Up to the 5th	80bpm	Click track
Minor arpeggio Pattern 2	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 3rd, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Minor 3rd, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group D: Technical Studies

Candidates are to prepare both the rhythmic study and the melodic study from the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam.

Rhythmic study

If the examiner requests the rhythmic study, candidates will hear a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 86bpm.

Melodic study

If the examiner requests the melodic study, they will ask candidates which option they are going to perform (Option 1: A major or Option 2: E major). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 100bpm.

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces. The grade book contains the following pieces:

Artist	Song
Anika Noni Rose	Almost There (from The Princess and the Frog)
Macy Gray	I Try
Justin Timberlake	Can't Stop the Feeling
Childish Gambino	Summertime Magic
The White Stripes	Seven Nation Army
Harry Styles	Sign of the Times
Ella Fitzgerald	Summertime
Noisettes	Don't Upset the Rhythm
Ellie Goulding	Your Song
Ed Sheeran	Afterglow

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING

Requirements

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen melody to perform, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be 4 bars long, in the key of C major or A minor, covering a range of up to a major 3rd. The tempo will be 70–80bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Requirements

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression, over which they will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The chord progression will be 4 bars long, in the key of A minor. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track three times. Candidates can rehearse during the first and second playthroughs, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their improvisation over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Rhythmic Recall

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play a melody. Candidates will then sing back the melody to a drum backing, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be a 2-bar diatonic melody in the key of C major, starting on the root note, using the first three notes of the scale. Candidates may sing in any octave. The melody will be based on half notes and quarter notes. The tempo will be 85bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should play the melody back to the drum backing.

TEST 2: RHYTHMIC RECALL

There are two parts to this test: Rhythm Recall and Identification.

Part 1: Rhythm Recall

Requirements

The examiner will play a 2-bar rhythm. Candidates will be asked to sing the rhythm back, on any pitch, using 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds. The rhythm will be played on a single note, to a drum backing. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing the rhythm back. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

Part 2: Identification

Requirements

Candidates will be asked to identify the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

Process

Candidates will be shown two notated rhythms. They will be asked to identify one which matches the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- Identify any pitch name (candidates will not need to state flat, sharp or natural)
- Identify rhythmic values, from the following:
 - Whole note
 - Half note
 - Quarter note
 - Eighth note
 - Sixteenth note
- Identify any rest values
- Identify and explain the meaning of any of the following:
 - 4/4 time signature marking
 - Repeat marks, 1st and 2nd time bars
 - Staccato marks
 - Slurs

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- What is the meaning of 'diction'?
- What is the meaning of 'tone'?
- During a song, when would be a better time to take a breath?
- Why is posture important when singing?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be free choice pieces. There is no unprepared work.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

Candidates will perform all of the technical exercises in the grade book as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com)

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Natural minor scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to prepare both of the following arpeggios, as written in the grade book.

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Minor arpeggio Pattern 1	Candidate's choice	Up to the 5th	80bpm	Click track
Minor arpeggio Pattern 2	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book:

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 3rd, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Minor 3rd, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

Group D: Technical Studies

Candidates are to prepare both the rhythmic study and the melodic study from the grade book.

Rhythmic study

If the candidate chooses to perform the rhythmic study, candidates will hear a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 86bpm.

Melodic study

If the candidate chooses to perform the melodic study, they will ask candidates which option they are going to perform (Option 1: A major or Option 2: E major). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 100bpm.

GRADE 3

The Grade 3 Vocals 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 have since acquired greater use of technique, rhythms, coordination and musical understanding. Improvisation phrasing is now confident and articulate and candidates have started to develop the beginnings of stylistic awareness.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are four groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals and Technical Studies. The scales, arpeggios and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the technical study to a backing track. The exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to prepare both of the following scales, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	90bpm	Click track
Natural minor scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to prepare both of the following arpeggios, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major arpeggio	Candidate's choice	1 octave	90bpm	Click track
Minor arpeggio	Candidate's choice	1 octave	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Perfect 4th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Perfect 5th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group D: Technical Studies

Candidates are to prepare both the rhythmic study and the melodic study from the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam.

Rhythmic study

If the examiner requests the rhythmic study, candidates will hear a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 95bpm.

Melodic study

If the examiner requests the melodic study, they will ask candidates which option they are going to perform: (Option 1: F# or Option 2: B# minor). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 100bpm.

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces. The grade book contains the following pieces:

Artist	Song
Judy Kuhn	Colors of the Wind (from Pocahontas)
Bruno Mars	Marry You
Taylor Swift	22
Billie Holiday	All of Me
George Ezra	Shotgun
Pharrell Williams	Happy
Jon Batiste	It's All Right (from Soul)
Amy Winehouse	Valerie
Birdy	People Help the People
Imagine Dragons	Radioactive

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen melody to perform, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be 4 bars long, in the key of F major or D minor, covering a range of up to a perfect 5th. Candidates may sing in any octave. The tempo will be 75–85bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION**Requirements**

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression, over which they will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The chord progression will be 4 bars long, in the key of G major or E minor. The tempo will be 80–90bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track three times. Candidates can rehearse during the first and second playthroughs, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their improvisation over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Rhythmic Recall

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play a melody. Candidates will then sing back the melody to a drum backing, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be a 2-bar diatonic melody in the key of C major or A minor, starting on the root note, using up to the first five notes of the scale. Candidates may sing in any octave. The melody may contain half notes, quarter notes and eighth notes and may contain rests. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should play the melody back to the drum backing.

TEST 2: RHYTHMIC RECALL

There are two parts to this test: Rhythm Recall and Identification.

Part 1: Rhythm Recall**Requirements**

The examiner will play a 2-bar rhythm. Candidates will be asked to sing the rhythm back, on any pitch, using 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds. The rhythm will be played on a single note, to a drum backing. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing the rhythm back. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

Part 2: Identification**Requirements**

Candidates will be asked to identify the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

Process

Candidates will be shown two notated rhythms. They will be asked to identify one which matches the rhythm they heard in Part 1.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- Identify any pitch name (including stating flat, sharp or natural)
- Identify rhythmic values, from the following:
 - Whole note
 - Half note
 - Quarter note
 - Eighth note
 - Sixteenth note
 - Triplet eighth notes
- Identify any interval up to a fifth between two adjacent notes (candidates will not need to state major, minor or perfect)
- Identify and explain the meaning of any of the following:
 - 4/4 time signature marking
 - Repeat marks, 1st and 2nd time bars
 - Staccato marks
 - Slurs
 - Crescendo/diminuendo
 - D.C. al Coda, D.S. al Coda and al Fine markings
 - Ad lib.

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- What is the meaning of the 'break'?
- What is the meaning of 'transition'?
- How do you support a long sustained note?
- Give an example of a type of food that would be good to eat before a performance?
- Give an example of a type of food that would not be good to eat before a performance?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE**PERFORMANCE PIECES**

Candidates will perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be free choice pieces. There is no unprepared work.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

Candidates will perform all of the technical exercises in the grade book as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com)

There are four groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals and Technical Studies. The scale, arpeggio and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the technical study to a backing track. The exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Natural minor scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to prepare both of the following arpeggios, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Minor arpeggio Pattern 1	Candidate's choice	Up to the 5th	80bpm	Click track
Minor arpeggio Pattern 2	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book:

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Perfect 4th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Perfect 5th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

Group D: Technical Studies

Candidates are to prepare both the rhythmic study and the melodic study from the grade book.

Rhythmic study

If the examiner requests the rhythmic study, candidates will hear a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 95bpm.

Melodic study

If the examiner requests the melodic study, they will ask candidates which option they are going to perform: (Option 1: F# or Option 2: B# minor). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. The tempo is 100bpm.

GRADE 4

The Grade 4 Vocals exam is for candidates who are ready for intermediate level playing. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 3 and have since acquired greater use of technique, more complex rhythms, coordination 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.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Melodic Studies and Backing Vocals. The scale, arpeggios and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the melodic study and backing vocals to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major pentatonic scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to prepare both of the following arpeggios, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major arpeggio	Candidate's choice	Up to a tenth	80bpm	Click track
Major arpeggio (ascending), dominant 7 arpeggio (descending)	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 6th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Major 7th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group D: Melodic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the two melodic studies given in the grade book. The examiner will ask which study the candidate has prepared (Study 1 or Study 2). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has two notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare both of these for their chosen exercise. The examiner will ask which exercise the candidate has prepared (Exercise 1 or Exercise 2). They will then select one of the vocal parts for the candidate to perform (the other two notated parts will be included on the backing track). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces. The grade book contains the following pieces:

Artist	Song
Queen	Another One Bites the Dust
Billie Eilish	Ocean Eyes
Stevie Wonder	Higher Ground
BTS	Dynamite
Nina Simone	My Baby Just Cares for Me
Massive Attack	Teardrop
Adele	Someone like You
Passenger	Let Her Go
Coldplay	Magic
Rihanna	Diamonds

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING

Requirements

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen piece to perform. The piece will be 8 bars long, in the key of D major, B minor or E minor, covering a range of up to an octave. Candidates may sing in any octave. During the first 6 bars candidates will sing the written melody and lyrics. During the final 2 bars candidates will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The tempo will be 80–90bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Requirements

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression. The chord progression will be 8 bars long, in the key of D or B $\flat$ major. During the first 2 bars candidates will sing the written melody and lyrics. During the final 6 bars candidates will improvise a melody, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The tempo will be 90–100bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track twice. Candidates can rehearse during the first playthrough, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their performance over the final playthrough will be assessed. Both playthroughs will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Harmony Vocals

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play a melody. Candidates will then sing back the melody to a drum backing, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be a 2-bar diatonic melody in the key of D major or E natural minor, starting on the root note, using up to the first six notes of the scale. Candidates may sing in any octave. The melody may contain half notes, quarter notes and eighth notes and may contain rests. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should play the melody back to the drum backing.

TEST 2: HARMONY VOCALS

Requirements

The examiner will play a 3-bar melody. Candidates will be asked to harmonise the melody a major 3rd above, using the same rhythm and lyrics. The melody will be based on chords I and IV. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

Candidates will be asked whether they would like a higher-pitched test or a lower-pitched test. The higher-pitched test will be in C or A major (Option 1), the lower-pitched test in D or F major (Option 2). They will be given the lyrics for their test. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by the root note and a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing their harmony line. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- Identify any pitch name (including stating flat, sharp or natural)
- Identify note values, and adjacent note value combinations, from the following:
 - Whole note
 - Half note
 - Quarter note
 - Eighth note
 - Sixteenth note
 - Triplet eighth notes
- Identify rest values, and adjacent rest value combinations, from the following:
 - Whole note rests
 - Half note rests
 - Quarter note rests
 - Eighth note rests
 - Sixteenth note rests
- Identify any interval up to a 7th between two adjacent notes (candidates will not need to state major, minor or perfect)
- Identify and explain the meaning of any of the following:
 - Any time signature marking
 - Any dynamic marking
 - Any tempo marking
 - Ad lib.

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- How do you ensure consistent vocal tone?
- How do you create breathy (aspirate) tone?
- When would you use vibrato?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be free choice pieces. There is no unprepared work.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Melodic Studies and Backing Vocals. The scale, arpeggios and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the melodic study and backing vocals to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Candidates will perform all of the technical exercises in the grade book as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com)

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major pentatonic scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to prepare both of the following arpeggios, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major arpeggio	Candidate's choice	Up to a tenth	80bpm	Click track
Major arpeggio (ascending), dominant 7 arpeggio (descending)	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book:

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 6th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Major 7th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

Group D: Melodic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the two melodic studies given in the grade book. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has two notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare both of these for their chosen exercise. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

GRADE 5

The Grade 5 Vocals exam is for candidates who have fully consolidated their intermediate level playing. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 4 and have since acquired a greater use of appropriate technique, more complex rhythms, coordination 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.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Melodic Studies and Backing Vocals. The scale, arpeggios and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the melodic study and backing vocals to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Minor pentatonic scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major arpeggio (ascending), dominant 7 arpeggio (descending)	Candidate's choice	Up to a twelfth	80bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Minor 6th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Minor 7th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group D: Melodic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the two melodic studies given in the grade book. The examiner will ask which study the candidate has prepared (Study 1 or Study 2). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has two notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare both of these for their chosen exercise. The examiner will ask which exercise the candidate has prepared (Exercise 1 or Exercise 2). They will then select one of the vocal parts for the candidate to perform (the other two notated parts will be included on the backing track). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces. The grade book contains the following pieces:

Artist	Song
Fleetwood Mac	Don't Stop
Kings of Leon	Use Somebody
Lady Gaga	A Million Reasons
Ella Fitzgerald	Dream a Little Dream of Me
Adele	Chasing Pavements
Marvin Gaye / Allen Stone	What's Going On
Jorja Smith	Don't Watch Me Cry
Sam Smith	I'm Not the Only One
John Legend	All Of Me
Christina Aguilera	Reflection (from Mulan)

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Before seeing the tests, the examiner will ask whether the candidate wishes to perform a piece of sight reading or take a test of improvisation and interpretation. Once the candidate has decided, they cannot change their mind.

SIGHT READING

Requirements

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen piece to perform. The piece will be 8 bars long, in the key of D major, B $\flat$ major, B minor, D minor or E minor, starting on the root note, covering a range of up to an octave. Candidates may sing in any octave. During the first 6 bars candidates will sing the written melody and lyrics. During the final 2 bars candidates will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The tempo will be 85–95bpm.

Process

Candidates will be given 90 seconds to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. Candidates will receive the same choice when performing the test.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Requirements

Candidates will be given a previously unseen chord progression. The chord progression will be 8 bars long, in the key of D major, B $\flat$ major, E minor or D minor. During the first 6 bars candidates will sing the written melody and lyrics. During the final 2 bars candidates will improvise a melody, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The tempo will be 90–100bpm.

Process

Candidates will hear the backing track twice. Candidates can rehearse during the first playthrough, before performing the improvisation over the third playthrough. Only their performance over the final playthrough will be assessed. Both playthroughs will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Harmony Vocals

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play a melody. Candidates will then sing back the melody to a drum backing, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be a 2-bar diatonic melody in the key of B $\flat$ major or C minor, starting on the root note, using up to the first six notes of the scale (for minor key tests this will be the first six notes of the natural minor scale). Candidates may sing in any octave. The melody may contain half notes, quarter notes and eighth notes and will contain at least one rest. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should play the melody back to the drum backing.

TEST 2: HARMONY VOCALS

Requirements

The examiner will play a 4-bar melody. Candidates will be asked to harmonise the melody a diatonic 3rd above, using the same rhythm and lyrics. The melody will be based on chords I, IV and V. The tempo will be 90–110bpm.

Process

Candidates will be asked whether they would like a higher-pitched test or a lower-pitched test. The higher-pitched test will be in A or F major (Option 1), the lower-pitched test in C or A major (Option 2). They will be given the lyrics for their test. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by the root note and a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing their harmony line. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Four of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be four music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- Identify any pitch name (including stating flat, sharp or natural)
- Identify note values, and adjacent note value combinations, from the following:
 - Whole note
 - Half note
 - Quarter note
 - Eighth note
 - Sixteenth note
 - Triplet eighth notes
- Identify rest values, and adjacent rest value combinations, from the following:
 - Whole note rests
 - Half note rests
 - Quarter note rests
 - Eighth note rests
 - Sixteenth note rests
- Identify any interval up to a octave between two adjacent notes (candidates will not need to state major, minor or perfect)
- Identify and explain the meaning of any of the following:
 - Any time signature marking
 - Any dynamic marking
 - Any tempo marking
 - Any key signature
 - A swung rhythm marking

Part 2: Knowledge of the Voice

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- Using your articulators (mouth/lips/tongue/teeth/jaw), how can you modify a bright 'ee' sound to produce a less bright tone?
- How would you prevent straining during prolonged use of louder dynamics?
- Can you suggest two exercises that can help develop control over dynamics across your range?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be free choice pieces. There is no unprepared work.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Melodic Studies and Backing Vocals. The scale, arpeggios and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the melodic study and backing vocals to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Candidates will perform all of the technical exercises in the grade book as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com)

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Minor pentatonic scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	80bpm	Click track

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major arpeggio (ascending), dominant 7 arpeggio (descending)	Candidate's choice	Up to a twelfth	80bpm	Click track

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following intervals, as written in the grade book:

Interval	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Minor 6th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Minor 7th, ascending	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

Group D: Melodic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the two melodic studies given in the grade book. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has two notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare both of these for their chosen exercise. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

GRADE 6

The Grade 6 Vocals 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, coordination 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.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Backing Vocals and Stylistic Studies. The scale, arpeggio and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the backing vocals and stylistic study to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Blues scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major and diminished arpeggio	Candidate's choice	Up to a fifth	100bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following interval sequences, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Interval sequence	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 7ths and major 6ths	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Minor 7ths and minor 6ths	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group D: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has three notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare all of these for their chosen exercise. The examiner will ask which exercise the candidate has prepared (Exercise 1 or Exercise 2). They will then select one of the vocal parts for the candidate to perform (the other two notated parts will be included on the backing track). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Stylistic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the eight stylistic studies given in the grade book. The studies are divided into the four distinct genre groups below, with two options for each genre group:

Pop and Musical Theatre

Soul and Contemporary R&B

Jazz and Blues

Rock and Indie

The examiner will ask which genre group and which study the candidate has prepared (Study 1 or Study 2). Candidates may sing in any octave but the studies cannot be transposed to a different key. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. *Note that the choice of genre group for this test will determine the style of the Quick Study Piece the examiner will select in the exam.*

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces. The grade book contains the following pieces:

Artist	Song
The Weeknd	Blinding Lights
Alanis Morissette	You Learn
Labrinth	Jealous
Ariana Grande	Tattooed Heart
Lewis Capaldi	Someone You Loved
Marvin Gaye	I Heard It Through the Grapevine
Bastille / Marshmello	Happier
Sarah Vaughan	Lullaby of Birdland
Beyoncé	Halo
Tiana Major9, EARTHGANG	Collide (from Queen & Slim soundtrack)

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

QUICK STUDY PIECE

Requirements

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen piece to perform, the style of which will be one of the two from the genre group that candidates chose for their Stylistic Study. The piece will be 12 bars long, in any major or minor key up to three sharps/flats, covering a range of up to a 10th. In bars 1 to 4 candidates will sing the written melody and lyrics; in bars 5 to 8 candidates will improvise a variation on the first 4 bars, developing the melody and lyrics as they wish; in bars 9 to 12 candidates will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The tempo will be 70–160bpm.

Preparation

Candidates will be asked whether they would like a higher-pitched test or a lower-pitched test. Candidates will be played a full mix version of the track, including the notated parts. They will then be given 3 minutes to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. The root note will be played again halfway through the practice time.

Performance

After the practice time, the backing track will be played twice more with the notated parts now absent. The first time is for candidates to rehearse and the second time to perform the final version for the exam. Only the performance over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Harmony Vocals

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play a melody. Candidates will then sing back the melody to a drum backing, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be a 2-bar diatonic melody in the key of A major or D natural minor, starting on the root note or the 5th, covering a range of up to an octave above the root note. Candidates may sing in any octave. The melody may contain half notes, dotted half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes and sixteenth notes and will contain rests. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should play the melody back to the drum backing.

TEST 2: HARMONY VOCALS**Requirements**

The examiner will play a 4-bar melody. Candidates will be asked to harmonise the melody a diatonic 3rd or 4th above, using the same rhythm and lyrics. The melody will be based on chords I, IV, V and VI^m. The tempo will be 90–120bpm.

Process

Candidates will be asked whether they would like a higher-pitched test or a lower-pitched test. The higher-pitched test will be in C or A major (Option 1), the lower-pitched test in G or A major (Option 2). They will be given the lyrics for their test. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by the root note and a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing their harmony line. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Three of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fourth will be about improvisation, and the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice or the microphone. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be three music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- Identify and explain any two sections of notation
- Identify and explain any intervals up to a octave between two adjacent notes (including stating major, minor or perfect)

Part 2: Improvisation

Candidates will be asked to briefly describe and demonstrate their approach to how they would improvise any part of the song, making reference to melody, rhythm, phrasing, dynamics and expression. Candidates can choose the part of the song.

Part 3: Knowledge of the Voice and the Microphone

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice or the microphone, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- Can you name three effective resonators for singing?
- Can you explain the difference between 'aspirate onset' and 'glottal onset'?
- Which exercises might be safe to perform when your voice is tired or you have a sore throat?
- How can you balance your sound on microphone when switching between chest voice (low register) and head/falsetto voice (high register)?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be free choice pieces. There is no unprepared work.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Melodic Studies and Backing Vocals. The scale, arpeggios and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the melodic study and backing vocals to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Candidates will perform all of the technical exercises in the grade book as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com)

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Blues scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major and diminished arpeggio	Candidate's choice	Up to a fifth	100bpm	Click track

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following interval sequences, as written in the grade book.

Interval sequence	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 7ths and major 6ths	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Minor 7ths and minor 6ths	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

Group D: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has three notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare all of these for their chosen exercise (Exercise 1 or Exercise 2). They will perform all three of the vocal parts in turn (the other two notated parts will be included on the backing track). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Stylistic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the eight stylistic studies given in the grade book. The studies are divided into the four distinct genre groups below, with two options for each genre group:

Pop and Musical Theatre

Soul and Contemporary R&B

Jazz and Blues

Rock and Indie

The candidate may choose one study from one group (Study 1 or Study 2). Candidates may sing in any octave but the studies cannot be transposed to a different key. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

GRADE 7

The Grade 7 Vocals 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.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Backing Vocals and Stylistic Studies. The scale, arpeggio and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the backing vocals and stylistic study to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Harmonic minor scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Augmented arpeggio	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following interval sequences, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Interval sequence	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 3rds and major 2nds	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Minor 3rds and minor 2nds	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group D: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has three notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare all of these for their chosen exercise. The examiner will ask which exercise the candidate has prepared, they will then select one of the vocal parts for the candidate to perform (the other two notated parts will be included on the backing track). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Stylistic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the eight stylistic studies given in the grade book. The studies are divided into the four distinct genre groups below, with two options for each genre group:

- Pop and Musical Theatre
- Soul and Contemporary R&B
- Jazz and Blues
- Rock and Indie

The examiner will ask which genre group and which study the candidate has prepared (Study 1 or Study 2). Candidates may sing in any octave but the studies cannot be transposed to a different key. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. *Note that the choice of genre group for this test will determine the style of the Quick Study Piece the examiner will select in the exam.*

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces. The grade book contains the following pieces:

Artist	Song
Chaka Khan	Ain't Nobody
Free	Alright Now
Hamzaa	Sunday Morning
Muse	Feeling Good
Gregory Porter	Hey Laura
Sarah Vaughan	Invitation
Etta James	Something's Got a Hold on Me
Hozier	Movement
Leona Lewis	Bleeding Love
Jeff Buckley	Lover, You Should've Come Over

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

QUICK STUDY PIECE

Requirements

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen piece to perform, the style of which will be one of the two from the genre group that candidates chose for their Stylistic Study. The piece will be 12 bars long, in any major or minor key up to four sharps/flats, covering a range of up to a 10th. In bars 1 to 4 candidates will sing the written melody and lyrics; in bars 5 to 8 candidates will improvise a variation on the first 4 bars, developing the melody and lyrics as they wish; in bars 9 to 12 candidates will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The tempo will be 70–160bpm.

Preparation

Candidates will be asked whether they would like a higher-pitched test or a lower-pitched test. Candidates will be played a full mix version of the track, including the notated parts. They will then be given 3 minutes to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. The root note will be played again halfway through the practice time.

Performance

After the practice time, the backing track will be played twice more with the notated parts now absent. The first time is for candidates to rehearse and the second time to perform the final version for the exam. Only the performance over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Harmony Vocals

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play a melody. Candidates will then sing back the melody to a drum backing, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be a 2-bar diatonic melody in the key of B major or E natural minor, starting on the root note or the 5th. Candidates may sing in any octave. The melody may contain half notes, dotted half notes, quarter notes, dotted quarter notes, eighth notes, dotted eighth notes and sixteenth notes and will contain rests. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should play the melody back to the drum backing.

TEST 2: HARMONY VOCALS**Requirements**

The examiner will play a 4-bar melody. Candidates will be asked to harmonise the melody a diatonic 3rd or 4th above, using the same rhythm and lyrics. The melody will be based on diatonic chords. The tempo will be 90–130bpm.

Process

Candidates will be asked whether they would like a higher-pitched test or a lower-pitched test. The higher-pitched test will be in A major or E minor (Option 1), the lower-pitched test in E major or B minor (Option 2). They will be given the lyrics for their test. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by the root note and a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing their harmony line. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Three of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fourth will be about improvisation, and the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice or the microphone. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be three music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- ▶ Identify and explain any two sections of notation
- ▶ Identify and explain any interval up to a octave between two adjacent notes (including stating major, minor or perfect)

Part 2: Improvisation

Candidates will be asked to briefly describe and demonstrate their approach to how they would improvise any part of the song, making reference to melody, rhythm, phrasing, dynamics and expression. Candidates can choose the part of the song.

Part 3: Knowledge of the Voice and the Microphone

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice or the microphone, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- What type of exercise might you use to practise 'flipping between registers', including the pitches you would use in the exercise for your voice?
- Can you give two examples of vocal effects that you might employ while singing in a rock style?
- Can you explain the difference between 'warm-ups' and 'technical practice', including one example of the type of exercise used for each?
- What equalization settings might you use to correct a singer with a very 'nasal' sound?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be free choice pieces. There is no unprepared work.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Melodic Studies and Backing Vocals. The scale, arpeggios and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the melodic study and backing vocals to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Candidates will perform all of the technical exercises in the grade book as detailed in the guidance that you can download at [rslawards.com](https://www.rslawards.com)

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Harmonic minor scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Augmented arpeggio	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following interval sequences, as written in the grade book:

Interval sequence	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 3rds and major 2nds	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Minor 3rds and minor 2nds	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

Group D: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has three notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare all of these for their chosen exercise (Exercise 1 or Exercise 2). They will perform all three of the vocal parts in turn (the other two notated parts will be included on the backing track). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Stylistic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the eight stylistic studies given in the grade book. The studies are divided into the four distinct genre groups below, with two options for each genre group:

- Pop and Musical Theatre
- Soul and Contemporary R&B
- Jazz and Blues
- Rock and Indie

The candidate may choose one study from one group (Study 1 or Study 2). Candidates may sing in any octave but the studies cannot be transposed to a different key. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

GRADE 8

The Grade 8 Vocals 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 have since developed heightened technique, use of expressive devices, rhythmic complexity, fluency, coordination 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.

GRADE EXAMINATION

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Backing Vocals and Stylistic Studies. The scale, arpeggio and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the backing vocals and stylistic study to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Chromatic scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Diminished arpeggio	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following interval sequences, as written in the grade book. The examiner will ask for one of them to be performed in the exam:

Interval sequence	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 7ths, minor 7ths and octaves	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Major 3rds and minor 3rds	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

The examiner will ask the candidate which starting note they have chosen (the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but candidates may sing in any octave). Candidates will hear the starting note, followed by a 1-bar count in, before performing the test to the metronome click.

Group D: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has three notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare all of these for their chosen exercise. The examiner will ask which exercise the candidate has prepared (Exercise 1 or Exercise 2). They will then select one of the vocal parts for the candidate to perform (the other two notated parts will be included on the backing track). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Stylistic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the eight stylistic studies given in the grade book. The studies are divided into the four distinct genre groups below, with two options for each genre group:

- Pop and Musical Theatre
- Soul and Contemporary R&B
- Jazz and Blues
- Rock and Indie

The examiner will ask which genre group and which study the candidate has prepared (Study 1 or Study 2). Candidates may sing in any octave but the studies cannot be transposed to a different key. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track. *Note that the choice of genre group for this test will determine the style of the Quick Study Piece the examiner will select in the exam.*

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces. The grade book contains the following pieces:

Artist	Song
Beyoncé	I Care
Andra Day	Rise Up
Sam Smith	Writing's on the Wall
Keala Settle	This is Me (from the Greatest Showman)
Whitney Houston	I Have Nothing
Skunk Anansie	Weak
Ella Fitzgerald / Chaka Khan	Night in Tunisia
The Killers	When You Were Young
Seal	Kiss from a Rose
Ray Charles	A Song for You

Please refer to page 7 for further information on free choice pieces.

QUICK STUDY PIECE

Requirements

Candidates will be given a short previously unseen piece to perform, the style of which will be one of the two from the genre group that candidates chose for their Stylistic Study. The piece will be 12 bars long. The piece will be 12 bars long, in any major or minor key up to four sharps/flats, covering a range of up to a 10th. In bars 1 to 4 candidates will sing the written melody and lyrics; in bars 5 to 8 candidates will improvise a variation on the first 4 bars, developing the melody and lyrics as they wish; in bars 9 to 12 candidates will improvise a melody using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The tempo will be 70–160bpm.

Preparation

Candidates will be asked whether they would like a higher-pitched test or a lower-pitched test. Candidates will be played a full mix version of the track, including the notated parts. They will then be given 3 minutes to practise, after which they will perform the test. Before the practice time begins, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or having a 4-beat count in at the beginning. Whichever option candidates choose, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. The root note will be played again halfway through the practice time.

Performance

After the practice time, the backing track will be played twice more with the notated parts now absent. The first time is for candidates to rehearse and the second time to perform the final version for the exam. Only the performance over the final playthrough will be assessed. Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a 4-beat count in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

EAR TESTS

Candidates will be given both of the following ear tests, examples of which are included in the grade book:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall
- Test 2: Harmony Vocals

TEST 1: MELODIC RECALL

Requirements

The examiner will play a melody. Candidates will then sing back the melody to a drum backing, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The melody will be a 2-bar diatonic melody in the key of B major or E natural minor, starting on the root note, 3rd or 5th. Candidates may sing in any octave. The melody may contain half notes, dotted half notes, quarter notes, dotted quarter notes, eighth notes, dotted eighth notes and sixteenth notes and will contain rests. The tempo will be 90bpm.

Process

The test will be played twice, each time preceded by a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the second playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should play the melody back to the drum backing.

TEST 2: HARMONY VOCALS**Requirements**

The examiner will play a 4-bar melody. Candidates will be asked to harmonise the melody a diatonic 3rd or 4th above, using the same rhythm and lyrics. The melody will be based on diatonic chords (chords I, IV, V and VI^m). The tempo will be 90–140bpm.

Process

Candidates will be asked whether they would like a higher-pitched test or a lower-pitched test. The higher-pitched test will be in A major or B minor (Option 1), the lower-pitched test in D major or E minor (Option 2). They will be given the lyrics for their test. The test will be played three times, each time preceded by the root note and a 4-beat count in. There will be a short gap after each playthrough. After the gap following the third playthrough candidates will be given a vocal count in, after which they should sing their harmony line. The length of time available after the third playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

Candidates will be asked five questions. Three of these will be music knowledge questions, based on any one of the pieces performed in the exam, the fourth will be about improvisation, and the fifth will be about knowledge of the candidate's own voice or the microphone. Candidates can use brief demonstrations to support their verbal explanations.

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

There will be three music knowledge questions in relation to one of the pieces performed in the exam. Candidates will be asked which piece they would like to be asked about. If the candidate's copy of the chosen piece contains extensive handwritten notes the examiner may either use their own version of the score as the basis for the questions or they may request that candidates select a different piece.

Candidates may be asked to identify:

- ▶ Any notation used in the chosen piece
- ▶ Recognition of intervals up to a 10th between two adjacent notes. (You will need to state major, minor or perfect.)

Part 2: Improvisation

Candidates will be asked to briefly describe and demonstrate their approach to how they would improvise any part of the song, making reference to melody, rhythm, phrasing, dynamics and expression. Candidates can choose the part of the song.

Part 3: Knowledge of the Voice and the Microphone

There will be one question about the candidate's knowledge of their voice or the microphone, chosen by the examiner from the list below.

Candidates may be asked:

- What is 'melisma' and what exercises can help you develop it?
- Describe techniques you might employ to build emotional intensity in a soul/contemporary R&B-style ballad.
- Give two examples of exercises designed to develop intensity/power in a singer's 'mix' voice.
- Explain the difference between a dynamic and a condenser microphone, including one example each of their uses.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform five prepared pieces, two of which must be from the relevant grade book, three of which can be free choice pieces. There is no unprepared work.

GRADED CERTIFICATE

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Candidates will perform three prepared pieces, one of which must be from the relevant grade book, two of which can be free choice pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are five groups of technical exercises at this grade: Scales, Arpeggios, Intervals, Melodic Studies and Backing Vocals. The scale, arpeggios and intervals are to be performed to a click track, the melodic study and backing vocals to backing tracks. Unless specified otherwise, the exercises may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

Candidates will perform all of the technical exercises in the grade book as detailed in the guidance that you can download at rslawards.com

Group A: Scales

Candidates are to perform the following scale, as written in the grade book:

Scale	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Chromatic scale	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

Group B: Arpeggios

Candidates are to perform the following arpeggio, as written in the grade book:

Arpeggio	Starting note	Range	Tempo	Accompaniment
Diminished arpeggio	Candidate's choice	1 octave	100bpm	Click track

Group C: Intervals

Candidates are to prepare both of the following interval sequences, as written in the grade book:

Interval sequence	Starting note	Tempo	Accompaniment
Major 7ths, minor 7ths and octaves	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track
Major 3rds and minor 3rds	Candidate's choice	90bpm	Click track

Group D: Backing Vocals

Candidates are to perform one of the two backing vocals exercises given in the grade book. Each exercise in the book has three notated vocal parts – candidates must prepare all of these for their chosen exercise (Exercise 1 or Exercise 2). They will perform all three of the vocal parts in turn (the other two notated parts will be included on the backing track). Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.

Group E: Stylistic Studies

Candidates are to perform one of the eight stylistic studies given in the grade book. The studies are divided into the four distinct genre groups below, with two options for each genre group:

- Pop and Musical Theatre
- Soul and Contemporary R&B
- Jazz and Blues
- Rock and Indie

The candidate may choose one study from one group (Study 1 or Study 2). Candidates may sing in any octave but the studies cannot be transposed to a different key. Candidates will hear the root note, followed by a 4-beat count in, before performing the test to the backing track.