

Syllabus aspect

ABRSM

Rockschool (RSL)

London College of Music

Trinity College of Music

MUSIC EXAMS FOR NEURODIVERSE STUDENTS

A survey of music syllabuses which may be suitable for neurodiverse students including those who are dyslexic updated February 2021.

The columns show 4 of the 5 music examination boards which are recognised by Ofqual and for which UCAS points can be gained within the highest 3 grades: **Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM)**; **Rockschool (RSL)**; **London College of Music** and **Trinity College of Music**.

The **Music Teachers' Board (MTB)** is also recognised but is only included in this list under **Assessment by DVD/video** as all their exams are assessed in this way. Further information about this Board is found at the end of this document as well as a list of all the known music examination boards in the UK.

Further information about Ofqual and UCAS may be found at the end of this document.

This information is correct at [March 2021](#). Please visit the Boards' own websites. The BDA cannot take responsibility for this material; it is offered as advice and is constantly being updated by the Boards.

Aspect of music syllabus	ABRSM	Rockschool (RSL)	London College of Music	Trinity College of Music
Music theory exams Grades 1 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory exams Grades 1-5 now available online only • No longer requires rhythm writing or melody writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular Music Theory is offered from Début to Grade 8. All grades require reading and writing (words and music) • No previous theory grade requirement. 	'Stave Music': Multi-sensory approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exams only available at public centres • Requirement to write tune or bass line
Music theory requirement to enter higher grade practical exams	Candidates must provide evidence of a pass at ABRSM Grade 5 or above in Music Theory, Practical Musicianship or a Practical Grades solo Jazz instrument before they can enter for a Grade 6, 7 or 8 Practical Grades or Performance Grades exam.	No requirement for Music Theory exams		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no theory prerequisites for taking any Trinity College London practical graded exams, but theoretical musical knowledge works to enhance and support practical studies.

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Options other than single instrument/voice exam	As well as exams in most instruments ABRSM offers grades in Musical Theatre Singing, Choral Singing, Jazz Ensembles and other ensembles of between 2 and 10 performers, each of whom must perform a separate part.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musical Theatre • Band exams at Grades 3, 5 and 8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music theatre • Irish and Scottish traditional music • Chinese • Ensemble • Composition • School music performance • ALCM Piano duet and Piano Accompaniment • LLCM Piano Duet and Piano Accompaniment 	
No scales/technical exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical Examinations at all grades include these • However, a new parallel set of "Performance Grades" is available now, with online assessment only and just the requirement to perform pieces/songs (no tests). These new exams are to run parallel with the traditional Practical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are two sets of exams: Grade Exams ('Début' to Grade 8) and Performance Certificate ('Première' to Grade 8) • Grade Exams require a choice of technical exercises, sight reading, aural tests and general musicianship questions. See individual syllabi for details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure play exams • Recital • Performance awards • DipLCM Concert • ALCM Recital • FLCM • Rock Guitar grades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both face-to-face and digital examinations require scales and technical exercises • In face-to-face exams there is a requirement for supporting tests (chosen from sight-reading, improvisation, musical knowledge and aural. • However, in Digital Exams candidates will be assessed on how well the musical skills and knowledge that

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	<p>grades and be equivalent in standard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performances can be recorded at any time prior to submitting them for the examination. • ARSM Diploma also has no requirement for scales or technical exercises and is also remotely assessed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Certificates do not require this, just 5 pieces instead of three 		<p>underpin the supporting tests are demonstrated within the context of their entire performance</p>
No sight reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Grades • Ensemble Assessments • ARSM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Certificate does not require sight-reading • Grade exams: grades 1- 8 improvisation and interpretation instead: Piano and Keyboard • Other instruments: Grades 1 – 5 improvisation and interpretation instead; Grades 6 -8 Quick Study piece instead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-grade 1 exams • Leisure play exams • Recital exams: either viva voce or extra performance piece instead • Piano Duet • Bass Guitar • Electric Guitar • Ukulele • Irish Traditional Music • Scottish Traditional Music • Rock guitar: improvisation instead • DipLCM Concert • ALCM Recital option 1: written essay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade exams (initial to Grade 5 only): aural, improvisation or musical knowledge can be chosen instead. (NB aural includes having to look at a score) • Rock and pop exams all grades: improvising instead.

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No sight-reading (cont'd)			<p>required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ALCM Recital option 2 ● ALCM Standard option 2: either viva voce or aural instead ● LLCM Recital: programme notes required ● LLCM Standard: provide programme notes and viva voce instead ● FLCM ● Acoustic Guitar - all diplomas: programme notes required 	
No aural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensemble Assessments ● Performance Grades ● ARSM 	Performance Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leisure play exams ● Recital exams ● Piano Duet grades 1-5 ● DipLCM Concert ● ALCM Recital options ● ALCM Standard option 2: either sight reading or viva voce instead ● LLCM ● FLCM 	Grades 6 – 8: improvisation instead

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acoustic Guitar: all diplomas: (see on) programme notes required 	
No viva voce/discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Grades Ensemble Assessments ARSM 	Performance Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recital exams: either sight-reading or extra performance piece required Piano Duet grades 1 -5 ALCM Standard option 2: either sight reading or aural instead LLCM Recital LLCM Standard: sight reading and programme notes instead FLCM: programme notes required Acoustic Guitar: all diplomas: programme notes Required 	
No formal mark scheme; no pass/fail (comments only)	Ensemble Assessments are graded from A to E rather than a mark scheme.		Pre-Grade 1	

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Choice of own piece(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Grades: one of the four pieces/songs may be own choice • ARSM: up to a third of the programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Grade exams: 2 out of 3 pieces may be own choice • Performance Certificate: 3 of 5 pieces may be own choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure play exams: 1 of 4 pieces own choice • Piano Duet grades 1 – 5: 1 of 3 pieces may be own choice • Piano Duet grade 7: 1 of 3 pieces must be own choice 	Recital Diploma (need to submit programme for approval in advance)
Choice of own composition for performance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Grade exams: 2 out of 3 pieces may be own compositions • Performance Certificate: 3 of 5 pieces may be own compositions 		Can use own composition for one piece
No public performance Assessment by DVD/ video (recorded exams)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Performance Grades • ARSM 	Exams are offered face-to-face, pre-recorded or live streamed.	Exams are offered face-to-face, recorded or live streamed.	Digital Grades
All Music Teachers' Board exams are recorded in audio during the lesson by the teacher, submitted online and marked by specialist examiners. Once the result is confirmed, a certificate is then awarded.				

For further details, do a web-search for the Board you are interested in.

Music examination boards in the UK ()

There are a number of music examination boards in the UK

Academy of South Indian Music

Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music

Independent Contemporary Music Awards (ICMA)

Music Teachers' Board

National College of Music, London

Nationwide Music Exams

Trinity College London

London College of Music (LCM): part of the University of West London

Registry of Guitar Tutors (RGT), which is part of LCM

Rockschool (RSL)

Victoria College of Music

For Ofqual and UCAS information see the next 2 pages.

Ofqual information (July 2020)

Ofqual is the regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. We regulate by recognising and monitoring awarding organisations that deliver qualifications and assessments as set out in the [Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act \(2009\)](#) and [Education Act \(2011\)](#).

Ofqual regulate awarding organisations. Once an awarding organisation has become recognised by Ofqual they are in a position to submit qualifications onto the official qualifications frameworks. The awarding organisations then approve centres to deliver these qualifications.

You can view details of all the qualifications that sit on the national frameworks through the online database we run - The Register of Regulated Qualifications: <https://register.ofqual.gov.uk/>

If you are unsure about a qualification you can look for the details on this website, all qualifications listed on this website are regulated. If you are still unsure you can speak to either the centre or the awarding organisation directly and ask them for the qualification number. This is a unique code we assign to qualifications once they have been approved to go on the national frameworks. It will be in the format of 000/0000/0.

UCAS points (University and College Admissions Service). These are used for entry to Higher Education

For students applying for courses starting in the 2017/18 academic year, or later, the following points apply to music examinations in those examination boards registered with Ofqual.

	Grade 6			Grade 7			Grade 8		
	Pass	Merit	Dist.	Pass	Merit	Dist.	Pass	Merit	Dist.
Practical and Performance	8	10	12	12	14	16	18	24	30
Theory	4	5	6	6	7	8	8	9	10

See <https://www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/information-new-ucas-tariff-advisers>

And (for music specifically) <https://us.abrsm.org/en/our-exams/information-and-regulations/exam-regulation-and-ucas-points/> (which information applies to all five regulated Boards)