

rockschool®

# Popular Music Theory Syllabus Guide

2015-2018

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# INTRODUCTION

**W**elcome to the **Rockschool 2015-2018 Syllabus Guide for Popular Music Theory**. This **Syllabus Guide** is designed to give teachers, learners and candidates practical information on the **Graded Popular Music Theory Exams** run by **Rockschool**.

The **Rockschool** website, [www.rockschool.co.uk](http://www.rockschool.co.uk) has in-depth information on all aspects of our **Theory Exams** including examination regulations, learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

**This Syllabus Guide covers all of our Popular Music Theory Exams;**  
➤ **From Debut (Entry Level 3) up to, and including, Grade 8**

All of the **Popular Music Theory Exams** have supportive material;

- **Graded Workbooks (Debut- Grade 8)**- this includes a sample paper
- **Guidebooks**- these are split into two levels; **Debut- Grade 5**, and **Grades 6-8**

## GRADED POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAMS

### Qualification Aims

The aim of the **Graded Popular Music Theory** exams is to provide musicians with the opportunity to attain accredited qualifications in the theory of performance in a popular music context. The qualifications will be available to anyone with an interest in studying the theoretical side of music performance, but is primarily aimed at musicians who play guitar, bass, drums, keyboards/piano or sing. Aside from individual instrumental knowledge there is a focus on band interaction and how the instruments in a band function together. In **Grades 6-8**, with the focus still on the former instruments, this knowledge will be extended to include 'brass' (trumpet, trombone and saxophone) and string (violin, viola and cello) sections. The **Debut** exam is aimed at both musicians just starting out learning the fundamentals of their instruments, and for learners who may have special educational needs. It is expected that most of these will be young learners in the early stages of their schooling but the principle applies to learners at the beginning of their musical careers of whatever age.

### Progression

These qualifications are designed to offer direct progression into higher levels of learning. This can be in the form of either grade exams or an appropriate qualification such as the **Music Practitioner** suite offered by **Rockschool**.

### Qualification Structure

The **graded popular music** exams are single unit qualifications in which candidates are asked to undertake the following unprepared elements in written form: music notation; popular music harmony; band knowledge; band analysis. The basic knowledge that forms the basis of the exam questions is outlined in this **Syllabus Guide**. The **Workbooks** provide examples of the types of questions found in the exams.

### Assessment Methodology

The underlying philosophy for assessment is that learners should receive credit for positive achievement, and that all should be encouraged to reach their fullest potential in each aspect of the qualification. **Rockschool** expects the majority of learners to take any of the **graded exam** qualifications after a period of study directed by a teacher. However, the specifications of each qualification are set up to allow learners to undertake independent study should they so wish. **Rockschool** offers help and support in the form of guidance and test examples to those learners who may not have access to a teacher or to supplement the work a teacher sets the learner. All assessment of these qualifications is external and is undertaken by members of the

Rockschool examiners panel. All examiners appointed by Rockscool for this purpose are trained and moderated by Rockscool.

## Expectations of Knowledge, Skills and Understanding

The grade 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 music notation and theoretical representation of music performance demanded in each grade. Learners will be able to complete a set of written music theory tasks (the complexity and variety of which are determined by which qualification is being attempted), which allows them to demonstrate their understanding of the practical elements of music performance and the way they are represented in written form. These knowledge-based and analytical skills set a firm platform for further practical and artistic development by the learner.

Graded Popular Music exams are 'banded' into the following grade categories: pass, merit, distinction or unclassified. Grade indicators are as follows:

- **Pass:** a pass grade will be awarded where a candidate has produced work to the required standard overall within the examination. They will demonstrate a basic understanding of music notation and harmony and their application in a music performance context.
- **Merit:** a merit grade will be awarded where a candidate has produced work to a good standard overall within the examination. They will demonstrate a good understanding of music notation and harmony and their application in a music performance context.
- **Distinction:** a distinction grade will be awarded where a candidate has produced work to an excellent standard overall within the examination. They will demonstrate an excellent understanding of music notation and harmony and their application in a music performance context.
- **Unclassified:** an unclassified grade will be awarded where the candidate has produced work, which does not meet the tasks contained within the qualification. They will not demonstrate a basic understanding of music notation and harmony and their application in a music performance context.

## Results and Certification

Candidates will be informed of their provisional results no later than four weeks of the completion of their examination. All certificates will be issued after the formal completion of all quality assurance processes.

## Examination Content

Graded Popular Music Theory Exams are available from Debut- Grade 8 and consist of the following elements;

- **Music Notation (20%)**- all questions in this section relate to music notation
- **Popular Music Harmony (25%)**- all questions in this section relate to music harmony
- **Band Knowledge (25%)**- this section is in two parts, with each part covering a range of instruments;  
Part 1: Identification  
Part 2: Notation and Techniques
- **Band Analysis (30%)**-in this section the questions will include the identification of music notation, harmony, and the stylistic characteristics of Guitar, Bass, Drums, Keys, and Vocals in a multi-instrumental context.

# EXAMINATION TIMINGS

## Examination Timings for Graded Popular Music Theory Exams

- Debut: 60 minutes
- Grade 1: 90 minutes
- Grade 2: 90 minutes
- Grade 3: 90 minutes
- Grade 4: 120 minutes
- Grade 5: 120 minutes
- Grade 6: 180 minutes
- Grade 7: 180 minutes
- Grade 8: 180 minutes

Note: If you complete the Theory Exam paper before the allocated time allowance, you are entitled to leave, providing you have permission from the Exam Invigilator.

## MARKING SCHEME

All Rockschool Graded Popular Music Theory Exams are marked out of **100**

### CLASSIFICATION BANDS

The classification bands for **Graded Popular Music Theory Exams** are as follows:

Pass: 60%–74%

Merit: 75%–89%

Distinction: 90% and above

Please note: candidates will need to pass 40% of EVERY section in the exam to pass overall

This is broken down as follows;

- **Music Notation** (20%)- you need to get **8** marks to pass this section
- **Popular Music Harmony** (25%)- you need to get **10** marks to pass this section
- **Band Knowledge** (25%)- you need to get **10** marks to pass this section
- **Band Analysis** (30%)-you need to get **12** marks to pass this section

### LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each Grade have been banded according to difficulty level. For every Grade you can refer to the learning outcomes and **assessment criteria** for a full understanding of the exam requirements. Candidates will need to achieve all the learning outcomes contained within the unit in order to be eligible for grading at pass level.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAMS

Please read the Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration policy for more information and guidance about how we take into account any special requirements due to a permanent or temporary disability for written (Theory) Exams. <http://www.rockschool.co.uk/qualifications/general-information/policies/>

Please note that Rockschool may contact your designated centre to request further information about the reasonable adjustment requested prior to the release of any results or certificates.

# DEBUT

## DEBUT OVERVIEW

### MUSIC NOTATION

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Music Notation** section of the exam;

- Drawing and recognising treble and bass clefs
- Drawing different note values (musical symbols)
- Writing and identifying accidentals
- Writing and understanding barlines and repeat marks
- Writing and identifying time signatures
- Understanding note lengths: adding barlines and time signatures, including double barlines
- Recognising note lengths, and being able to add missing notes and rests
- Understanding how to beam notes
- Understanding equivalent notes and rests
- Note naming, and identifying the correct clef
- Identifying accidentals
- Identifying chords
- Understanding and identifying melodic intervals
- Understanding and identifying harmonic intervals
- Understanding tempo markings
- Recognising the note values of: whole, half, quarter and eighth notes
- Understanding how to group notes and rests
- Naming flats, sharps, and naturals on the staff
- Understanding note “tails”
- Identifying pitch ranges: E on bass clef- middle C/ middle C to top G on the treble clef
- Understanding and recognising tones and semitones

### POPULAR MUSIC HARMONY

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Popular Music Harmony** section of the exam;

- Identifying scale intervals
- Writing scales with accidentals
- Writing scales with key signatures
- Applying scale knowledge
- Identifying arpeggios
- Basic chord knowledge
- Understanding and writing scales and arpeggios in a major key
- Identifying tones and semitones
- Identifying C/ G major scales, chords and arpeggios
- Understanding major scale formula
- Identifying C/ G key signatures

## BAND KNOWLEDGE

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Knowledge** section of the exam;

- Identification of Drum kit parts
- Identification of Guitar and Bass Guitar parts
- Identification of keys on acoustic and electronic piano keyboards
- Understanding vocal pitch ranges
- Understanding and identifying a variety of instrumental notation
- Understanding and identifying instrumental scores and clefs

## BAND ANALYSIS

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Analysis** section of the exam;

- Understanding scores with up to **two** different instruments
- Identification of tempo including an understanding of BPM
- Recognising time signatures
- Identification of clefs
- Recognising keys
- Understanding pitch
- Understanding duration and rhythm
- Chord analysis
- Recognising melodic and harmonic Intervals
- Understanding note values and equivalent rests
- Understanding the use of barlines
- Identifying different parts of band instruments

## SITTING A DEBUT POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAM

### GENERAL ADVICE

- If a question requires a written answer, don't feel compelled to use every line. Answering the questions correctly is much more important than using all the available space.
- Aim to answer all the questions set. If you get stuck on one particular question, move on and come back to it later.
- Your answers should be neat, accurate and legible, as marks can't be given if your response is illegible.
- Avoid unnecessary corrections by thinking your responses through before committing them to paper.
- Use a pencil that is sharp enough to write precisely, but soft enough to rub out and make corrections.

**TO AVOID CONFUSION, TICK BOXES (CHECKBOXES) SHOULD BE MARKED WITH A CLEAR TICK SYMBOL RATHER THAN A CROSS. PLEASE NOTE THAT SOME ANSWERS REQUIRE MORE THAN ONE BOX TO BE TICKED, SO READ THE QUESTIONS CAREFULLY.** **DEBUT ASSESSMENT**

All of the listed regulated units which include assessment criteria can also be found on the Ofqual website:  
[http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/K\\_507\\_1244](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/K_507_1244) The Debut (Entry Level 3) Popular Music Theory Exam consists of the

following **learning outcomes** and **assessment criteria**:

**Learning outcomes**

- The learner will:
- 1 Understand music notation
  - 2 Understand the elements of popular music harmony
  - 3 Understand instrumental components and notation
  - 4 Be able to identify music notation, harmony and instrumental characteristics within a multi-instrumental score

**Assessment Criteria**

- The learner can:
- 1.1 Identify notes up to one ledger note and keys up to one sharp on the bass and treble clef
  - 1.2 Identify whole, half, quarter and eighth-note rhythms and rests in 4/4 or 3/4 time signatures using bass, treble and percussion clefs
  - 1.3 Identify elements of the staff
  - 2.1 Identify and accurately reproduce major scales and related intervals
  - 2.2 Identify and accurately reproduce simple triadic chords
  - 3.1 Identify parts of musical instruments
  - 3.2 Identify pitch, rhythm, instrument voices and techniques within instrument-specific music notation
  - 4.1 Identify pitch, keys, time signatures and rhythms within a multi-instrumental score of two parts
  - 4.2 Accurately complete a multi-instrumental musical score of two parts

The Debut Popular Music Theory Exam lasts **60 minutes**

# GRADE I

## GRADE I OVERVIEW

The requirements for this level are the same as the previous Grade, plus the following:

### MUSIC NOTATION

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Music Notation** section of the exam;

- Understanding note lengths and adding barlines
- Recognising note values and adding missing notes
- Understanding how to beam notes of different values
- Understanding equivalent notes and rests
- Understanding note names
- Recognising and adding clefs
- Identifying chords
- Recognising and understanding accidentals: sharps, flats and naturals
- Identifying and using repeat marks
- Identifying and understanding dynamics
- Identifying and understanding articulations
- Understanding the major scale
- Writing accidentals
- Identifying the 2/4 time signature
- Understanding ties
- Understanding dotted notes
- Recognising dynamics: *p*, *f*, *cresc.* and *dim.*
- Recognising articulations: staccato, legato, accents
- Identifying pitch ranges: D below 1 ledger line on the bass clef to D above middle C, B to B in the treble

### POPULAR MUSIC HARMONY

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Popular Music Harmony** section of the exam;

- Identifying major 2<sup>nd</sup> intervals
- Identifying major 3<sup>rd</sup> intervals
- Identifying scale intervals
- Writing scales with accidentals
- Writing scales with key signatures
- Understanding, and adding, accidentals
- Identifying arpeggios
- Understanding, and writing, chords correctly
- Applying chord knowledge
- Recognising tones and semitones
- Applying scale knowledge
- Understanding tones and semitones
- Identifying F major scales, chords and arpeggios
- Understanding major chord formula
- Recognising the F key signature

## BAND KNOWLEDGE

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Knowledge** section of the exam;

- Identification of Drum kit parts
- Identification of Guitar and Bass Guitar parts
- Identification of keys on acoustic and electronic piano keyboards
- Understanding vocal pitch ranges
- Understanding and identifying varied instrumental notation
- Understanding and identifying instrumental scores and clefs

## BAND ANALYSIS

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Analysis** section of the exam;

- Understanding scores with up to **three** different instruments
- Understanding time signatures
- Recognising melodic intervals
- Understanding note values and their equivalent rests
- Understanding and recognising music symbols and directions
- Understanding rhythms and note values
- Recognising time signatures
- Identification of clefs
- Recognising keys
- Understanding pitch, and pitch range of specific instruments
- Chord analysis

Note: In all levels syllabus content will also be taken from previous grades in order to test your knowledge in the exam.

## SITTING A GRADE I POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAM

### GENERAL ADVICE

- If a question requires a written answer, don't feel compelled to use every line. Answering the questions correctly is much more important than using all the available space.
- Aim to answer all the questions set. If you get stuck on one particular question, move on and come back to it later.
- Your answers should be neat, accurate and legible, as marks can't be given if your response is illegible.
- Avoid unnecessary corrections by thinking your responses through before committing them to paper.
- Use a pencil that is sharp enough to write precisely, but soft enough to rub out and make corrections.
- To avoid confusion, tick boxes (checkboxes) should be marked with a clear tick symbol rather than a cross. Please note that some answers require more than one box to be ticked, so read the questions carefully.

# GRADE I ASSESSMENT

All of the listed regulated units which include assessment criteria can also be found on the Ofqual website:  
[http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/M\\_507\\_1245](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/M_507_1245)

The Grade I Popular Music Theory Exam consists of the following **learning outcomes** and **assessment criteria**;

## Learning Outcomes

- The learner will:
- 1 Understand music notation
  - 2 Understand the elements of popular music harmony
  - 3 Understand instrumental components, notation and techniques
  - 4 Be able to identify and modify music notation, harmony and instrumental characteristics within a multi-instrumental score

## Assessment criteria

- The learner can:
- 1.1 Identify notes up to one ledger note and keys up to one sharp and flat on the bass and treble clef
  - 1.2 Identify whole, half, quarter and eighth note rhythms and rests in 4/4, 2/4 or 3/4 time signatures using bass, treble and percussion clefs
  - 1.3 Identify elements of the stave, music notation symbols for dynamics, articulations and phrasing
  - 2.1 Identify and accurately reproduce major and minor scales and their related intervals
  - 2.2 Identify and accurately reproduce triadic chords and arpeggios
  - 3.1 Identify parts of musical instruments and describe their function
  - 3.2 Identify pitch, rhythm, instrument voices and techniques within instrument-specific music notation
  - 3.3 Identify instrument-specific notation and describe their corresponding practical techniques
  - 4.1 Identify pitch, keys, time signatures and rhythms within a multi-instrumental score of three parts
  - 4.2 Accurately complete a multi-instrumental musical score of three parts
  - 4.3 Identify instrument-specific techniques within a multi-instrumental musical score of three parts

The Grade I Popular Music Theory Exam lasts **90 minutes**

# GRADE 2

## GRADE 2 OVERVIEW

The requirements for this level are the same as the previous Grades, plus the following areas:

### MUSIC NOTATION

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Music Notation** section of the exam;

- Understanding note lengths and adding barlines
- Recognising note values (including 16ths) and adding time signatures
- Understanding time signatures
- Understanding how to beam notes of different values
- Adding together equivalent notes and rests, including full bar rests
- Understanding note names: two ledger lines
- Adding missing notes
- Recognising clefs
- Identifying chords
- Understanding repeats: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> time repeats, anacrusis
- Identifying and understanding dynamics: *mp* and *mf*
- Identifying and understanding articulation
- Understanding scales: major and minor
- Understanding grace notes
- Recognising note ranges: 2 ledger notes above and below
- Identifying pitch ranges: 2 ledger lines either side of bass and treble clef- bottom C to top C

### POPULAR MUSIC HARMONY

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Popular Music Harmony** section of the exam;

- Identifying major and minor thirds
- Identifying scale intervals
- Recognising scales, and understanding how to write them with the correct accidentals
- Applying scale knowledge
- Identifying arpeggios
- Applying chord knowledge
- Recognising tones and semitones
- Recognising chord patterns
- Recognising D, Bb major scales and chords
- Understanding relative minors: 2 sharps and flats
- Understanding minor chord formula
- Recognising the natural minor scale

## BAND KNOWLEDGE

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Knowledge** section of the exam;

- Identification of Drum kit parts
- Identification of Guitar and Bass Guitar parts
- Identification of keys: acoustic and electronic piano keyboards
- Understanding vocal pitch ranges
- Understanding and identifying varied instrumental notation
- Understanding and identifying instrumental scores and clefs

## BAND ANALYSIS

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Analysis** section of the exam;

- Understanding scores with up to **three** different instruments
- Identification of tempo
- Understanding time signatures
- Identification of clefs
- Recognising keys
- Understanding pitch ranges across different instrumental disciplines
- Understanding duration and rhythm
- Chord analysis
- Recognising chord symbols
- Understanding intervals
- Understanding note values

Note: In all levels syllabus content will also be taken from previous grades in order to test your knowledge in the exam.

## SITTING A GRADE 2 POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAM

### GENERAL ADVICE

- If a question requires a written answer, don't feel compelled to use every line. Answering the questions correctly is much more important than using all the available space.
- Aim to answer all the questions set. If you get stuck on one particular question, move on and come back to it later.
- Your answers should be neat, accurate and legible, as marks can't be given if your response is illegible.
- Avoid unnecessary corrections by thinking your responses through before committing them to paper.
- Use a pencil that is sharp enough to write precisely, but soft enough to rub out and make corrections.
- To avoid confusion, tick boxes (checkboxes) should be marked with a clear tick symbol rather than a cross. Please note that some answers require more than one box to be ticked, so read the questions carefully.

## GRADE 2 ASSESSMENT

All of the listed regulated units which include assessment criteria can also be found on the Ofqual website:  
[http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/T\\_507\\_1246](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/T_507_1246)

The Grade 2 Popular Music Theory Exam consists of the following **learning outcomes and assessment criteria**;

### Learning outcomes

- The learner will:
- 1 Understand music notation
  - 2 Understand the elements of popular music harmony
  - 3 Understand instrumental components, notation and techniques
  - 4 Be able to identify and modify music notation, harmony and instrumental characteristics within a multi-instrumental score

### Assessment criteria

- The learner can:
- 1.1 Identify notes up to two ledger notes and keys up to two sharps and flats on the bass and treble clef
  - 1.2 Identify whole, half, quarter, eighth, triplets and 16th note rhythms and rests in 4/4, 2/4 or 3/4 time signatures using bass, treble and percussion clefs
  - 1.3 Identify elements of the staff, music notation symbols for dynamics, articulations and phrasing
  - 2.1 Identify and accurately reproduce major and minor scales and their related intervals
  - 2.2 Identify and accurately reproduce simple triadic chords and arpeggios
  - 3.1 Identify parts of musical instruments and describe their function
  - 3.2 Identify pitch, rhythm, instrument voices and techniques within instrument-specific music notation
  - 3.3 Identify instrument-specific notation and describe their corresponding practical techniques
  - 4.1 Identify pitch, keys, time signatures and rhythms within a multi-instrumental musical score of three parts
  - 4.2 Accurately complete a multi-instrumental musical score of three parts
  - 4.3 Identify instrument-specific techniques within a multi-instrumental musical score of three parts

The Grade 2 Popular Music Theory Exam lasts **90 minutes**

# GRADE 3

## GRADE 3 OVERVIEW

The requirements for this level are the same as the previous Grades, plus the following areas:

### MUSIC NOTATION

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Music Notation** section of the exam;

- Understanding note lengths, and adding barlines
- Recognising note values
- Beaming notes correctly
- Understanding and adding time signatures: 3/8, 6/8, 12/8
- Understanding how to beam notes of different values, and adding missing notes where applicable
- Understanding and adding equivalent notes and rests
- Understanding note names: up to three ledger lines
- Recognising clefs
- Recognising notes on the staff, and understanding enharmonics
- Understanding repeat marks in beats and bars: Segno, D.S/ D.C al Coda and Fine
- Identifying and understanding dynamics: *pp* and *ff*
- Identifying and understanding articulation
- Understanding scales: major and minor
- Understanding triplets and swing notation
- Recognising improv directions
- Understanding vibrato
- Understanding fermata

### POPULAR MUSIC HARMONY

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Popular Music Harmony** section of the exam;

- Identifying intervals: perfect 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>
- Applying interval knowledge
- Identifying scale intervals
- Recognising tones and semitones
- Understanding, and writing, scales with accidentals
- Understanding, and writing, major pentatonic and minor pentatonic scales
- Understanding pentatonic melodies: major and minor
- Understanding, and applying, scale knowledge, including the harmonised major scale
- Identifying arpeggios
- Understanding chords, and harmonised major scales, including diatonic chords
- Understanding, and writing, chords
- Recognising chord charts
- Creating chord charts from roman numerals
- Application of chord knowledge
- Recognising melodic and harmonic intervals
- Understanding notation: 3 sharps and flats

## BAND KNOWLEDGE

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Knowledge** section of the exam;

- Identification of Drum kit parts
- Identification of Guitar and Bass Guitar parts
- Identification of keys on acoustic and electronic piano keyboards
- Understanding vocal pitch ranges
- Understanding and identifying varied instrumental notation
- Understanding and identifying instrumental scores and clefs
- Understanding and recognising musical symbols on instrumental scores

## BAND ANALYSIS

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Analysis** section of the exam;

- Understanding scores with up to **three** different instruments
- Identification of tempo including an understanding of BPM
- Understanding time signature
- Recognising chord symbols
- Instrument-specific techniques
- Understanding pitch
- Recognising dynamic markings
- Identifying scalar patterns
- Recognising Intervals
- Recognising arpeggiated chords
- Understanding articulation
- Recognising keys
- Genre-specific features of the music
- Understanding note values: including equivalent notes and rests
- Understanding musical devices in a variety of band scores

Note: In all levels syllabus content will also be taken from previous grades in order to test your knowledge in the exam.

## SITTING A GRADE 3 POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAM

### GENERAL ADVICE

- If a question requires a written answer, don't feel compelled to use every line. Answering the questions correctly is much more important than using all the available space.
- Aim to answer all the questions set. If you get stuck on one particular question, move on and come back to it later.
- Your answers should be neat, accurate and legible, as marks can't be given if your response is illegible.
- Avoid unnecessary corrections by thinking your responses through before committing them to paper.
- Use a pencil that is sharp enough to write precisely, but soft enough to rub out and make corrections.
- To avoid confusion, tick boxes (checkboxes) should be marked with a clear tick symbol rather than a cross. Please note that some answers require more than one box to be ticked, so read the questions carefully.

## GRADE 3 ASSESSMENT

All of the listed regulated units which include assessment criteria can also be found on the Ofqual website:  
[http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/A\\_507\\_1247](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/A_507_1247)

The Grade 3 Popular Music Theory Exam consists of the following **learning outcomes and assessment criteria**;

### Learning Outcomes

The learner will:

- 1 Understand music notation
- 2 Understand the elements of popular music harmony
- 3 Understand instrumental components, notation and techniques
- 4 Be able to identify and modify music notation, harmony, stylistic traits and instrumental characteristics within a multi-instrumental score
- 5 Be able to interpret a score to make appropriate harmony choices for improvised music and interpret improvisational directions

### Assessment criteria

The learner can:

- 1.1 Identify notes up to three ledger notes and keys up to three sharps and flats on the bass and treble clef
- 1.2 Identify whole, half, quarter, eighth, triplets and 16th note rhythms and rests in 4/4, 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, 6/8 or 12/8 time signatures using bass, treble and percussion clefs
- 1.3 Identify elements of the staff, music notation symbols for dynamics, articulations and phrasing
- 2.1 Identify and accurately reproduce major and minor scales and their related intervals
- 2.2 Identify and accurately reproduce triadic chords, arpeggios and chord progressions
- 3.1 Identify parts of musical instruments and describe their function
- 3.2 Identify pitch, rhythm, instrument voices and techniques within instrument-specific music notation
- 3.3 Identify instrument-specific notation and describe their corresponding practical techniques
- 4.1 Identify pitch, keys, time signatures and rhythms within a multi-instrumental musical score of three parts
- 4.2 Accurately complete a multi-instrumental musical score of three parts in the appropriate style while adhering to any improvisation directions
- 4.3 Identify instrument-specific techniques and stylistic traits within a multi-instrumental musical score of three parts
- 5.1 Identify appropriate scales and arpeggios for improvisation within a multi-instrumental musical score of three parts

The Grade 3 Popular Music Theory Exam lasts **90 minutes**

# GRADE 4

## GRADE 4 OVERVIEW

The requirements for this level are the same as the previous Grades, plus the following areas:

### MUSIC NOTATION

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Music Notation** section of the exam;

- Understanding rhythm: halving and doubling rhythmic values, 6/8 and 12/8, half notes and triplets
- Understanding pitch: 8va and 8vb symbols, ledger lines
- Understanding dynamics and articulation
- Re-writing scores with a new time signature
- Understanding and recognising trills
- Identifying note names up to four ledger lines
- Understanding time signatures of the same sound with different notation
- Recognising triplets
- Understanding the use of key signatures and accidentals in major and minor scales

### POPULAR MUSIC HARMONY

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Popular Music Harmony** section of the exam;

- Identifying intervals: major 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>
- Understanding scales: pentatonic and variants
- Applying scale knowledge: Blues scale
- Adding accidentals to scales
- Writing and understanding scales
- Writing and understanding accidentals
- Naming chords: maj7, min7, dom7, m7b5
- Applying chord knowledge: roman numeral progressions
- Understanding key signatures up to four sharps and flats (Emaj, Abmaj)

### BAND KNOWLEDGE

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Knowledge** section of the exam;

- Identification of Drum kit parts
- Identification of Guitar and Bass Guitar parts
- Identification of keys: acoustic and electronic piano keyboards
- Understanding vocal pitch ranges
- Different techniques used across instrumental disciplines
- Understanding and identifying varied instrumental notation
- Understanding and identifying instrumental scores and clefs
- Understanding of musical symbols

## BAND ANALYSIS

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Analysis** section of the exam;

- Understanding scores with up to **four** different instruments
- Recognising keys
- Recognising chord symbols, including roman numerals
- Instrumental features and techniques across all disciplines
- Understanding tempo markings
- Recognising note values and duration
- Recognising pitches across different instrumental notation
- Understanding dynamic markings
- Understanding articulation markings
- Understanding melodic intervals
- Recognising musical devices on a multi-instrumental score
- Recognising musical genres
- Understanding genre-specific instrumental techniques
- Understanding scales
- Recognising key musical terminology on a notated score

Note: In all levels syllabus content will also be taken from previous grades in order to test your knowledge in the exam.

## SITTING A GRADE 4 POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAM

### GENERAL ADVICE

- If a question requires a written answer, don't feel compelled to use every line. Answering the questions correctly is much more important than using all the available space.
- Aim to answer all the questions set. If you get stuck on one particular question, move on and come back to it later.
- Your answers should be neat, accurate and legible, as marks can't be given if your response is illegible.
- Avoid unnecessary corrections by thinking your responses through before committing them to paper.
- Use a pencil that is sharp enough to write precisely, but soft enough to rub out and make corrections.
- To avoid confusion, tick boxes (checkboxes) should be marked with a clear tick symbol rather than a cross. Please note that some answers require more than one box to be ticked, so read the questions carefully.

# GRADE 4 ASSESSMENT

All of the listed regulated units which include assessment criteria can also be found on the Ofqual website:  
[http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/J\\_507\\_1249](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/J_507_1249)

The Grade 4 Popular Music Theory Exam consists of the following **learning outcomes and assessment criteria**;

## Learning Outcomes

- The learner will:
- 1 Understand music notation
  - 2 Understand the elements of popular music harmony
  - 3 Understand instrumental components, notation, techniques and stylistic traits
  - 4 Be able to analyse, identify and modify music notation, harmony, stylistic traits and instrumental characteristics within a multi-instrumental score
  - 5 Be able interpret a score to make appropriate harmony choices for improvised music and interpret improvisational directions

## Assessment criteria

- The learner can:
- 1.1 Identify and accurately reproduce notes up to four ledger notes and keys up to four sharps and flats on the bass and treble clef
  - 1.2 Identify and accurately reproduce whole, half, quarter, eighth, triplets and 16th note rhythms and rests in 3/8, 6/8, 12/8, 4/4, 2/4 or 3/4 time signatures using bass, treble and percussion clefs
  - 1.3 Identify and accurately reproduce elements of the staff, music notation symbols for dynamics, articulations and phrasing
  - 2.1 Identify and accurately reproduce major and minor scales and their related intervals
  - 2.2 Identify and accurately reproduce seventh chords, arpeggios and chord progressions
  - 3.1 Identify and describe parts of musical instruments and related equipment
  - 3.2 Identify pitch, rhythm, instrument voices and techniques within instrument-specific music Notation
  - 3.3 Identify instrument-specific notation and describe their corresponding practical techniques
  - 4.1 Identify pitch, keys, time signatures and rhythms within a multi-instrumental musical score of four parts
  - 4.2 Accurately complete a multi-instrumental musical score of four parts in the appropriate style while adhering to any improvisation directions
  - 4.3 Identify instrument-specific techniques and stylistic traits within a multi-instrumental musical score of four parts
  - 5.1 Identify appropriate scales and arpeggios for improvisation a multi-instrumental musical score of four parts

The Grade 4 Popular Music Theory Exam lasts **120 minutes**

# GRADE 5

## GRADE 5 OVERVIEW

The requirements for this level are the same as the previous Grades, plus the following areas:

### MUSIC NOTATION

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Music Notation** section of the exam;

- Understanding rhythm: halving and doubling rhythmic values, 6/8 and 12/8, half notes and triplets
- Understanding pitch: 15ma and 15mb symbols, ledger lines
- Understanding dynamics and articulation: *fp*, and *spf*
- Re-writing scores with a new time signature
- Understanding the use of key signatures and accidentals in major and minor scales
- Recognising pitches across different types of scores

### POPULAR MUSIC HARMONY

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Popular Music Harmony** section of the exam;

- Identifying intervals: minor 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>ths</sup>
- Scale identification: harmonic minor scale
- Applying scale knowledge
- Adding accidentals to scales: major and minor
- Writing scales with the correct clef, key signature, and accidentals (where appropriate)
- Chords: naming chords and their inversions (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>)
- Identifying chords: transposing roman numeral charts
- Applying chord knowledge
- Recognising melodic and harmonic intervals
- Understanding chord sequences
- Understanding slash chord notation, and the natural minor with V chord
- Understanding the transposition of chord symbols
- Identifying key signatures: up to 5 sharps and flats

### BAND KNOWLEDGE

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Knowledge** section of the exam;

- Identification of Drum kit parts
- Recognising genre-specific techniques applied to all instrumental disciplines
- Identification of Guitar and Bass Guitar parts
- Understanding the use of technology with band instruments
- Identification of keys: acoustic and electronic piano keyboards
- Understanding vocal pitch ranges
- Understanding of varied music notation and clefs
- Recognition of pitch ranges across SATB vocal ranges

## BAND ANALYSIS

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Analysis** section of the exam;

- Understanding scores with up to **five** different instruments
- Recognising keys
- Understanding instrument-specific techniques
- Chord analysis, including inversions
- Scale identification
- Understanding various types of notation
- Recognising rhythms
- Recognising musical devices
- Recognising musical styles
- Understanding the parts, and functions, of band instruments
- Knowing, and applying, articulation and dynamics across varied scores
- Recognising scales: major and minor

Note: In all levels syllabus content will also be taken from previous grades in order to test your knowledge in the exam.

## SITTING A GRADE 5 POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAM

### GENERAL ADVICE

- If a question requires a written answer, don't feel compelled to use every line. Answering the questions correctly is much more important than using all the available space.
- Aim to answer all the questions set. If you get stuck on one particular question, move on and come back to it later.
- Your answers should be neat, accurate and legible, as marks can't be given if your response is illegible.
- Avoid unnecessary corrections by thinking your responses through before committing them to paper.
- Use a pencil that is sharp enough to write precisely, but soft enough to rub out and make corrections.
- To avoid confusion, tick boxes (checkboxes) should be marked with a clear tick symbol rather than a cross. Please note that some answers require more than one box to be ticked, so read the questions carefully.

## GRADE 5 ASSESSMENT

All of the listed regulated units which include assessment criteria can also be found on the Ofqual website:

[http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/A\\_507\\_1250](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/A_507_1250)

The Grade 5 Popular Music Theory Exam consists of the following **learning outcomes and assessment criteria**;

**Learning Outcomes**

- The learner will:
- 1 Understand music notation
  - 2 Understand the elements of popular music harmony
  - 3 Understand instrumental components, notation, techniques and stylistic traits
  - 4 Be able to analyse, identify and modify music notation, harmony, stylistic traits and instrumental characteristics within a multi-instrumental score
  - 5 Be able interpret a score to make appropriate harmony choices for improvised music and interpret improvisational directions

**Assessment Criteria**

- The learner can:
- 1.1 Identify and accurately reproduce up to four ledger notes, octave transposition and keys up to five sharps and flats on the bass and treble clef
  - 1.2 Identify and accurately reproduce whole, half, quarter, eighth, triplets and 16th note rhythms and rests in 3/8, 6/8, 12/8, 4/4, 2/4 or 3/4 time signatures using bass, treble and percussion clefs
  - 1.3 Identify and accurately reproduce elements of the stave, music notation symbols for dynamics, articulations and phrasing
  - 2.1 Identify and accurately reproduce major and minor scales and their related intervals
  - 2.2 Identify and accurately reproduce triad inversions, seventh chords, arpeggios and chord progressions
  - 3.1 Identify and describe parts of musical instruments and related equipment
  - 3.2 Identify pitch, rhythm, instrument voices and techniques within instrument-specific music Notation
  - 3.3 Identify instrument-specific notation and describe their corresponding practical techniques
  - 4.1 Identify pitch, keys, time signatures and rhythms within a multi-instrumental score
  - 4.2 Accurately complete a multi-instrumental musical score of five parts in the appropriate style while adhering to any improvisation directions
  - 4.3 Identify instrument-specific techniques and stylistic traits within a multi-instrumental musical score of five parts
  - 5.1 Identify appropriate scales and arpeggios for improvisation within a multi-instrumental musical score of five parts

The Grade 5 Popular Music Theory Exam lasts **120 minutes**

# GRADE 6

## GRADE 6 OVERVIEW

The requirements for this level are the same as the previous Grades, plus the following areas:

### MUSIC NOTATION

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Music Notation** section of the exam;

- Understanding rhythm: double dotted rhythms and less-common time signatures
- Rhythm: rewriting with a new time signature, and as compound and simple time
- Understanding pitch: double accidentals
- Understanding pitch: writing enharmonic pitches
- Understanding pitch: enharmonic transposition
- Recognising note values: 16<sup>th</sup>, triplet, double dots
- Understanding time signatures: 2/2, 3/2, 4/2
- Understanding key signatures: double flats and sharps

### POPULAR MUSIC HARMONY

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Popular Music Harmony** section of the exam;

- Identifying intervals: b5, b2
- Understanding modes: modal basics, modal transformation, modal differences, modal knowledge, writing out modes in notes and note names
- Recognising modes: ionian & aeolian, dorian & mixolydian
- Understanding, and identifying scales: country, pentatonic, major, minor, and blues
- Chromaticism: completing chromatic scales, recognising gaps in chromatic scales, writing out chromatic scales, and identifying chromatic fragments
- Transposition: transposing in major 3rds and perfect 5ths
- Transposing chord charts
- Understanding chords and chord inversions: 3<sup>rd</sup> inversion
- Adding chords: 6<sup>th</sup>, sus 2 & 4, diatonic chords including maj 9<sup>th</sup>, min 9<sup>th</sup> and dom 9<sup>th</sup>
- Identifying harmonic and melodic intervals
- Identifying chords: naming chords, chord charts, chord sequences, and use of roman numeral notation
- Understanding key signatures up to seven sharps and flats

### BAND KNOWLEDGE

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Knowledge** section of the exam;

- Identification of Drum kit parts
- Genre- specific instrumental techniques of band instruments
- Identification of Guitar and Bass Guitar parts
- Understanding the use of music technology with band instruments
- Understanding instrumental performance technique
- Identification of keys: acoustic and electronic piano keyboards
- Identification of vocal techniques
- Understanding the function of a microphone
- Understanding how a singer uses music technology to improve performance
- Genre- specific instrumental techniques of brass instruments
- Identification of parts on a brass instrument
- Identifying key musical terms associated with band performance
- Recognising instrument- specific techniques
- Recognising notation across different instrumental disciplines
- Identification of instrumental parts across different disciplines
- Identification of pitch range across different instrumental disciplines

## **BAND ANALYSIS**

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Analysis** section of the exam;

- Understanding scores with up to **eight** different instruments
- Understanding the use of improvisation techniques
- Genre- specific techniques: style and content
- Understanding of stylistic traits across varied instruments
- Understanding the harmonic content in band scores
- Understanding score writing
- Understanding the transposition of instruments whilst score writing
- Understanding musical devices: melodic, harmonic, rhythmic
- Recognising instrument-specific techniques

Note: In all levels syllabus content will also be taken from previous grades in order to test your knowledge in the exam.

## **SITTING A GRADE 6 POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAM**

### **GENERAL ADVICE**

- If a question requires a written answer, don't feel compelled to use every line. Answering the questions correctly is much more important than using all the available space.
- Aim to answer all the questions set. If you get stuck on one particular question, move on and come back to it later.
- Your answers should be neat, accurate and legible, as marks can't be given if your response is illegible.
- Avoid unnecessary corrections by thinking your responses through before committing them to paper.
- Use a pencil that is sharp enough to write precisely, but soft enough to rub out and make corrections.
- To avoid confusion, tick boxes (checkboxes) should be marked with a clear tick symbol rather than a cross. Please note that some answers require more than one box to be ticked, so read the questions carefully.

# GRADE 6 ASSESSMENT

All of the listed regulated units which include assessment criteria can also be found on the Ofqual website: [http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/J\\_507\\_1252](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/J_507_1252)

The Grade 6 Popular Music Theory Exam consists of the following **learning outcomes and assessment criteria**;

## Learning outcomes

- The learner will:
- 1 Understand music notation
  - 2 Understand the elements of popular music harmony
  - 3 Understand instrumental components, specialist notation, techniques and stylistic traits
  - 4 Be able to analyse, identify and modify music notation, harmony, stylistic traits and instrumental characteristics within a multi-instrumental score
  - 5 Be able interpret a score to make a range of appropriate harmony choices for improvised music and interpret improvisational directions while demonstrating stylistic awareness

## Assessment criteria

- The learner can:
- 1.1 Identify and accurately reproduce any note on the staff, octave transposition and keys up to six sharps and flats including modal key signatures using bass and treble clef
  - 1.2 Identify and accurately reproduce whole, half, quarter, eighth, triplets and 16th note rhythms and rests in 2/2, 3/2, 4/2, 3/8, 6/8, 12/8, 4/4, 2/4 or 3/4 time signatures using bass, treble and percussion clefs
  - 1.3 Identify and accurately reproduce elements of the staff, music notation symbols for dynamics, articulations and phrasing
  - 2.1 Identify and accurately reproduce scales, modes and their related intervals
  - 2.2 Identify and accurately reproduce extended chords, arpeggios and chord progressions
  - 3.1 Identify and describe parts of musical instruments and related equipment with reference to the effect different choices make on sound
  - 3.2 Identify pitch, rhythm, instrument voices and techniques within instrument-specific music notation including transposing brass instruments
  - 3.3 Identify, including transposing brass instruments, instrument-specific notation and describe, with reference to performance quality, their corresponding practical techniques
  - 4.1 Identify pitch, keys, time signatures and rhythms within a multi-instrumental score
  - 4.2 Accurately complete a multi-instrumental score of up to eight parts in the appropriate style while adhering to any improvisation directions
  - 4.3 Identify instrument-specific techniques and stylistic traits within a multi-instrumental score of up to eight parts
  - 5.1 Identify appropriate scales and arpeggios for improvisation within a multi-instrumental score of up to eight parts

The Grade 6 Popular Music Theory Exam lasts **180 minutes**

# GRADE 7

## GRADE 7 OVERVIEW

The requirements for this level are the same as the previous Grades, plus the following areas:

### MUSIC NOTATION

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Music Notation** section of the exam;

- Understanding rhythm: 32<sup>nd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> notes, and equivalent rests.
- Rhythmic values: halving rhythmic values, doubling rhythmic values, working with less-common time signatures.
- Understanding pitch: enharmonic transpositions
- Transposing and re-writing scores across different instruments and clefs
- Understanding time signatures: 5/4, 6/4, 7/4

### POPULAR MUSIC HARMONY

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Popular Music Harmony** section of the exam;

- Identifying compound intervals
- Understanding modes: ionian, dorian, phrygian, lydian, and mixolydian
- Recognising modes and modal differences, and writing out modes in notation
- Transposing melodies: 2nds, 4ths, 6ths
- Chord identification: diatonic I I and I 3
- Recognising harmonic and melodic intervals
- Understanding chord inversions

### BAND KNOWLEDGE

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Knowledge** section of the exam;

- Identification of Drum parts
- Genre-specific techniques used across different instrumental disciplines
- Identification of Guitar and Bass Guitar parts
- Understanding the use of music technology with band instruments
- Understanding instrumental performance technique
- Identification of keys: acoustic and electronic instruments
- Identification of vocal techniques
- Understanding the function of a microphone
- Understanding how a singer uses music technology to improve performance
- Genre-specific instrumental techniques of brass instruments
- Identification of parts on a brass instrument
- Key musical terms associated with band performance
- Recognising instrument-specific techniques
- Recognising notation across different instrumental disciplines
- Identification of pitch range across different instrumental disciplines
- Understanding instrumental-specific notation
- Recognising melodic ornamentation
- Understanding transposing instruments
- Recognising different parts on band and brass instruments
- How to develop your performance technique across different instrumental disciplines
- Interpreting musical directions on a score for up to 8 players
- Knowing the pitch range across instrumental disciplines

## BAND ANALYSIS

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Analysis** section of the exam;

- Understanding scores with up to **eight** different instruments
- Understanding instrument-specific techniques
- Re-writing a score for transposing instruments
- Chordal analysis and stylistic traits of band and brass instruments
- Interpreting a score for up to eight players
- Understanding improvisation techniques across instrumental disciplines
- Understanding style and content of specific instruments
- Recognising the stylistic traits of varied instruments
- Understanding musical devices across instrumental disciplines: melodic/ harmonic/ rhythmic
- Recognising the stylistic traits in different instrumental disciplines
- Generic band score analysis

Note: In all levels syllabus content will also be taken from previous grades in order to test your knowledge in the exam.

## SITTING A GRADE 7 POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAM

### GENERAL ADVICE

- If a question requires a written answer, don't feel compelled to use every line. Answering the questions correctly is much more important than using all the available space.
- Aim to answer all the questions set. If you get stuck on one particular question, move on and come back to it later.
- Your answers should be neat, accurate and legible, as marks can't be given if your response is illegible.
- Avoid unnecessary corrections by thinking your responses through before committing them to paper.
- Use a pencil that is sharp enough to write precisely, but soft enough to rub out and make corrections.
- To avoid confusion, tick boxes (checkboxes) should be marked with a clear tick symbol rather than a cross. Please note that some answers require more than one box to be ticked, so read the questions carefully.

# GRADE 7 ASSESSMENT

All of the listed regulated units which include assessment criteria can also be found on the Ofqual website:  
[http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/L\\_507\\_1253](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/L_507_1253)

The Grade 7 Popular Music Theory Exam consists of the following **learning outcomes and assessment criteria**;

## Learning outcomes

- The learner will:
- 1 Understand music notation
  - 2 Understand the elements of popular music harmony
  - 3 Understand instrumental components, specialist notation, techniques and stylistic traits
  - 4 Be able to analyse, identify and modify music notation, harmony, stylistic traits and instrumental characteristics within a multi-instrumental score
  - 5 Be able interpret a score to make a range of appropriate harmony choices for improvised music and interpret improvisational directions while demonstrating stylistic awareness

## Assessment criteria

- The learner can:
- 1.1 Identify and accurately reproduce any note on the staff, octave transposition and keys up to seven sharps and flats including modal key signatures using bass and treble clef
  - 1.2 Identify and accurately reproduce whole, half, quarter, eighth, triplet, 16th, 32nd and 64th note rhythms and rests in any time signature using bass, treble and percussion clefs
  - 1.3 Identify and accurately reproduce elements of the staff, music notation symbols for dynamics, articulations and phrasing
  - 2.1 Identify and accurately reproduce scales, modes and their related intervals
  - 2.2 Identify and accurately reproduce extended and altered chords, arpeggios and chord Progressions
  - 3.1 Identify and describe parts of musical instruments and related equipment with reference to the effect different choices make on sound
  - 3.2 Identify pitch, rhythm, instrument voices and techniques within instrument-specific music notation including transposing brass instruments
  - 3.3 Identify, including transposing brass instruments, instrument-specific notation and describe, with reference to performance quality, their corresponding practical techniques
  - 4.1 Identify pitch, keys, time signatures and rhythms within a multi-instrumental score
  - 4.2 Accurately complete a multi-instrumental score of up to eight parts in the appropriate style while adhering to any improvisation directions
  - 4.3 Identify instrument-specific techniques and stylistic traits within a multi-instrumental score of up to eight parts
  - 5.1 Identify appropriate scales and arpeggios for improvisation within a multi-instrumental score of up to eight parts

The Grade 7 Popular Music Theory Exam lasts **180 minutes**

# GRADE 8

## GRADE 8 OVERVIEW

The requirements for this level are the same as the previous Grades, plus the following areas:

### MUSIC NOTATION

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Music Notation** section of the exam;

- Clefs: rewriting into other clefs
- Rhythm: adding missing time signatures, tuplet ratios, and beaming into different note groupings, and equivalent rests
- Recognising music notation used by different instrumental groups including alto
- Understanding odd note groupings
- Recognising time signatures: 5/8, 7/8

### POPULAR MUSIC HARMONY

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Popular Music Harmony** section of the exam;

- Understanding scales: melodic and harmonic minor scales
- Identifying scales and using accidentals in contrasting melody lines: altered, whole tone, diminished, melodic minor
- Writing out scales with different clefs and varied pitch
- Understanding the use of accidentals in varied modes
- Transposing melodies across different instrumental disciplines
- Understanding chords: extended and altered
- Identifying intervals of varied keys and clefs
- Recognising all keys and understanding how to transpose into any key

### BAND KNOWLEDGE

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Knowledge** section of the exam;

- Understanding how music technology is used: identification of effects and how they are used
- Instrument-specific effects and how to recognise them
- How music technology effects have changed over the decades
- Identification of parts on a string instrument
- Understanding how to play a stringed instrument, the physical differences between them, and recognising instrument-specific traits
- Understanding instrument-specific techniques across different disciplines
- Understanding and recognising instrumental notation
- Interpreting musical devices on a score
- Recognising different clefs
- Recognising the pitch range of all instruments studied

## BAND ANALYSIS

At this Grade you will need to cover the following aspects for the **Band Analysis** section of the exam;

- Understanding scores with up to **eight** different instruments
- Instrument-specific techniques
- Re-writing a score for transposing instruments
- Chordal analysis and stylistic traits of band and brass instruments
- Interpreting a score for up to eight players
- Understanding improvisation techniques across instrumental disciplines
- Understanding style and content of specific instruments
- Recognising the stylistic traits of varied instruments
- Understanding musical devices across instrumental disciplines: melodic/ harmonic/ rhythmic
- Recognising the stylistic traits in different instrumental disciplines
- Generic band score analysis
- Recognising scales, modes, and modulation

Note: In all levels syllabus content will also be taken from previous grades in order to test your knowledge in the exam.

## SITTING A GRADE 8 POPULAR MUSIC THEORY EXAM

### GENERAL ADVICE

- If a question requires a written answer, don't feel compelled to use every line. Answering the questions correctly is much more important than using all the available space.
- Aim to answer all the questions set. If you get stuck on one particular question, move on and come back to it later.
- Your answers should be neat, accurate and legible, as marks can't be given if your response is illegible.
- Avoid unnecessary corrections by thinking your responses through before committing them to paper.
- Use a pencil that is sharp enough to write precisely, but soft enough to rub out and make corrections.
- To avoid confusion, tick boxes (checkboxes) should be marked with a clear tick symbol rather than a cross. Please note that some answers require more than one box to be ticked, so read the questions carefully.

# GRADE 8 ASSESSMENT

All of the listed regulated units which include assessment criteria can also be found on the Ofqual website:  
[http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/R\\_507\\_1254](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit/Details/R_507_1254)

The Grade 8 Popular Music Theory Exam consists of the following **learning outcomes and assessment criteria**;

## Learning outcomes

The learner will:

- 1 Understand music notation
- 2 Understand the elements of popular music harmony
- 3 Understand instrumental components, specialist notation, techniques and stylistic traits
- 4 Be able to analyse, identify and modify music notation, harmony, stylistic traits and instrumental characteristics within a multi-instrumental score
- 5 Be able interpret a score to make a range of appropriate harmony choices for improvised music and interpret improvisational directions while demonstrating stylistic awareness

## Assessment Criteria

The learner can:

- 1.1 Identify and accurately reproduce any note on the staff, octave transposition and keys up to seven sharps and flats including modal key signatures using bass, treble and alto clef
- 1.2 Identify and accurately reproduce whole, half, quarter, eighth, triplet, 16th, 32nd, 64th note rhythms, odd note groupings, tuplets, ratio bracketed polyrhythms and rests in any time signature using bass, treble, alto and percussion
- 1.3 Identify and accurately reproduce elements of the staff, music notation symbols for dynamics, articulations and phrasing
- 2.1 Identify and accurately reproduce scales, modes and their related intervals
- 2.2 Identify and accurately reproduce extended and altered chords, arpeggios and chord Progressions
- 3.1 Identify and describe parts of musical instruments and related equipment with reference to the effect different choices make on sound
- 3.2 Identify pitch, rhythm, instrument voices and techniques within instrument-specific music notation including orchestral string and transposing brass instruments
- 3.3 Identify, including transposing brass instruments, instrument-specific notation and describe, with reference to performance quality, their corresponding practical techniques
- 4.1 Identify pitch, keys, time signatures and rhythms within a multi-instrumental score
- 4.2 Accurately complete a multi-instrumental score of up to eight parts in the appropriate style while adhering to any improvisation directions
- 4.3 Identify instrument-specific techniques and stylistic traits within a multi-instrumental score of up to eight parts
- 5.1 Identify appropriate scales and arpeggios for improvisation within a multi-instrumental score of up to eight parts

The Grade 8 Popular Music Theory Exam lasts **180 minutes**

## Theory Exam Regulations

1. Rockschoo! exams are open to all candidates, irrespective of age and without previously having taken any other grade in the same subject in accordance with our Equal Opportunities policy.
2. Full payment and relevant documentation must reach the offices of Rockschoo! on or before the chosen exam period's closing date.
3. It is the responsibility of the applicant/candidate to read and to abide by these regulations ensuring the correct payment has been made, the accuracy of information supplied and that those connected with the examination are aware of all relevant information.
4. Names on certificates will be as on candidate's acknowledgement letter. A **£10** fee will be charged if:
  - a) Any amendments to the name are requested by the candidate after the date of the exam.
  - b) A replacement certificate is needed due to loss or error in the information given, either by the teacher or candidate.
5. Cancellation of an exam will result in loss of the exam fee. Exam entries may not be transferred from one candidate to another. Full refunds will only be given for medical reasons and on production of a medical certificate. Partial refunds **may** be given under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of Rockschoo!.
6. If a candidate wishes to defer their exam once it has been scheduled they will incur a charge of half the original exam entry fee.
7. Rockschoo! reserves the right to defer exams until the next available exam period. After one deferral, an exam is guaranteed at an exam centre chosen by Rockschoo!. This may not be your local centre.
8. Only the Exam Invigilator and candidates taking the examination are allowed to be present in the examination room, with the exception and teachers/assistants of special needs candidates, agreed by Rockschoo! in advance.
9. Candidates should not have coats, bags and other personal items with them during the examination. These should be left in a safe place for the duration of the examination. Candidates requiring additional items as part of a special requirement will have agreed this with Rockschoo! in advance of the examination.
10. Candidates are not permitted to leave the examination room until they have completed their examination paper and handed it in to the Exam Invigilator. If the candidate completes the exam early they may leave the exam room providing they have the permission to do so by the Exam Invigilator.
11. Examinations will commence at the stated time. Candidates arriving more than 10 minutes late will need to agree with the Exam Invigilator whether they can enter the examination. Additional time will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and will be no more than 20 minutes.
12. Any candidates with special educational needs must notify the Rockschoo! office of any special provision needed prior to the exam and provide medical acknowledgement where possible.
13. Entries will be accepted by Rockschoo! only in accordance with the conditions and regulations stated and in all matters the decision of Rockschoo! must be accepted as final.
14. Rockschoo! operates a quality assured appeals process. All appeals must be made in writing no later than 30 days after receipt of result. Please refer to our appeals procedure for information on this:  
<http://www.rockschoo!.co.uk/qualifications/general-information/appeals/>

**All fees quoted are inclusive of VAT and effective as of 1st January 2015**[JT1]