

General Information: Graded Music Exams

These guidelines apply to all [Rockschool](#) and [RSL Classical](#) syllabuses. **Please read them carefully as they contain important information which will help you get the best result from your exam.**

They are mostly relevant for face-to-face and live video exams, but some information may also be useful for candidates submitting recorded video exams.

Please also check our [Covid-19 guidelines](#).

Arrival and warm-up

You should arrive 15 minutes before your exam is due to start.

If you arrive later than the time of your exam, the examiner may not be able to conduct the exam, and it may need to be re-scheduled.

Most venues will have a practice room but **this is not guaranteed**. If you are concerned about this, please check in advance to see if one is available at your [chosen venue](#).

Photographic identification

If you are taking a grade 6, 7 or 8 exam you must bring photographic identification. Your result may be withheld if the appropriate ID is not presented on the day. If you do not have appropriate ID then please complete the [ID form available on the RSL website](#) and bring it with you to your exam.

Backing / accompaniment

The venue will provide backline equipment for your exam, i.e. amplifiers and PA system.

The examiner will provide the backing tracks for any pieces from a **current** Rockschool Grade Book or Hot Rock/Rockschool Classic series. **If you are playing a piece from a previous syllabus as a Free Choice Piece you will need to provide your own backing track.**

If you are using live accompaniment in your exam, please add full details to the 'additional scheduling notes' when submitting your online entry so that the required arrangements may be put in place. The accompaniment / second part may be played by your teacher or another musician, who should only be in the exam room for the relevant part of the exam. Alternatively, vocals candidates may accompany themselves.

You may perform an RSL Grade book piece with a different backing track or accompaniment to the one provided, but this will be considered 'Adapted Repertoire'; and if the adaptation is judged by the examiner to reduce the level of demand required for the grade, this will affect the marks awarded. This also includes instances where a backing track including the solo part ('full mix') is used. For more information see our guidance on [Free Choice Pieces, Adapted and Benchmarked Repertoire](#).

You may use a mixture of backing tracks and live accompaniment in the same exam.

Sheet music

You must bring the appropriate hard copy grade book, digital equivalent, or proof of subscription to the RSL Learning Platform to be signed or noted by the examiner. Your result may be withheld if the appropriate materials are not presented on the day.

With the exception of certain Technical Exercises where memory requirements apply, you may use sheet music which contains notes made during the course of study. However, you may not make notes during the exam.

Photocopied pages are permitted in order to avoid page turns, as long as the original hard copy grade book/digital equivalent/learning platform subscription is presented on the day. Examiners will not assist with page turns.

Candidates performing a Free Choice Piece must bring two copies of the sheet music with them; an original copy for the performance and a second copy (photocopy) for the examiner. **This includes selections from previous RSL syllabuses.** For more information, see our guidance on [Free Choice Pieces, Adapted and Benchmarked Repertoire](#).

Repeats

Notated repeats are required in accompanied pieces (ie. where played to a backing track) but for solo pieces (ie. without a backing track) can be considered optional.

Where not observing a repeat, candidates may jump straight to a second time bar where notated.

Da capo and dal segno indications should be observed.

Instrument information

Guitar and Bass

You must bring your own instrument and leads, and we recommend bringing spare strings.

If you are using effects which need to be plugged in then we suggest checking provision for power sources with the venue beforehand. If using batteries, please ensure that they are new/fully charged.

You should be fully tuned up before entering the exam room.

Ukulele

You must bring your own instrument, and we recommend bringing spare strings.

You should be fully tuned up before entering the exam room.

Drums

RSL centres will provide an acoustic kit as standard. You must bring your own sticks.

Candidates taking grades 6-8 who have notified Rockscool on their entry that they wish to bring their own equipment, may bring their own cymbals, hi hats, pedal, snare or even entire kit.

Drummers who wish to play an electric kit will need to provide the entire kit regardless of grade taken and must have notified RSL on entry.

Vocals

Not all venues will be able to provide a microphone. If intending to use a microphone and not bringing your own, please ensure that you check with the exam venue directly prior to the exam day. (NB. Candidates must use their own microphone during the Covid-19 pandemic).

Piano

Both acoustic and digital pianos are accepted for use in piano exams (both Rockscool and RSL Classical), at all grades.

Venues may provide either acoustic and/or digital pianos. Candidates are advised to contact the venue directly if they wish to check the details of the piano provided. See also our [Find a Centre](#) page.

Keyboard

Candidates must bring their own keyboard and stand, plus any additional required equipment. Please refer to the syllabus guide for specific requirements for each grade.

General

You should not make any adaptations to your instrument which make it easier to play, such as stickers on the frets or keys.

At the start of the exam

You will be allowed a few minutes to set up before the exam commences.

Where required, a sound check will be given at the start of the exam to ensure that you are happy with the balance / audio levels.

Additional people in the exam room

On occasion there may be an additional RSL staff member or trainee in the room with the main examiner. We will always inform you of this in advance, and you're welcome to decline if you're not comfortable with it. The additional staff member/trainee will then step out of the room for the duration of your examination.

Teachers and parents are not allowed in the exam room other than in exceptional circumstances, with permission having been granted under the Reasonable Adjustments process.

Restarts

Restarts will only be permitted if candidates are less than a third of the way through a piece or technical exercise.

Candidates will not be permitted more than **one** re-start during the performance of the pieces, and more than **two** re-starts during the Technical Exercises.

All re-starts may be reflected in the marking, with the exception of a first (or only) re-start in the Technical Exercises section.

Adaptation and personalisation of pieces

You should perform pieces as notated, except where you 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., you will be marked on your ability to present the personalised material in a stylistically appropriate way, commensurate with the grade level. However, where adaptations are judged to simplify the piece, or reduce the level of demand, this may be reflected in the marking. All performances will be expected to have a clear basis in the notated material.

For the 2021 Vocals syllabus, performances which align with the published audio realisations will not be interpreted as reducing the level of demand.

Safeguarding

All venues will have either visibility into the exam room or CCTV monitoring which the steward will regularly check. CCTV footage will be deleted shortly after the exam and is not available to view by candidates, parents, teachers or other people accompanying the candidate.

Recording exams

On occasion, RSL may record face-to-face exams using either video or audio. The candidate will be contacted in advance to request permission for RSL to retain and use these recordings for training and benchmarking purposes. Recordings will not be made available in the public domain and will be held for a maximum of 6 years.

Separate [terms and conditions](#) apply for live video and recorded video examinations.

No person other than RSL is permitted to make any recordings of the exam.

Results and certificates

Candidates will receive their results and report online and certificates will be issued afterwards. We aim to release results a maximum of 7 days after the exam, but very often it will be sooner than this.

Please note that all results issued are provisional and subject to RSL's quality assurance procedures until the certificate, which represents the formal award of the qualification, is issued. However, in practice results will only change in exceptional circumstances. Please note that we cannot give results out over the phone, post or email.