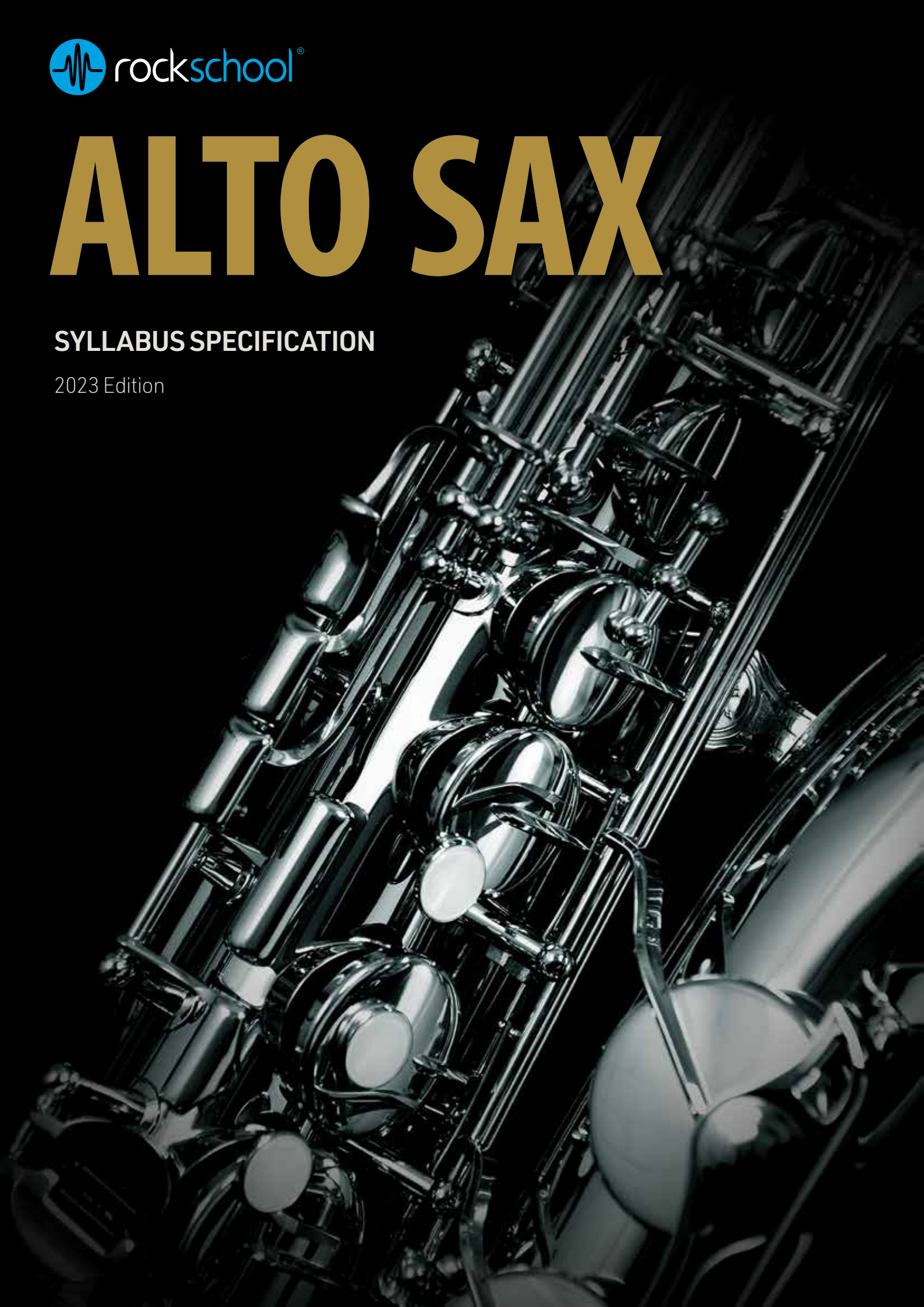


ALTO SAX

SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION

2023 Edition





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2023 Edition

Revised: Initial release (no revisions)

See [Revision History](#) at back of book
for further information

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PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Rockscool 2023 syllabus for Alto Sax. This syllabus guide is designed to give teachers, learners and candidates practical information on the graded examinations run by Rockscool.

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

This Syllabus Guide covers the following examinations:

- Graded Examinations Grade 1 to Grade 8
- Performance Certificates Grade 1 to Grade 8

The Value Of RSL Qualifications

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

RSL & UCAS

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

Our qualifications at Level 3 (Grades 6–8) carry allocated points on the UCAS tariff. For full details relating to the allocation of UCAS points please see: www.rslawards.com/about-us/ucas-points

Period Of Operation

This syllabus specification covers Alto Sax Grade Examinations and Performance Certificates from September 2023.

Examinations

Rockscool offers two types of graded music examination: Graded Examination & Performance Certificate

Grade Examinations

Grade Examinations are available from Grade 1 – Grade 8 and consist of the following elements:

Prepared Work	Unprepared Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 3 Performance Pieces: Grade 1 to Grade 8▪ Technical Exercises: Grade 1 to Grade 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sight Reading Or Improvisation & Interpretation: Grade 1 to Grade 5▪ Quick Study Pieces: Grades 6–8▪ Ear Tests: Grade 1 to Grade 8▪ General Musicianship Questions: Grade 1 to Grade 8

Performance Certificates

Performance Certificates are available from Grade 1 – Grade 8 and consist of the following:

Prepared Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 5 Performance Pieces: Grade 1 to Grade 8

OVERVIEW

Unit Overview – Graded Examinations in Popular Music Performance

QUALIFICATION TITLE	QAN	TOTAL NO. OF UNITS	GUIDED LEARNING HOURS	CREDIT	TOTAL
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

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

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

QUALIFICATION SUMMARY

Aims & Broad Objectives

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

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

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

Progression

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

Qualification Structure

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

Entry Requirements

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

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

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Assessment Methodology

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

Technical tests covering knowledge of:

- Scales
- Arpeggios
- Technical Studies

Performance Pieces

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

Unseen Tests

- Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation tests (Grade 1 – Grade 5)
- Quick Study Pieces (Grades 6–8)
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

Assessment Timings

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

Grade Exams

- Grade 1: 20 minutes
- Grade 2: 20 minutes
- Grade 3: 25 minutes
- Grade 4: 27 minutes
- Grade 5: 27 minutes
- Grade 6: 32 minutes
- Grade 7: 32 minutes
- Grade 8: 32 minutes

Performance Certificates

- Grade 1: 20 minutes
- Grade 2: 20 minutes
- Grade 3: 25 minutes
- Grade 4: 25 minutes
- Grade 5: 25 minutes
- Grade 6: 27 minutes
- Grade 7: 27 minutes
- Grade 8: 30 minutes

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

MARKING SCHEMES

Grade Exams: Grade 1 to Grade 8			
Element	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Technical Exercises	9–10 out of 15	11–12 out of 15	13+ out of 15
Ear Tests	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9+ out of 10
Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation (Grade 1 – Grade 5)	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9+ out of 10
Quick Study Piece (Grades 6–8)			
General Musicianship Questions	3 out of 5	4 out of 5	5 out of 5
Total Marks	60%	74%	90%

Performance Certificates: Grade 1 to Grade 8			
Element	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 4	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 5	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Total Marks	60%	75%	90%

Examination Structure

The examination structure for the grade examinations is shown below:

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

PREFACE

General Notes

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

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

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

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

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

The Examiner will not facilitate page turning for candidates. Candidates are allowed to photocopy relevant sheet music as necessary to alleviate page turns but all copied materials must be handed into the Examiner at the end of the examination.

All tempo markings are to be observed unless otherwise stated. Each piece is designed carefully to achieve a number of outcomes appropriate for the grade.

Expectations of Knowledge, Skills and Understanding

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

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

Quality Assurance

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

CANDIDATE ACCESS AND REGISTRATION

Access and Registration

The qualifications will:

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

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

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

Recommended Prior Learning

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

FURTHER INFORMATION & CONTACT

Guidance on Free Choice Pieces

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

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

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

Free choice pieces must be in a modern popular genre such as pop; rock; jazz; country; blues; soul; reggae, film and musical theatre.

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

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

PREFACE

Complaints & Appeals

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

Equal Opportunities

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

Contacts for Help & Support

All correspondence should be directed to:

RSL

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

Or info@rslawards.com

ROCKSCHOOL CONTEMPORARY ALTO SAX EXAMINATIONS

EXAMINATIONS OVERVIEW

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

Grade Examinations

Alto Sax Grade Examinations are available from Grade 1 to Grade 8 and consist of the following elements:

- Three Performance Pieces: Grade 1 to Grade 8
- Technical Exercises: Grade 1 to Grade 8
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation: Grade 1 to Grade 5
- Quick Study Pieces: Grade 6 to Grade 8
- General Musicianship Questions: Grade 1 to Grade 8

These elements fall into two categories:

- Prepared work: This consists of three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises
- Unprepared work: This consists of Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation (Grade 1 to Grade 8)

Performance Certificates

Alto Sax Performance Certificates are available from Grade 1 to Grade 8 and consist of the following elements:

- Five Performance Pieces

EXAMINATION STRUCTURE

The examination structure for the Grade Examination is shown below:

Grade 1 to Grade 8

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation (Grade 1 to Grade 5); Quick Study Piece (Grades 6–8)
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

EXAMINATION TIMINGS

Grade Exams

- Grade 1: 20 minutes
- Grade 2: 20 minutes
- Grade 3: 25 minutes
- Grade 4: 27 minutes
- Grade 5: 27 minutes
- Grade 6: 32 minutes
- Grade 7: 32 minutes
- Grade 8: 32 minutes

Performance Certificates

- Grade 1: 20 minutes
- Grade 2: 20 minutes
- Grade 3: 25 minutes
- Grade 4: 25 minutes
- Grade 5: 25 minutes
- Grade 6: 27 minutes
- Grade 7: 27 minutes
- Grade 8: 30 minutes

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

GENERAL NOTES

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

Free Choice Pieces

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

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

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

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

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

Adaptation and Personalisation of Pieces

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

Notation

Use of Transposition:

Unless otherwise specified, all pitches and key signatures reference written pitch, not concert pitch. While it does not form part of the examination, candidates are recommended to develop a working knowledge of the transposition of their instruments commensurate with the grade they are studying toward.

GRADING CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS

GRADED EXAMINATIONS

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

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

Sight Reading / Improvisation & Interpretation / Quick Study Piece

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

Ear Tests

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

General Musicianship Questions (GMQs)

Bands of Attainment / Mark Range					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	5 correct responses	4 correct responses	3 correct responses	2 correct responses	0–1 correct responses

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

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

DEFINITIONS

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

GRADE 1

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

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

GRADE EXAM | GRADE 1

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play three performance pieces and technical exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and a technical study.

Unprepared Work

Candidates are required to complete either a sight reading or an improvisation & interpretation test, and two ear tests developing melodic and rhythmic recall.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

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

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 1 there are three groups of technical work: scales, arpeggios and a technical study.

All scales and arpeggios need to be played in straight feel, prepared with tongued and slurred articulation, in the rhythms, keys, octaves and tempos shown in the grade book. Candidates may use their book during the exam for all groups.

Groups A & B need to be played to a click. The examiner will play the click at the given tempo and candidates should begin to play after four clicks.

Group C is played without click.

Group A: Scales

The tempo for this group is ♩=50.

- G major scale, 1 octave
- G dorian mode, 1 octave
- G minor pentatonic scale, 1 octave

Group B: Arpeggios

The tempo for this group is ♩=50.

- G major arpeggio, 1 octave
- G minor arpeggio, 1 octave

Group C: Technical Study

In this group, you will be required to perform your choice of one of the technical studies shown below.

- Study 1: Dynamics, articulation and phrasing.
- Study 2: Modes and stylistic techniques.
- Study 3: Intervals and intonation.

SUPPORTING TESTS

Section 1 | Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation

In this section, candidates can choose between a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask which the candidate has chosen before then showing the test. Once the candidate has chosen, they cannot change their mind.

Sight Reading

In the Sight Reading test, the examiner will give the candidate a melody to be played to a metronome click.

- 4 bars duration
- In the key of G major
- At a tempo of $\text{♩} = 100$
- In f time
- Based on half notes (minims), quarter notes (crotchets) and associated rests.

The examiner will show the candidate the notation, and the candidate will have 90 seconds to prepare. The candidate may ask for a metronome click at the start of, or throughout the candidates practise time. After the 90 seconds practise time, the examiner will play the candidate the click track again, and the candidate will be required to perform the test.

Improvisation & Interpretation

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give the candidate a 5-bar chord progression in the key of G major or G minor. The candidate will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for the candidate to practise and the second time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is $\text{♩} = 95$.

During the preparation time, the candidate will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 2 | Ear Tests

In this section, candidates are tested on their melodic and rhythmic recall skills.

Test 1 | Melodic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate two consecutive notes. The candidate will need to identify whether the last note is higher or lower than the first. The candidate will hear the test twice, each time with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

Test 2 | Rhythmic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate a two-bar rhythm on the note 'G'. The candidate will hear the test twice. The candidate will then hear a one bar count-in, after which the candidate will be required to play back the rhythm on their instrument on the same note, to a drum backing. The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 3 | General Musicianship Questions

The final part of the exam is the General Musicianship Questions (GMQs) section, where the examiner will ask five questions drawn from the topics listed below. For the notation section, the examiner will ask the candidate to choose a piece they've played in the exam.

Notation

The candidate may be asked to identify the following on the score:

- You may be asked to identify the following on your score:
- The treble clef or time signature
- Note pitch names
- Half note (minim), quarter note (crotchet) or eighth note (quaver) values
- The tempo marking

The candidate's Instrument

The candidate may be asked to identify one of the following parts of their instrument:

- Bell
- Mouthpiece
- Keys

Music Theory

The candidate may be asked to describe the construction of a major or minor triad.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE | GRADE 1

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play five performance pieces. There is no unprepared work in the Performance Certificate.

The Grade 1 Performance Certificate lasts 20 minutes

GRADE 2

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

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

GRADE EXAM | GRADE 2

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play three performance pieces and technical exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and a technical study.

Unprepared Work

Candidates are required to complete either a sight reading or an improvisation & interpretation test, and two ear tests which continue to develop melodic and rhythmic recall

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

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

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 2 there are three groups of technical work: scales, arpeggios and a technical study.

All scales and arpeggios need to be played in straight feel, prepared with tongued and slurred articulation, in the rhythms, keys, octaves and tempos shown in the grade book. Candidates may use their book during the exam for all groups.

Group C is played as indicated below

Group A: Scales

The tempo for this group is ♩=55.

- D major scale, 2 octaves
- D dorian mode, 2 octaves
- D minor pentatonic scale, 2 octaves

Group B: Arpeggios

The tempo for this group is ♩=55.

- D major arpeggio, 2 octaves
- D minor arpeggio, 2 octaves

Group C: Technical Study

In this group, the candidate will be required to perform their choice of one of the technical studies shown below.

- Study 1: Dynamics, articulation and phrasing.
- Study 2: Modes and stylistic techniques.
- Study 3: Intervals and intonation.

SUPPORTING TESTS

Section 1 | Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation

In this section, candidates can choose between a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask which the candidate has chosen before then showing the test. Once the candidate has chosen, they cannot change their mind.

Sight Reading

The test will be:

- 6 bars duration
- In the key of D major or B minor
- At a tempo of $\text{♩}=100$
- In $\frac{4}{4}$ time
- Based on half notes (minims), quarter notes (crotchets), eighth notes and associated rests.

The examiner will show the candidate the notation, and the candidate will have 90 seconds to prepare. The candidate may ask for a metronome click at the start of, or throughout their practise time. After the 90 seconds practise time, the examiner will play the candidate the click track again, and they will be required to perform the test.

Improvisation & Interpretation

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give the candidate a 5-bar chord progression in the key of D major or D minor. The candidate will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for the candidate to practise and the second time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is $\text{♩}=95$.

During the preparation time, the candidate will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 2 | Ear Tests

In this section, candidates are tested on their melodic and rhythmic recall skills.

Test 1 | Melodic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate a two-bar melody with a drum backing using the D major scale. The first note of the melody will be the root note and the first interval will be ascending. The candidate will play the melody back on their instrument.

The candidate will hear the melody twice. Each time the melody is played it is preceded by a vocal count-in. There will then be a short gap for the candidate to practise. After the third vocal count-in (signifying the assessed part of the test) the candidate should play the melody along to the drum backing. The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

Test 2 | Rhythmic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate a two-bar rhythm on the note 'D'. The candidate will hear the test twice. The candidate will then hear a one bar count-in, after which they will be required to play back the rhythm on their instrument on the same note, to a drum backing. The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 3 | General Musicianship Questions

The final part of the exam is the General Musicianship Questions (GMQs) section, where the examiner will ask five questions drawn from the topics listed below. For the notation section, the examiner will ask the candidate to choose a piece they've played in the exam.

Notation

The candidate may be asked to:

- Explain the meaning of the time signature
- Identify note pitch names including accidentals, or identify the key signature
- Identify rhythm values found in the piece drawn from the following: half note (minim), dotted half-note (dotted minim), quarter note (crotchet) or eighth note (quaver) and associated rests
- Identify the tempo marking or genre of the piece

The Candidate's Instrument

The candidate may be asked to identify one of the following parts of their instrument:

- Keys
- Ligature
- Reed

Music Theory

The candidate may be asked to describe the construction of a dominant seventh chord.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE | GRADE 2

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play five performance pieces. There is no unprepared work in the Performance Certificate.

The Grade 2 Performance Certificate lasts 20 minutes

GRADE 3

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

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

GRADE EXAM | GRADE 3

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play three performance pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and chords.

Unprepared Work

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or an Improvisation & Interpretation test, and two Ear Tests which continue to develop Melodic and Rhythmic recall.

EXAM STRUCTURE

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

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

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

TECHNICAL WORK

At Grade 3 there are three groups of technical work: scales, arpeggios and a technical study.

In this part of the exam, the examiner will ask for a selection of scales (Group A) and arpeggios (Group B) drawn from the lists below. All scales and arpeggios should be prepared with tongued and slurred articulation. The examiner will announce the key, scale or arpeggio type and articulation for each example. Where shown, you may choose the type of minor scale (natural, harmonic or melodic).

Group A: Scales

The tempo for this group is $\text{♩} = 60$.

- B^b major scale, 1 octave
- A major scale, to the 12th
- A dorian mode, to the 12th
- A minor pentatonic scale, to the 12th
- A blues scale, to the 12th
- G chromatic scale, 1 octave

Group B: Arpeggios

The tempo for this group is $\text{♩} = 60$.

- B^b major arpeggio, 1 octave
- A major arpeggio, 1 octave
- B^b minor arpeggio, 1 octave
- A minor arpeggio, 1 octave

Group C: Technical Study

In this group, you will be required to perform your choice of one of the technical studies shown below.

- Study 1: Dynamics, articulation and phrasing.
- Study 2: Modes and stylistic techniques.
- Study 3: Intervals and intonation.

SUPPORTING TESTS

Section 1 | Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation

In this section, candidates can choose between a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask which the candidate has chosen before then showing the test. Once the candidate has chosen, they cannot change their mind.

Sight Reading

In the Sight Reading test, the examiner will give the candidate a melody to be played to a metronome click.

The test will be:

- 8 bars duration
- In the key of A major or A minor
- In $\frac{4}{4}$ or $\frac{8}{8}$ time
- Based on half notes (minims), dotted half-notes (dotted minims), quarter notes (crotchets), dotted quarter-notes (dotted crotchets), eighth notes and associated rests.

The examiner will show the candidate the notation, and they will have 90 seconds to prepare. The candidate may ask for a metronome click at the start of, or throughout their practise time. After the 90 seconds practise time, the examiner will play the candidate the click track again, and they will be required to perform the test.

Improvisation & Interpretation

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give the candidate an 8-bar chord progression in the key of A major or A minor. The candidate will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for the candidate to practise and the second time is for them to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is $\text{♩} = 95$.

During the preparation time, the candidate will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 2 | Ear Tests

In this section, candidates are tested on their melodic and rhythmic recall skills.

Test 1 | Melodic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate a two-bar melody with a drum backing using the A major scale. The first note of the melody will be the root note. The candidate will play the melody back on their instrument.

The candidate will hear the melody twice. Each time the melody is played it is preceded by a vocal count-in. There will then be a short gap for the candidate to practise. After the third vocal count-in (signifying the assessed part of the test) the candidate should play the melody along to the drum backing. The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

Test 2 | Rhythmic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate a two-bar rhythm on the note 'A'. The candidate will hear the test twice. The candidate will then hear a one bar count-in, after which they will be required to play back the rhythm on their instrument on the same note, to a drum backing. The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 3 | General Musicianship Questions

The final part of the exam is the General Musicianship Questions (GMQs) section, where the examiner will ask five questions drawn from the topics listed below. For the notation section, the examiner will ask the candidate to choose a piece they've played in the exam.

Notation

The candidate may be asked to:

- Explain the meaning of the key signature
- Explain the meaning of the tempo marking
- Identify note pitch names including accidentals, or identify rhythm values found in the piece drawn from the following: half note (minim), dotted half-note (dotted minim), quarter note (crotchet), dotted quarter-note (dotted crotchet), eighth note (quaver), sixteenth note (semiquaver) and associated rests
- Identify the tempo marking or genre of the piece

The candidate's Instrument

The candidate may be asked to explain how manipulation of the mouthpiece affects the overall tuning of the alto sax.

Music Theory

The candidate may be asked to describe the construction of a minor seventh chord or a major seventh chord.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE | GRADE 3

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play five performance pieces. There is no unprepared work in the Performance Certificate.

The Grade 3 Performance Certificate lasts 25 minutes.

GRADE 4

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

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

GRADE EXAM | GRADE 4

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play three performance pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and chords.

Unprepared Work

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or an Improvisation & Interpretation test, and two Ear Tests which continue to develop Melodic recall and begin to develop harmonic recall.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 4 exam lasts 27 minutes and is taken in the following order:

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

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

TECHNICAL WORK

In this part of the exam, the examiner will ask for a selection of scales (Group A) and arpeggios (Group B) drawn from the lists below. All scales and arpeggios should be prepared with tongued, slurred and off-beat quaver swing tonguing. The examiner will announce the key, scale or arpeggio type and articulation for each example. Where shown, the candidate may choose the type of minor scale (natural, harmonic or melodic).

Group A: Scales

The tempo for this group is ♩=70.

- C major scale, 2 octaves
- G major scale, to the 12th
- C dorian mode, 2 octaves
- G dorian mode, to the 12th
- C minor pentatonic scale, 2 octaves
- G minor pentatonic scale, to the 12th
- C mixolydian mode, 2 octaves
- G mixolydian mode, to the 12th
- C blues scale, 2 octaves
- G blues scale, to the 12th
- C chromatic scale, 2 octaves

Group B: Arpeggios

- The tempo for this group is ♩=60.
- D major 7th arpeggio, 1 octave
- D minor 7th arpeggio, 1 octave
- D dominant 7th arpeggio, 1 octave
- G major 7th arpeggio, 1 octave
- G minor 7th arpeggio, 1 octave
- G dominant 7th arpeggio, 1 octave

Group C: Technical Study

In this group, the candidate will be required to perform their choice of one of the technical studies shown below.

- Study 1: Dynamics, articulation and phrasing.
- Study 2: Modes and stylistic techniques.
- Study 3: Intervals and intonation.

SUPPORTING TESTS

Section 1 | Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation

In this section, candidates can choose between a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask which the candidate has chosen before then showing the test. Once the candidate has chosen, they cannot change their mind.

Sight Reading

In the Sight Reading test, the examiner will give the candidate a short piece to be played to a backing track. At this grade, there will be two bars where the candidate will need to improvise melodies to complement the surrounding notated melody during their performance. Chord symbols are shown as guidance for the two bars of improvisation.

The test will be:

- 8 bars duration
- In the key of G major or G minor
- Melodies are predominantly diatonic with occasional accidentals
- In $\frac{4}{4}$ or $\frac{8}{8}$ time

The candidate will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for the candidate to practise and the second time is for them to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one-bar count-in.

During the preparation time, they will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Improvisation & Interpretation

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give the candidate a 12-bar lead sheet, over which they will be required to improvise a melody on their instrument. Two bars within the test will contain notated melody which the candidate must perform as written during their performance.

The candidate will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for the candidate to practise and the second time is for them to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one-bar count-in.

During the preparation time, they will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

The test will be:

- In the key of G major or G minor
- 12 bars duration, of which 2 bars containing notated melody are to be played as written, and the remaining 10 bars are to be improvised
- Predominantly diatonic, but may contain occasional non-diatonic harmony and accidentals
- In $\frac{4}{4}$ time, with a straight or swung eighth-note (swung quaver) feel
- At a tempo of $\text{♩} = 95\text{--}105$

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 2 | Ear Tests

In this section, candidates are tested on their melodic and rhythmic recall skills.

Test 1 | Melodic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate a two-bar melody with a drum backing using the G major or G minor scale. The first note of the melody will be the root note. The candidate will play the melody back on their instrument.

The test begins with a reference root note. The melody will then be played twice. Each time the melody is played it is preceded by a vocal count-in. There will then be a short gap for the candidate to practise. After the third vocal count-in (signifying the assessed part of the test) the candidate should play the melody along to the drum backing. The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

Test 2 | Harmonic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate a four-bar chord sequence in the key of C major, drawn from chords I, IV and V. The test contains one chord per bar, and the first chord will be the root chord. The candidate will be asked to identify the chord sequence.

The test begins with a reference root note. The chord sequence will then be played twice. Each time the chord sequence is played, it is preceded by a vocal count-in. After the second playthrough, the examiner will ask the candidate to state the chord sequence. The candidate may use chord names (C major, G major etc.) or numerals (I, V etc.). The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 3 | General Musicianship Questions

The final part of the exam is the General Musicianship Questions (GMQs) section, where the examiner will ask five questions drawn from the topics listed below. For the notation section, the examiner will ask the candidate to choose a piece they've played in the exam.

Notation

The candidate may be asked to:

- Explain the meaning of the time signature or key signature
- Explain the meaning of the tempo marking or any dynamic marking found on the score
- Identify note pitch names (including accidentals) or identify rhythm values found in piece – half note (minim), dotted half-note (dotted minim), quarter note (crotchet), dotted quarter-note (dotted crotchet), eighth note (quaver), sixteenth note (semiquaver), eighth-note triplets (quaver triplets), and their associated rests.
- Explain the meaning of any articulation or expression mark found on the score

The Candidate's Chosen Piece

The candidate may be asked to give one example of a musical feature of the piece which is representative of the genre, *e.g.* rhythmic features, harmonic features, tempo, feel *etc.*

Music Theory

The candidate may be asked to describe the construction of a diminished or augmented triad.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE | GRADE 4

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play five performance pieces. There is no unprepared work in the Performance Certificate.

The Grade 4 Performance Certificate lasts 25 minutes.

GRADE 5

The Grade 5 Alto Sax exam is for candidates who have been typically learning for three years or more and who have fully consolidated their intermediate level playing. They have mastered the key skills up to Grade 4 and since acquired a greater use of appropriate technique, more complex rhythms, 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.

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

GRADE EXAM | GRADE 5

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play three performance pieces and Technical Exercises which cover scales, arpeggios and chords.

Unprepared Work

Candidates are required to complete either a Sight Reading or an Improvisation & Interpretation test, and two Ear Tests which continue to develop melodic and harmonic recall.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 5 exam lasts 27 minutes and is taken in the following order:

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

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

TECHNICAL WORK

In this part of the exam, the examiner will ask for a selection of scales (Group A) and arpeggios (Group B) drawn from the lists below. All scales and arpeggios should be prepared with tongued, slurred and off-beat quaver swing tonguing. The examiner will announce the key, scale or arpeggio type and articulation for each example. Where shown, the candidate may choose the type of minor scale (natural, harmonic or melodic).

Group A: Scales

The tempo for this group is ♩=80.

- E major scale, two octaves
- F major scale, to the 12th
- E dorian mode, two octaves
- F dorian mode, to the 12th
- E mixolydian mode, two octaves
- F mixolydian mode, to the 12th
- E minor pentatonic scale, two octaves
- F minor pentatonic scale, to the 12th
- E blues scale, two octaves
- F blues scale, to the 12th
- E chromatic scale, two octaves

Group B: Arpeggios

The tempo for this group is ♩=70.

- E major 7th arpeggio, two octaves
- F major 7th arpeggio, to the 12th
- E minor 7th arpeggio, two octaves
- F minor 7th arpeggio, to the 12th
- E dominant 7th arpeggio, two octaves
- F dominant 7th arpeggio, to the 12th
- E diminished 7th arpeggio, two octaves
- F diminished 7th arpeggio, to the 12th

Group C: Technical Study

In this group, the candidate will be required to perform their choice of one of the technical studies shown below.

- Study 1: Dynamics, articulation and phrasing.
- Study 2: Modes and stylistic techniques.
- Study 3: Intervals and intonation.

SUPPORTING TESTS

Section 1 | Sight Reading or Improvisation & Interpretation

In this section, candidates can choose between a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask which the candidate has chosen before then showing the test. Once the candidate has chosen, they cannot change their mind.

Sight Reading

In the Sight Reading test, the examiner will give the candidate a short piece to be played to a backing track. At this grade, there will be four bars where the candidate will need to improvise melodies to complement the surrounding notated melody during their performance. Chord symbols are shown as guidance for the four bars of improvisation.

The test will be:

- 12 bars duration
- In the key of E major, E minor, F major or F minor
- Melodies are predominantly diatonic – there may be occasional accidentals
- In $\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$ or $\frac{12}{8}$ time

The candidate will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for the candidate to practise and the second time is for them to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one-bar count-in.

During the preparation time, the candidate will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Improvisation & Interpretation

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give the candidate a 12-bar lead sheet, over which they will be required to improvise a melody on their instrument. Four bars within the test will contain notated melody which the candidate must perform as written during their performance.

The candidate will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for the candidate to practise and the second time is for them to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one-bar count-in.

During the preparation time, the candidate will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

The test will be:

- In the key of E major, C# minor, F major and D minor.
- 12 bars duration, of which 4 bars containing notated melody are to be played as written, and the remaining 8 bars are to be improvised
- Predominantly diatonic, but may contain occasional non-diatonic harmony and accidentals
- In $\frac{4}{4}$ time, with a straight or swung eighth-note (swung quaver) feel
- A maximum tempo of $\text{♩} = 115$

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 2 | Ear Tests

In this section, candidates are tested on their melodic and rhythmic recall skills.

Test 1 | Melodic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate a two-bar melody with a drum backing using the E major or E minor scale. The first note of the melody will be the root note. The candidate will play the melody back on their instrument.

The test begins with a reference root note. The melody will then be played twice. Each time the melody is played it is preceded by a vocal count-in. There will then be a short gap for the candidate to practise. After the third vocal count-in (signifying the assessed part of the test) the candidate should play the melody along to the drum backing. The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

Test 2 | Harmonic Recall

The examiner will play the candidate a two-bar chord sequence in the key of C major, drawn from chords I, II^m, IV, V and VI^m. The test contains two chords per bar, and the first chord will be the root chord. The candidate will be asked to identify the chord sequence.

The test begins with a reference root note. The chord sequence will then be played twice. Each time the chord sequence is played, it is preceded by a vocal count-in. After the second playthrough, the examiner will ask the candidate to state the chord sequence. The candidate may use chord names (C major, G major *etc.*) or numerals (I, V *etc.*). The tempo is ♩=95.

Example audio is available in the downloadable files provided with the grade book.

SUPPORTING TESTS | CONTINUED

Section 3 | General Musicianship Questions

The final part of the exam is the General Musicianship Questions (GMQs) section, where the examiner will ask five questions drawn from the topics listed below. For the notation section, the examiner will ask the candidate to choose a piece they've played in the exam.

Notation

The candidate may be asked to:

- Explain the meaning of the time signature or key signature
- Explain the meaning of the tempo marking or any dynamic marking found on the score
- Identify any note pitch name(s) or rhythm value(s) found on the score
- Explain the meaning of any articulation or expression mark found on the score

The Candidate's Chosen Piece

The candidate may be asked to give one example of a musical feature of the piece which is representative of the genre, *e.g.* rhythmic features, harmonic features, tempo, feel *etc.*

Music Theory

The candidate may be asked to describe the construction of a diminished 7 chord or a minor 7^b5 chord.

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE | GRADE 5

EXAM OVERVIEW

Prepared Work

Candidates are required to play five performance pieces. There is no unprepared work in the Performance Certificate.

The Grade 5 Performance Certificate lasts 25 minutes.

REVISION HISTORY

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19 Sep 2023

Initial document release.