

# ROCK & POP GUITAR SYLLABUS

Qualification specifications  
for graded exams from 2018

Digital and face-to-face assessment



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# WELCOME

Welcome to Trinity College London's Rock & Pop Guitar syllabus for digital and face-to-face exams. Whether self-taught or taking lessons, learning for fun or heading for a career in the music industry, these exams help musicians develop real technical and performance skills to achieve their musical ambitions. We place performance at the heart of our Rock & Pop exams, so everything in this syllabus is assessed within a performance context that mirrors the skills you need in the industry.

## REAL SONGS

Play the music you love with our huge range of hit songs spanning all contemporary styles. Choose your set list from our graded songbooks and downloads, play a song of your own choice, or perform a song you've written yourself.

## REAL SKILLS

Develop the improvisation and playback session skills that professional musicians need. Showcase your technical skills in a real-life context through our technical focus songs and demonstrate your ability to deliver a compelling live performance.

## REAL PROGRESS

Achieve your goals with an externally regulated and internationally recognised qualification. Trust the 140-year heritage Trinity brings to contemporary music, and benefit from marks and comments on your performance from industry experts.

The exams are supported by a range of resources that provide essential support for learners:

- ▶ Graded songbooks containing all the songs needed for the exam, background information on the songs, and performance hints and tips
- ▶ Downloadable demo and backing tracks for the songs in the books
- ▶ Additional downloadable songs - check the website for the latest releases
- ▶ Session skills example tests books

We hope you enjoy exploring the songs on offer and we wish you every success in the exams and your wider music-making.

## ABOUT TRINITY COLLEGE LONDON

Trinity College London, established in 1872, is a leading internationally recognised awarding organisation (exam board), publisher and independent education charity. We specialise in the assessment of communicative and performance skills covering music, drama, combined arts and English language. With over 850,000 candidates a year in more than 60 countries worldwide, Trinity qualifications are specifically designed to help people progress. We inspire teachers and learners through the creation of assessments that are enjoyable to prepare for, rewarding to teach and that develop the skills needed in real life.

At the heart of Trinity's work is the belief that effective communicative and performance skills are life enhancing, know no boundaries and should be within reach of us all. We exist to promote and foster the best possible communicative and performance skills through assessment, content and training that is innovative, personal and authentic.

## KEEP UP TO DATE

Please check [trinityrock.com](http://trinityrock.com) to make sure you are using the current version of the syllabus and for the latest information about our Rock & Pop exams.

You can also check out our syllabuses and graded songbooks for:

- ▶ Bass
- ▶ Drums
- ▶ Keyboards
- ▶ Vocals

Performance diplomas for bass, drums, guitar, keyboards and vocals are available at ATCL, LTCL and FTCL levels. Find out more at [trinitycollege.com/rock-pop-diplomas](http://trinitycollege.com/rock-pop-diplomas).

Trinity accepts entries for its exams on the condition that candidates conform to the requirements of the appropriate syllabus. Any amendments to the requirements will be published and advertised via our website and in subsequent imprints.

# INTRODUCTION TO TRINITY'S ROCK & POP GRADES

## OBJECTIVE OF THE QUALIFICATIONS

Trinity's graded Rock & Pop exams provide a structured yet flexible framework for progress, which enables a learner to demonstrate their own musical personality and promotes enjoyment in music performance.

The exams assess performance and technical ability through practical assessment. They offer learners of any age the opportunity to measure their development as performers against a series of internationally understood benchmarks, taking them from beginner level to the point at which they can progress to higher education in music, or enter for Trinity's performance diplomas.

## WHO THE QUALIFICATIONS ARE FOR

Trinity's graded Rock & Pop exams are open to all learners, with no age restrictions or other limitations. There is no requirement to have passed lower grades, theory exams or other qualifications, although the grades represent a system of progressive mastery and the outcomes for each level assume confidence in the requirements of previous grades.

We are committed to making our exams accessible to all, and each candidate is treated individually when considering how assessments can be adapted for those with special needs. Find more information at [trinitycollege.com/music-csn](http://trinitycollege.com/music-csn).

## SONGS

Trinity makes every effort to ensure that the songs listed for each grade remain valid for the life of this syllabus. However, we reserve the right to change or add songs. For the latest information go to [trinityrock.com](http://trinityrock.com).

## PARENTAL AND TEACHER GUIDANCE

The songs in Trinity's Rock & Pop syllabuses have been arranged to represent the artists' original recordings as closely and authentically as possible. Popular music frequently deals with subject matter that some may find offensive or challenging. It is possible that the songs may include material that some might find unsuitable for use with younger learners.

There is no requirement that all songs in this syllabus must be learnt. We recommend that parents, guardians and teachers exercise their own judgement to satisfy themselves that the lyrics of selected songs are appropriate for the learners concerned. Trinity does not associate itself with, adopt or endorse any of the opinions or views expressed in the selected songs.

## ASSESSMENT AND MARKING

Trinity's graded Rock & Pop exams are assessed by external examiners, who are industry experts trained and moderated by Trinity. Examiners provide marks and comments for each section of the exam using the assessment criteria in the [Marking](#) section.

The exams are marked out of 100. Candidates' results correspond to different attainment levels as follows:

Total mark	Attainment level
87-100	Distinction
75-86	Merit
60-74	Pass
45-59	Below Pass 1
0-44	Below Pass 2

## DURATION OF STUDY (TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME)

All regulated qualifications are assigned a total qualification time. This should be used as guidance only. Total qualification time is an estimate of the average time a candidate spends with a teacher (guided learning hours) added to the average time spent learning independently. It is recognised that the amount of time needed to commit to a qualification will be dependent on each individual's level of experience.

	Guided learning hours (GLH)	Independent learning hours (ILH)	Total qualification time (TQT) (hours)
Initial	8	32	40
Grade 1	12	48	60
Grade 2	18	72	90
Grade 3	18	102	120
Grade 4	24	126	150
Grade 5	24	156	180
Grade 6	36	184	220
Grade 7	48	222	270
Grade 8	54	266	320

## RECOGNITION AND UCAS POINTS

Trinity College London is an international awarding organisation regulated by Ofqual (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation) in England, CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland and by Qualifications Wales. Various arrangements are in place with governmental education authorities worldwide.

In the UK, Grades 6-8 are eligible for UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) points for those applying to colleges and universities, as shown in the next column.

### Grade 6

UCAS POINTS

Pass **8** | Merit **10** | Distinction **12**

### Grade 7

UCAS POINTS

Pass **12** | Merit **14** | Distinction **16**

### Grade 8

UCAS POINTS

Pass **18** | Merit **24** | Distinction **30**

## WHERE THE QUALIFICATIONS COULD LEAD

While for some learners graded Rock & Pop exams represent a personal goal or objective, they can also be used as a progression route towards:

- ▶ Diplomas in Rock & Pop performance offered by Trinity or by other awarding organisations
- ▶ Music courses at conservatoires and universities, for which Grade 8 is often specified as an entry requirement
- ▶ Employment opportunities in music and the creative arts

## HOW TO BOOK AN EXAM

Booking details for face-to-face and digital exams are available at [trinityrock.com/book](https://trinityrock.com/book).

Face-to-face exams can be taken at Trinity's public exam centres, which are available throughout the world. Details are available at [trinitycollege.com/worldwide](https://trinitycollege.com/worldwide), and candidates should contact their local Trinity representative for more information.

Alternatively, in the UK, schools and private teachers with sufficient candidates may apply for an exam visit (please see [trinityrock.com/exam-visit](https://trinityrock.com/exam-visit) for details).

## TRINITY'S ROCK & POP QUALIFICATIONS

Trinity's music qualifications offer flexible progression routes from beginner to advanced levels in a range of musical styles. All are designed to help candidates develop as musicians according to their individual needs as learners.

Graded Rock & Pop exams are available for bass, drums, guitar, keyboards and vocals, and may be taken face-to-face or digitally. Find out more at [trinityrock.com](https://trinityrock.com).

After Grade 8, candidates can progress to Rock & Pop performance diplomas at Associate (ATCL), Licentiate (LTCL) and Fellowship (FTCL) levels. These are assessed digitally and allow candidates to create a set list of their favourite artists, choosing the songs that showcase their skills. Find out more at [trinitycollege.com/rock-pop-diplomas](https://trinitycollege.com/rock-pop-diplomas).

## OTHER QUALIFICATIONS OFFERED BY TRINITY

Graded Classical & Jazz exams assess a broad range of musicianship skills, including performance, while certificate exams focus entirely on performance, including separate marks for presentation skills. Find out more about graded exams at [trinitycollege.com/graded-exams](https://trinitycollege.com/graded-exams) and about certificate exams at [trinitycollege.com/certificates](https://trinitycollege.com/certificates).

Theory exams are available from Grade 1 to support learners to develop their understanding of the technical language of music. However, no theory qualifications or other prerequisites are required to enter graded or certificate exams at any level. Find out more about theory exams at [trinitycollege.com/theory](https://trinitycollege.com/theory).

After Grade 8 or the Advanced Certificate in classical subjects, candidates can progress to diplomas at Associate (ATCL), Licentiate (LTCL) and Fellowship (FTCL) levels. These assess higher skills in performance, teaching and theory. Find out more about classical diploma exams at [trinitycollege.com/diplomas](https://trinitycollege.com/diplomas).

Adults who work as music educators may also wish to consider Trinity's Level 4 Certificate for Music Educators (Trinity CME). Find out more about the Trinity CME at [trinitycollege.com/CME](https://trinitycollege.com/CME).

The Awards and Certificates in Musical Development are designed for those with learning difficulties across the whole spectrum of abilities and needs, and are mapped to the Sounds of Intent inclusive framework of musical engagement. Find out more at [trinitycollege.com/musical-development](http://trinitycollege.com/musical-development).

We also offer:

- ▶ Graded, certificate and diploma qualifications in drama-related subjects
- ▶ English language qualifications
- ▶ Teaching English qualifications
- ▶ Arts Award (only available in certain countries)

Specifications for all these qualifications can be downloaded from [trinitycollege.com](http://trinitycollege.com).

## TRINITY MUSIC QUALIFICATIONS

RQF* Level	EQF** Level	Classical and Jazz	Rock & Pop	Theory of Music	Teaching	Music Performance in Choirs	Graded Awards in Music Performance	Music Performance in Bands	Awards and Certificates in Musical Development	Solo and Group Certificates <sup>3</sup>
7	7	FTCL	FTCL <sup>2</sup>							
6	6	LTCL	LTCL <sup>2</sup>	LMusTCL <sup>1</sup>	LTCL					
5	4/5									
4		ATCL	ATCL <sup>2</sup>	AMusTCL <sup>1</sup>	ATCL					
					Certificate for Music Educators (CME)					
3	4	Grade 8	Grade 8	Grade 8					Level 3	Advanced
		Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 7						
		Grade 6	Grade 6	Grade 6						
2	3	Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 5					Level 2	Intermediate
		Grade 4	Grade 4	Grade 4						
1	2	Grade 3	Grade 3	Grade 3					Level 1	Foundation
		Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 2		Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 2		
		Grade 1	Grade 1	Grade 1		Grade 1	Grade 1	Grade 1		
Entry Level 3	1	Initial	Initial			Initial	Initial	Initial	Entry 3	
Entry Level 2						Pre-Initial		Pre-Initial	Entry 2	
Entry Level 1									Entry 1	

\* Regulated Qualifications Framework    \*\* European Qualifications Framework

1 Available only as in-person exams

2 Available only as digital exams

3 Available only as in-person exams and not EQF or RQF regulated

**REGULATED TITLES AND QUALIFICATION NUMBERS**

<b>Regulated title</b>	<b>Qualification number</b>
<b>Initial</b> TCL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Rock & Pop (Entry 3) (Initial)	600/3695/3
<b>Grade 1</b> TCL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Rock & Pop (Grade 1)	600/3546/8
<b>Grade 2</b> TCL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Rock & Pop (Grade 2)	600/3588/2
<b>Grade 3</b> TCL Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Rock & Pop (Grade 3)	600/3590/0
<b>Grade 4</b> TCL Level 2 Award in Graded Examination in Rock & Pop (Grade 4)	600/3591/2
<b>Grade 5</b> TCL Level 2 Award in Graded Examination in Rock & Pop (Grade 5)	600/3592/4
<b>Grade 6</b> TCL Level 3 Award in Graded Examination in Rock & Pop (Grade 6)	600/3593/6
<b>Grade 7</b> TCL Level 3 Award in Graded Examination in Rock & Pop (Grade 7)	600/3594/8
<b>Grade 8</b> TCL Level 3 Award in Graded Examination in Rock & Pop (Grade 8)	600/3595/X

# POLICIES

## SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

Trinity is fully committed to safeguarding and protecting the candidates that we work with. All posts, including examiners, are subject to a safer recruitment process, including the disclosure of criminal records and vetting checks. Our safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and promote safeguarding and safer working practice across all parts of our work.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Trinity is committed to providing equality of opportunity and treatment for all, and will not unlawfully or unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly on the basis of any characteristic.

## REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT

Trinity is committed to creating an inclusive environment where candidates with special needs are able to demonstrate their skills and feel welcomed. We aim to make our exams accessible to all. We treat each learner individually when considering how we can achieve this aim, recognising that requirements vary. Candidates can be assured that we do not compromise on the standard of marking or allow the quality of exams to be affected in any way.

All provision is tailored to the particular needs of each candidate. In order to be most beneficial, as full an explanation as possible of the required provision should be given. The need and request for provision should be made on the appropriate form available to download from [trinitycollege.com/music-csn](https://trinitycollege.com/music-csn). For enquiries please contact [music-csn@trinitycollege.com](mailto:music-csn@trinitycollege.com).

## DATA PROTECTION

Trinity is registered as a Data Controller with the Information Commissioner's Office in the United Kingdom under data protection legislation. Please see [trinitycollege.com/data-protection](https://trinitycollege.com/data-protection) for the most up-to-date information about Trinity's data protection procedures and policies.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

Trinity is committed to providing a high-quality service for all our users from initial enquiry through to certification. Full details of our customer service commitment can be found at [trinitycollege.com/customer-service](https://trinitycollege.com/customer-service).

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

Please note that for training/monitoring purposes, it may, on occasion, be necessary for there to be more than one examiner in the room.

Trinity audio records and sometimes films face-to-face exams for quality assurance and training purposes. In the case of filming, Trinity will always seek permission from the candidate (or a parent or guardian) first. All recording devices will be discreet and should not cause any distraction to candidates.

## RELEASE OF EXAM RESULTS

Full details of the timeframe for release of exam results can be found at [trinitycollege.com/music-results](https://trinitycollege.com/music-results). Any exam infringements (eg choosing an incorrect song) will be referred directly to Trinity's central office by the examiner. Exam reports may be withheld until the outcome of any referral has been considered by Trinity. Depending on the severity of the infringement, marks may be deducted or, in extreme cases, the exam may be invalidated.

## MALPRACTICE

Trinity requires its registered exam centres to report any suspected malpractice by candidates, teachers or examiners. In situations where a centre is found to be inadequate or to be guilty of malpractice, either in terms of provision of facilities or in administration, the exam centre may be required to suspend all of its activities relating to Trinity exams until the cause of the problem is identified and rectified, if appropriate. In extreme circumstances, the centre may have its registered status withdrawn.

In the very rare cases or circumstances where a centre or individual may be suspected of malpractice, Trinity will aim to minimise any inconvenience caused to any affected candidate, and would like to thank candidates, teachers and centre staff for their kind co-operation in reporting any suspected incident of cheating, thereby assisting Trinity in upholding the quality and integrity of its exam process.

## RESULTS REVIEW AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

Anyone who wishes to question their exam result should refer to [trinitycollege.com/results-enquiry](https://trinitycollege.com/results-enquiry) for full details of our results review and appeals process.

# TRINITY PUBLICATIONS

The following Trinity publications support this syllabus.

All are available from [trinityrock.com/store](http://trinityrock.com/store) or from your local music shop.

## ROCK & POP SONGBOOKS

Trinity's Rock & Pop songbooks contain eight songs (including three technical focus songs), plus background information on the songs and performance tips. Each also contains a code that gives free access to downloadable MP3 files of demo and backing tracks for the songs.

Guitar Initial	TCL 017079
Guitar Grade 1	TCL 017086
Guitar Grade 2	TCL 017093
Guitar Grade 3	TCL 017109
Guitar Grade 4	TCL 017116
Guitar Grade 5	TCL 017123
Guitar Grade 6	TCL 017130
Guitar Grade 7	TCL 017147
Guitar Grade 8	TCL 017154

## DEMO AND BACKING TRACK CDS

The demo and backing tracks that accompany the graded songbooks (and are free as downloads with the purchase of a songbook) are also available as graded CDs.

Guitar Initial CD	TCL 017550
Guitar Grade 1 CD	TCL 017567
Guitar Grade 2 CD	TCL 017574
Guitar Grade 3 CD	TCL 017581
Guitar Grade 4 CD	TCL 017598
Guitar Grade 5 CD	TCL 017604
Guitar Grade 6 CD	TCL 017611
Guitar Grade 7 CD	TCL 017628
Guitar Grade 8 CD	TCL 017635

## SESSION SKILLS

Specimen playback and improvising tests are available in Trinity's Session Skills books, which include downloadable backing tracks.

Guitar Session Skills Initial-Grade 2	TCL 014306
Guitar Session Skills Grades 3-5	TCL 014313
Guitar Session Skills Grades 6-8	TCL 014320

Syllabuses and Rock & Pop songbooks are also available for:

- ▶ Bass
- ▶ Drums
- ▶ Keyboards
- ▶ Vocals

# LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

## INITIAL

(RQF Entry Level 3)

### Learning outcomes

The learner will:

1. Produce a performance that demonstrates a basic foundation on their instrument and shows some interpretation
2. Perform audibly with a sense of enthusiasm and enjoyment and with some awareness of audience
3. Demonstrate that the foundations of a secure technique have been established
4. Demonstrate a range of technical and musical abilities through either a quick study piece or improvisation

### Assessment criteria

The learner can:

- 1.1 Perform with adequate continuity and a sense of pulse
- 1.2 Perform with some evidence of individual interpretation
- 2.1 Demonstrate some sense of performance with some confidence and capacity for audience engagement
- 3.1 Demonstrate a generally adequate technique
- 3.2 Perform with an adequate basic sound
- 4.1 Respond to a quick study piece with attention to note values and pitches
- 4.2 Improvise with some melodic development, some harmonic awareness, and a basic use of instrumental/vocal resources relevant to Initial level

## GRADE 1

(RQF Level 1)

### Learning outcomes

The learner will:

### Assessment criteria

The learner can:

<p>1. Produce a performance that demonstrates preparation and the beginnings of interpretation</p>	<p>1.1 Perform with general continuity and a sense of pulse 1.2 Perform with a developing feeling of individual interpretation</p>
<p>2. Perform accurately and be able to create and convey mood to the audience</p>	<p>2.1 Give a performance that is essentially accurate with general fluency and attention to musical and notational details 2.2 Demonstrate an overall sense of performance with basic confidence and some capacity for audience engagement</p>
<p>3. Show evidence of a basic familiarity with the fundamentals of instrumental/vocal technique</p>	<p>3.1 Demonstrate a generally reliable technique 3.2 Perform with an adequate basic sound with some evidence of tonal control and projection</p>
<p>4. Demonstrate a range of technical and musical abilities through either a quick study piece or improvisation</p>	<p>4.1 Respond to a quick study piece with continuity of pulse and attention to note values and pitches 4.2 Improvise with some melodic development, harmonic awareness, and use of basic instrumental/vocal resources relevant to Grade 1</p>

## GRADE 2

(RQF Level 1)

### Learning outcomes

The learner will:

### Assessment criteria

The learner can:

<p>1. Produce a performance that demonstrates preparation, understanding and the beginnings of thoughtful interpretation</p>	<p>1.1 Perform with generally secure rhythm and a sense of pulse 1.2 Perform with a general feeling of individuality and commitment</p>
<p>2. Perform clearly and accurately and be able to create and convey mood to the audience</p>	<p>2.1 Give a performance that is generally accurate and fluent with fair attention to musical and notational details 2.2 Demonstrate a competent sense of performance</p>
<p>3. Show evidence of a technical command of the instrument/voice</p>	<p>3.1 Demonstrate a competent level of technical ability with varied use of instrumental/vocal resources 3.2 Perform with a good-quality sound that is flexible and well-projected</p>
<p>4. Demonstrate a range of technical and musical abilities through either a quick study piece or improvisation</p>	<p>4.1 Respond to a quick study piece with continuity of pulse, attention to note values and pitches, and some sense of musical interpretation 4.2 Improvise with a creative approach to melodic responses, awareness of harmonic implications, and generally wide use of instrumental/vocal resources relevant to Grade 2</p>

## GRADE 3

(RQF Level 1)

### Learning outcomes

The learner will:

### Assessment criteria

The learner can:

1. Produce a performance that demonstrates careful preparation, understanding and the beginnings of thoughtful interpretation	1.1 Perform with secure rhythm and pulse 1.2 Perform with clear evidence of an emerging musical personality
2. Perform clearly and accurately, with a sense of spontaneity and be able to create and convey mood to the audience	2.1 Give a performance that is accurate and fluent with perceptive attention to musical and notational details 2.2 Demonstrate a confident, communicative and consistent sense of performance
3. Show evidence of a fluent technical command of the instrument/voice	3.1 Demonstrate a solid command of technique with musical and sensitive control of intonation and other instrumental/vocal resources 3.2 Perform with good production and projection of sound
4. Demonstrate a range of technical and musical abilities through either a quick study piece or an improvisation	4.1 Respond to a quick study piece with continuity of pulse, attention to note values and pitches, and a sense of musical interpretation 4.2 Improvise with controlled melodic development, appropriate harmonic vocabulary, and full use of instrumental/vocal resources relevant to Grade 3

## GRADE 4

(RQF Level 2)

### Learning outcomes

The learner will:

### Assessment criteria

The learner can:

<p>1. Produce a performance that demonstrates an understanding of the material, leading to a personal interpretation</p>	<p>1.1 Give a performance that pays attention to musical and notational details 1.2 Perform with some evidence of stylistic awareness and a general attempt to convey individual musical intent</p>
<p>2. Perform clearly and with projection, supporting mood and character and engaging with the audience</p>	<p>2.1 Demonstrate an overall sense of performance with confidence and some capacity for audience engagement</p>
<p>3. Show evidence of a basic exploration of and familiarity with the fundamentals of instrumental/vocal technique</p>	<p>3.1 Perform with a generally reliable technique 3.2 Perform with an adequate basic sound with some evidence of tonal control and projection</p>
<p>4. Demonstrate a range of technical and musical abilities through either a quick study piece or improvisation</p>	<p>4.1 Respond to a quick study piece with continuity of pulse, attention to note values and pitches, and a sense of musical interpretation 4.2 Improvise with melodic development, harmonic awareness, and use of instrumental/vocal resources relevant to Grade 4</p>

## GRADE 5

(RQF Level 2)

### Learning outcomes

The learner will:

1. Produce a performance that demonstrates a sound understanding of the material, leading to a personal and imaginative interpretation
2. Perform confidently with projection, control and engagement with the audience
3. Show evidence of consistent application of developing technical skills and sound production
4. Demonstrate a range of technical and musical abilities through either a quick study piece or improvisation

### Assessment criteria

The learner can:

- 1.1 Give a performance that pays close attention to musical and notational details
- 1.2 Perform with awareness of and sensitivity to appropriate style, with evidence of an emerging musical personality
- 2.1 Give a performance that is rhythmically secure and has a strong sense of pulse
- 2.2 Perform confidently with a consistent sense of performance and engagement with the audience
- 3.1 Perform with a solid command of technique, good intonation and a musical control of other instrumental/vocal resources
- 3.2 Perform with consistently good production, flexibility and projection of sound
- 4.1 Respond to a quick study piece with fluency, accurate notes and tonality, and detailed phrasing, articulation and dynamics
- 4.2 Improvise with well-controlled and imaginative melodic development, strong planning and structure, appropriate harmonic vocabulary, and full use of instrumental/vocal resources relevant to Grade 5

**GRADE 6**

(RQF Level 3)

**Learning outcomes**

The learner will:

**Assessment criteria**

The learner can:

1. Produce a secure and sustained performance that demonstrates a stylistic awareness and mature grasp of the material	1.1 Perform with attention to dynamics, articulation and phrasing 1.2 Perform with general evidence of stylistic awareness and some attempt to convey individual musical intent and commitment
2. Perform with confidence and a sense of ownership and self-awareness that engages the audience wholeheartedly	2.1 Demonstrate an overall sense of performance with general confidence and a recognisable capacity for audience engagement
3. Show familiarity with the full compass of the instrument/voice and use some advanced techniques	3.1 Give a performance that is technically reliable with generally secure intonation and a good quality of tone
4. Demonstrate a range of technical and musical abilities through either a quick study piece or improvisation	4.1 Respond to a quick study piece with mostly accurate notes and tonality, adequate continuity, musical development, and well-planned use of instrumental/vocal resources 4.2 Improvise with imaginative melodic development, appropriate harmonic procedures, well-planned length, and use of instrumental/vocal resources

## GRADE 7

(RQF Level 3)

### Learning outcomes

The learner will:

### Assessment criteria

The learner can:

<p>1. Produce a secure and sustained performance that demonstrates a sensitive stylistic interpretation</p>	<p>1.1 Perform with a good standard of dynamics, articulation and phrasing 1.2 Perform with a clear awareness of appropriate style, with an individual musical personality</p>
<p>2. Perform with confidence and a sense of ownership and self-awareness, which engages the audience</p>	<p>2.1 Demonstrate a comfortable sense of performance with consistent audience engagement</p>
<p>3. Show familiarity with the full compass of the instrument/voice and employ advanced techniques</p>	<p>3.1 Give a performance that is fluent and accurate, with a strong technical facility and a high quality of tone and intonation</p>
<p>4. Demonstrate a range of technical and musical abilities through either a quick study piece or improvisation</p>	<p>4.1 Respond to a quick study piece with general accuracy in notes and tonality, with continuity and creative musical development, and with a wide use of instrumental/vocal resources 4.2 Improvise with creative melodic development, harmonic awareness, appropriate length and a wide use of instrumental/vocal resources</p>

## GRADE 8

(RQF Level 3)

### Learning outcomes

The learner will:

### Assessment criteria

The learner can:

<p>1. Produce a secure and sustained performance that demonstrates a discriminating and sensitive personal interpretation</p>	<p>1.1 Perform with keen attention to dynamics, articulation and phrasing</p> <p>1.2 Perform with a high level of musical sensitivity and a convincing grasp of appropriate style, with a clear, distinctive and authoritative musical personality</p>
<p>2. Perform with confidence and a sense of authority and control that engages the audience wholeheartedly</p>	<p>2.1 Perform with confidence and effective engagement with the audience</p>
<p>3. Show familiarity with the full compass of the instrument/voice and employ advanced techniques with even control across all registers</p>	<p>3.1 Perform with a strong command of technique with musical and sensitive control of intonation and other instrumental/vocal resources</p>
<p>4. Demonstrate a range of technical and musical abilities through either a quick study piece or improvisation</p>	<p>4.1 Respond to a quick study piece with accuracy in notes and tonality, fluency, imaginative musical development, strong planning and construction, and full and creative use of instrumental/vocal resources</p> <p>4.2 Improvise with well-controlled and imaginative melodic development, clear and appropriate harmonic vocabulary, appropriate length and full and creative use of instrumental/vocal resources</p>

# MARKING

## HOW THE EXAM IS MARKED

Examiners give comments and marks for each section of the exam, up to the maximums listed in the **Face-to-face** and **Digital** tables.

It is not necessary to pass all sections or any particular section in order to achieve a pass overall. No marks are awarded for a section if no attempt is made.

The total mark for the exam corresponds to different attainment levels as follows:

Mark	Attainment level
87-100	Distinction
75-86	Merit
60-74	Pass
45-59	Below Pass 1
0-44	Below Pass 2

## HOW THE SONGS ARE MARKED

Each song is awarded three separate marks corresponding to three specific musical components, allowing candidates to receive precise feedback about specific aspects of their performance. These marks combine to give an overall mark for the song.

The three components are:

### Fluency & security

Fluency, synchronisation with the backing track, security in notes and rhythm.

### Technical control

Ability to control the instrument effectively, achieving the various technical demands of the song; sound quality.

### Communication & style

Stylistic understanding (eg mood and character), musical detail (eg dynamics and articulation), audience engagement.

Marks are awarded for these, to form a maximum total mark for each song as follows:

Maximum mark for each song		
Songs 1 & 2	Song 3	Component
8	8	Fluency & security
8	12	Technical control
9	10	Communication & style
<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>Total mark for each song</b>

The marks for song 3 are different because higher marks are awarded under technical control to reflect the two areas of technical focus.

Total marks awarded for songs correspond to the attainment levels as follows:

Total mark for each song		
Songs 1 & 2	Songs 3	Attainment level
22-25	26-30	Distinction
19-21	22-25	Merit
15-18	18-21	Pass
11-14	14-17	Below Pass 1
0-10	0-13	Below Pass 2

### HOW SESSION SKILLS ARE MARKED (FACE-TO-FACE EXAMS ONLY)

Session skills are awarded a single mark that corresponds to different attainment levels as follows:

Mark	Attainment level
17-20	Distinction
15-16	Merit
12-14	Pass
9-11	Below Pass 1
0-8	Below Pass 2

## HOW THE SONGS ARE MARKED

Examiners use the criteria below to decide on the mark.

	<b>8 MARKS</b>	<b>7 MARKS</b>	<b>6 MARKS</b>
<b>Fluency &amp; security</b>	<p>Excellent fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Very high level of security in notes and rhythm.</p>	<p>Very good sense of fluency and synchronisation with only momentary lapses.</p> <p>High level of security in notes and rhythm with minimal inaccuracies.</p>	<p>Good sense of fluency and synchronisation though with occasional lapses.</p> <p>Good level of security in notes and rhythm despite occasional inaccuracies.</p>
	<b>8 MARKS</b>	<b>7 MARKS</b>	<b>6 MARKS</b>
<b>Technical control (Songs 1 &amp; 2)</b>	<p>Technical demands fulfilled to a very high degree.</p> <p>Excellent sound quality.</p>	<p>Technical demands fulfilled with only momentary insecurities.</p> <p>Very good sound quality with minimal blemishes.</p>	<p>Technical demands largely fulfilled though with occasional insecurities.</p> <p>Good sound quality despite occasional lapses.</p>
	<b>12 MARKS</b>	<b>10–11 MARKS</b>	<b>8–9 MARKS</b>
<b>Technical control (Song 3)</b>	<p>Technical focus elements fulfilled to a very high degree.</p> <p>Excellent sound quality.</p>	<p>Technical focus elements fulfilled with only momentary insecurities.</p> <p>Very good sound quality with minimal blemishes.</p>	<p>Technical focus elements largely fulfilled though with occasional insecurities.</p> <p>Good sound quality despite occasional lapses.</p>
	<b>9 MARKS (SONGS 1 &amp; 2)</b> <b>10 MARKS (SONG 3)</b>	<b>8 MARKS (SONGS 1 &amp; 2)</b> <b>9 MARKS (SONG 3)</b>	<b>6–7 MARKS (SONGS 1 &amp; 2)</b> <b>7–8 MARKS (SONG 3)</b>
<b>Communication &amp; style</b>	<p>Highly convincing communication and engagement.</p> <p>Excellent stylistic understanding and realisation of musical detail.</p>	<p>Very good communication and engagement with only momentary insecurities.</p> <p>Very good stylistic understanding and realisation of musical detail with minimal lapses.</p>	<p>Good communication and engagement overall though with occasional insecurities.</p> <p>Good stylistic understanding and realisation of musical detail despite occasional lapses.</p>

## HOW THE SONGS ARE MARKED (CONT.)

Examiners use the criteria below to decide on the mark.

	<b>5 MARKS</b>	<b>3-4 MARKS</b>	<b>1-2 MARKS</b>
<b>Fluency &amp; security</b>	<p>Generally reliable level of fluency and synchronisation though with some lapses.</p> <p>Reasonable level of security in notes and rhythm despite some inaccuracies.</p>	<p>Unreliable fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Unreliable level of security in notes and rhythm.</p>	<p>Little or no sense of fluency or synchronisation.</p> <p>Extremely unreliable level of security in notes and rhythm.</p>
	<b>5 MARKS</b>	<b>3-4 MARKS</b>	<b>1-2 MARKS</b>
<b>Technical control (Songs 1 &amp; 2)</b>	<p>Technical demands generally fulfilled though with some insecurities.</p> <p>Basic sound quality achieved despite some lapses.</p>	<p>Technical demands often not fulfilled.</p> <p>Unreliable sound quality.</p>	<p>Technical demands hardly or not at all fulfilled.</p> <p>Basic sound quality not achieved.</p>
	<b>7 MARKS</b>	<b>4-6 MARKS</b>	<b>1-3 MARKS</b>
<b>Technical control (Song 3)</b>	<p>Technical focus elements generally fulfilled though with some insecurities.</p> <p>Basic sound quality achieved despite some lapses.</p>	<p>Technical focus elements often not fulfilled.</p> <p>Unreliable sound quality.</p>	<p>Technical focus elements hardly or not at all fulfilled.</p> <p>Basic sound quality not achieved.</p>
	<b>5 MARKS (SONGS 1 &amp; 2)</b> <b>6 MARKS (SONG 3)</b>	<b>3-4 MARKS (SONGS 1 &amp; 2)</b> <b>4-5 MARKS (SONG 3)</b>	<b>1-2 MARKS (SONGS 1 &amp; 2)</b> <b>1-3 MARKS (SONG 3)</b>
<b>Communication &amp; style</b>	<p>Generally reliable level of communication and engagement though with some insecurities.</p> <p>Reasonable stylistic understanding and realisation of musical detail despite some lapses.</p>	<p>Unreliable communication and engagement.</p> <p>Unreliable stylistic understanding and realisation of musical detail.</p>	<p>Little or no communication and engagement.</p> <p>Extremely unreliable stylistic understanding and realisation of musical detail.</p>

## HOW SESSION SKILLS ARE MARKED (FACE-TO-FACE EXAMS ONLY)

Examiners use the criteria below to decide on the mark.

	19–20 MARKS	17–18 MARKS	15–16 MARKS
<b>Playback</b>	<p>Very high level of security in notes and rhythms.</p> <p>Excellent sense of fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Excellent sound quality and attention to musical detail.</p>	<p>High level of security in notes and rhythms with only minimal inaccuracies.</p> <p>Very good sense of fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Very good sound quality and attention to musical detail.</p>	<p>Good level of security in notes and rhythms despite occasional inaccuracies.</p> <p>Good sense of fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Good sound quality and attention to musical detail.</p>
	19–20 MARKS	17–18 MARKS	15–16 MARKS
<b>Improvising</b>	<p>Highly convincing stylistic communication and development.</p> <p>Excellent fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Excellent sound quality and command of instrumental resources.</p>	<p>Very good level of stylistic communication and development with only minimal limitations.</p> <p>Very good fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Very good sound quality and command of instrumental resources.</p>	<p>Good level of stylistic communication and development despite occasional limitations.</p> <p>Good sense of fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Good sound quality and command of instrumental resources.</p>

## HOW SESSION SKILLS ARE MARKED (FACE-TO-FACE EXAMS ONLY) (CONT.)

Examiners use the criteria below to decide on the mark.

	12-14 MARKS	7-11 MARKS	1-6 MARKS
<b>Playback</b>	<p>Generally reliable level of security in notes and rhythms though with some inaccuracies.</p> <p>Basic level of fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Basic sound quality and attention to musical detail.</p>	<p>Unreliable level of security in notes and rhythms.</p> <p>Unreliable level of fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Unreliable sound quality and attention to musical detail.</p>	<p>Little or no accuracy in notes and rhythms.</p> <p>Little or no fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Little or no sound quality and attention to musical detail.</p>
	12-14 MARKS	7-11 MARKS	1-6 MARKS
<b>Improvising</b>	<p>Generally reliable level of stylistic communication and development though with some limitations.</p> <p>Basic level of fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Basic sound quality and command of instrumental resources.</p>	<p>Unreliable level of stylistic communication and development.</p> <p>Unreliable level of fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Unreliable sound quality and command of instrumental resources.</p>	<p>Little or no stylistic communication and development.</p> <p>Little or no fluency and synchronisation.</p> <p>Little or no basic sound quality and command of instrumental resources.</p>

## HOW OVERALL PERFORMANCE IS MARKED (DIGITAL EXAMS ONLY)

The candidate's entire performance is awarded two separate marks corresponding to two assessment areas, as follows. Further information about the adaptation of the session skills requirements can be found at [trinitycollege.com/digital-rp-grades](http://trinitycollege.com/digital-rp-grades).

### Performance delivery and focus (10 marks)

- ▶ Assurance and continuity of delivery
- ▶ Consistency of focus

### Musical awareness (10 marks)

- ▶ Demonstration of musical personality
- ▶ Ability to work within, move between, or maintain styles

Examiners use the criteria below to decide on the mark:

	<b>DISTINCTION 9- 10 MARKS</b>	<b>MERIT 8 MARKS</b>
<b>Performance delivery &amp; focus</b>	<p>The performances are delivered with assurance, and transition between items is smooth.</p> <p>Focus is maintained throughout the presentation.</p>	<p>The performances are mostly delivered with assurance, and transition between items is mainly smooth.</p> <p>Focus is maintained throughout the presentation for the most part.</p>
<b>Musical awareness</b>	<p>There is a convincing level of personal investment and commitment in the performances.</p> <p>The ability to maintain or move between styles is well-developed.</p>	<p>There is a good level of personal investment and commitment in the performances.</p> <p>The ability to maintain or move between styles is mostly well-developed.</p>

## HOW OVERALL PERFORMANCE IS MARKED (DIGITAL EXAMS ONLY) (CONT.)

Examiners use the criteria below to decide on the mark:

	<b>PASS 6-7 MARKS</b>	<b>BELOW PASS 1 4-5 MARKS</b>	<b>BELOW PASS 2 1-3 MARKS</b>
<b>Performance delivery &amp; focus</b>	<p>The performances are delivered with reasonable assurance, and transition between items is moderately smooth.</p> <p>Focus is adequately maintained throughout the presentation.</p>	<p>Assurance in performance delivery is limited, with unreliable continuity between items.</p> <p>Focus is inconsistently maintained throughout the presentation.</p>	<p>There is little or no assurance in performance delivery with limited continuity between items.</p> <p>Focus is not maintained throughout the presentation.</p>
<b>Musical awareness</b>	<p>There is an adequate level of personal investment and commitment in the performances.</p> <p>The ability to maintain or move between styles is reasonably well-developed.</p>	<p>There is a limited level of personal investment and commitment in the performances.</p> <p>The ability to maintain or move between styles is limited.</p>	<p>Personal investment and commitment are not demonstrated.</p> <p>The ability to maintain or move between styles is not yet evident.</p>

# ACCESS ALL AREAS...

Get the full Rock & Pop experience online at [trinityrock.com](https://trinityrock.com).

Digital resources are available to support learning, including advice and content on:

- Songs, performance and technique

You can access:

- Bite-sized videos that include tips from professional musicians on techniques featured in the songs
- Producer's notes on the tracks, to increase your knowledge of rock and pop
- Articles on performance tips, musical styles, developing technique and advice from the music industry

For further help please contact your local representative.

Contact details are listed at [trinityrock.com](https://trinityrock.com).

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## I KNOW WHICH PATHWAY I WANT TO TAKE

Take me to Digital assessment



Take me to Face-to-face assessment



# ABOUT THE EXAMS

Each digital exam has **two** main components: songs and overall performance.

## SONGS (80 MARKS)

Choose **three** songs, including a technical focus song.

## OVERALL PERFORMANCE (20 MARKS)

Performance delivery and focus;  
Musical awareness.

## SONGS (80 MARKS)



## OVERALL PERFORMANCE (20 MARKS)

**DIGITAL EXAMS: STRUCTURE AND MARK SCHEME****Maximum marks****SONG 1** **25**

A song chosen from the current Guitar song list, played to the Trinity backing track.

**SONG 2** **25**

*Either* a different song chosen from the current Guitar song list, played to the Trinity backing track.

*Or* an own-choice song.

*Or* a song composed by the candidate.

If song 2 is an own-choice song or one composed by the candidate it may:

- ▶ Be unaccompanied
- ▶ Be played to a backing track (which can be pre-recorded by the candidate)
- ▶ Include added vocals, performed live by the candidate
- ▶ Include an accompaniment played or sung live by another musician

**SONG 3** **30**

A technical focus song chosen from the current Guitar song list, containing specific technical elements, played to the Trinity backing track.

**OVERALL PERFORMANCE** **20**

Performance delivery and focus; Musical awareness.

**TOTAL** **100**

## ORDER OF THE EXAM

Your songs should be performed in the same order as they are listed on the upload form.

## TYPES OF INSTRUMENT

For Initial to Grade 2, candidates can use either an acoustic/classical, electro-acoustic or electric guitar in the exam. From Grade 3 onwards, an electro-acoustic or electric guitar must be used, although an acoustic guitar may be used for song 2 if this is an own-choice song where an acoustic guitar would be suitable for the style.

Some songs are not suited to performance on an acoustic or electro-acoustic guitar. Care should be taken that the style can be successfully conveyed on the type of instrument being used.

The use of a plectrum is encouraged throughout the syllabus, unless a song is specifically written in a fingerpicked style.

Candidates may use more than one instrument in the exam (eg an electric guitar and an electro-acoustic guitar).

## KEY NOTES FOR DIGITAL EXAMS

1. To take this assessment you must have access to:
  - A good quality audio-visual recording device with enough storage for your performance (eg a good quality mobile phone, tablet, laptop or video camera)
  - The internet, to upload your performance video and supporting files
  - An external speaker that will allow you to play backing tracks for your exam songs
2. All performances must be submitted as one continuous video. Start the recording before your first song, and do not stop or pause the video until you have completed all parts of the assessment. Any evidence of editing will result in a syllabus infringement and your exam will not be assessed.
3. You can be given assistance to film your performance, and another person can be present to operate your backing tracks. A count-in at the start of a pre-recorded track is permitted. However, indications of pulse, verbal or non-verbal entry cues during the songs, or the playing of an additional instrument (unless for own-choice songs) will result in a syllabus infringement.
4. Only the official Trinity backing tracks should be used. Adapted or edited versions of the tracks from any other source are not permitted.
5. Audio and video may be recorded using separate devices, as long as they are recorded simultaneously. No pre- or post-production techniques may be applied. A single external microphone may be used but multiple microphone set-ups are not permitted.

# SONGS

The guitar arrangements are as authentic as possible to the original songs. They have been created to develop the candidate's technique, musicianship, ensemble skills, timekeeping and stylistic awareness, while providing the opportunity to improvise and embellish creatively when appropriate, just as a player would on stage or in the studio.

Candidates should familiarise themselves with the technical demands of each song, particularly when preparing for song 3 (the technical focus song). Some songs specify certain requirements, and candidates must ensure that they observe these.

Songs 1 and 3 must be played along with the backing track. Only song 2 may be played unaccompanied (if appropriate – see further details below).



**SONGS**  
(80 marks)

## SONG 1

Song 1 must be selected from the songs indicated as 'Song 1 or Song 2' in the Guitar song list, available at [trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list](http://trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list). It must be performed with the Trinity backing track.

## SONG 2

Song 2 may be:

- ▶ selected from the songs indicated as 'Song 1 or Song 2' in the Guitar song list, available at [trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list](http://trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list), performed with the Trinity backing track
- ▶ an own-choice song

Own-choice songs must be equivalent in standard to the songs in the Trinity Guitar songbook for the grade. Parameters indicating the length and level of difficulty required at each grade are listed in the [Parameters tables](#).

The own-choice song can be:

- ▶ Sheet music from a printed or online source
- ▶ An original song that the candidate has written
- ▶ A cover version that the candidate has arranged

Own-choice songs can:

- ▶ Be unaccompanied
- ▶ Be played to a backing track (not including the solo part) – this can be self-created
- ▶ Include added vocals, performed live by the candidate
- ▶ Be accompanied live by a musician, either playing or singing

Candidates must upload a scan or photocopy of their own-choice song along with their video. Own-choice songs may be presented as an original score, handwritten or computer-generated, in one of the following formats:

- ▶ A lead sheet with lyrics, chords and melody line
- ▶ A chord chart with lyrics
- ▶ A full score using conventional staff notation
- ▶ A full score using conventional staff notation and TAB

A song from the 2015–2017 Trinity Rock & Pop syllabus may be selected as an own-choice song, provided that it meets the current own-choice parameters.

### SONG 3

Song 3 must be selected from the songs indicated as 'Song 3 (Technical Focus)' in the Guitar song list, available at [trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list](http://trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list). It must be performed with the Trinity backing track.

These songs are designed to develop technical skills, and each song has two technical elements identified. Guidance on the preparation of these technical skills is included in the songbooks.

For the technical focus song, higher marks are available in the technical control component to reflect the increased emphasis on this area. Examiners will refer to the technical elements in their comments.

If a candidate includes two or three technical focus songs in their set list, they should clearly indicate which one is to be examined as the technical focus song on the relevant screen when uploading their video.

### PERFORMANCE AND INTERPRETATION

Trinity's Rock & Pop exams are designed to encourage musical performances that reflect a candidate's own personal style and approach. This is because we understand that contemporary music is flexible in its stylistic interpretation, particularly at the higher grades. However, performances should not be simplified and musical integrity should always be maintained.

### REPEATS, EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES AND TEMPI

All songs should be prepared in full with all repeats, *da capo* and *dal segno* instructions and 1st and 2nd time bars observed. Candidates are encouraged to include a range of expressive techniques such as vibrato, slides, bends, whammy bar, etc appropriate to the style of the song, particularly in the higher grades. Candidates should observe terms showing tempo, dynamics, character and style of the music.

### BACKING TRACKS

The official Trinity backing tracks must be used for all songs in the Guitar song list. Adapted or edited versions of the tracks from any other source are not permitted.

Backing tracks for own-choice songs must be of good quality and must not include the solo part.

### PERFORMING FROM MEMORY

Candidates may perform any or all of their songs from memory. However, this is not compulsory and no additional marks are given for this.

## MUSIC AND COPIES

There is a section on the online portal where you can provide any supporting documentation.

- ▶ Enter the details of your songs on the relevant screen, in order of performance. Indicate which is your technical focus song and (if applicable) your own-choice song.
- ▶ If you are playing an own-choice song you must upload a scanned copy or photograph of the sheet music. All pages of the song should be in one single file. If you need to combine images into one file, there are many apps that can help you and you will find them on your device's application store.

## PAGE TURNERS

Difficult page turns may be overcome by photocopying the relevant pages. A page turner may assist at Grades 6-8 if necessary.

## COPYRIGHT IN A SONG

Points to remember:

- ▶ Candidates can create a cover version of a song and perform it in an exam or other non-public performance
- ▶ Candidates cannot record a cover version or make recordings available to others (by uploading it to a website or copying it) without the appropriate licence
- ▶ Candidates own the copyright of any songs they have written themselves

Further information is available at [trinityrock.com/syllabus](http://trinityrock.com/syllabus).

## OBTAINING MUSIC FOR THE EXAM

Trinity's Rock & Pop songbooks contain eight songs (including three technical focus songs), plus background information on the songs and performance tips. They are available from [trinityrock.com/shop](http://trinityrock.com/shop) or from your local music shop. See [Publications](#) for further details.

## PARAMETERS FOR OWN-CHOICE SONGS

Own-choice songs should match the standard of songs in the Trinity Guitar songbook for the appropriate grade.

The following tables give guidelines for what might be included at each grade. All techniques are cumulative, but it is not expected that songs will contain everything in the list – this is intended to be a general guide to the type of techniques appropriate at each grade.

Please note that if the length of the song is towards the maximum end of the time limit then examiners may stop the video once they have heard enough to form a balanced assessment. Songs that exceed the required duration may not be listened to in their entirety. Own-choice songs may be shortened from the original if necessary, for example by cutting instrumental intros and outros, or by limiting the number of verses.

### INITIAL

Duration	45 seconds-2 minutes
Rhythmic values	Mainly crotchets and quavers, plus minims, dotted minims and semibreves in melodic passages, equivalent rests, ties
Syncopation	Simple syncopation
Time signatures	$\frac{4}{4}$ , $\frac{2}{4}$ , $\frac{3}{4}$
Tempos	60-130 bpm
Dynamics	<i>mp</i> , <i>mf</i> , <i>f</i> – few changes, simple contrasts only
Range/position	Basic hand positions
Keys and chords	Simple keys and chords, two-note power chords
Part writing	Mainly small chords of two to four notes, simple full chords, time to change between chords, occasional very straightforward melodic writing
Improvisation	None

**GRADE 1**

Duration	1-2.5 minutes
Rhythmic values	As Initial, with more variety
Syncopation	As Initial
Time signatures	As Initial
Tempos	60-160 bpm
Dynamics	<i>p, mp, mf, f</i> with occasional hairpins
Range/position	Occasionally moving beyond basic positions, but with enough time to move easily to any unusual positions
Keys and chords	As Initial
Part writing	Still mainly chordal but more use of full chords, some melodic sections
Other directions/techniques	<i>Staccato</i> , accents, pause on last note
Improvisation	None

**GRADE 2**

Duration	1.5-3 minutes
Rhythmic values	Occasional semiquavers
Syncopation	Simple syncopation
Time signatures	$\frac{2}{4}$ , occasional changes of time signature
Tempos	50-160 bpm
Dynamics	<i>Crescendo/decrescendo</i> within phrases, greater use of contrasts
Range/position	Slightly more varied than Grade 1, still leaving time for any more challenging positions
Keys and chords	Wider range of keys and chords
Part writing	Riffs and written solos becoming more important alongside chordal sections
Other directions/techniques	RH damp, palm mute, ring, slides, occasional use of hammer-on and pull-off, optional distortion/overdrive/crunch
Improvisation	None

**GRADE 3**

Duration	1.5-3.5 minutes
Rhythmic values	Semiquavers more frequent in accompaniment and melodic material
Syncopation	Mainly simple syncopation
Time signatures	<b>6</b> , <b>12</b> <b>8</b> , <b>8</b>
Tempos	Full range of tempos, tempo changes within songs
Dynamics	<i>pp</i> <i>ff</i>
Range/position	Hand positions starting to move up the neck more often, ranges becoming more extended
Keys and chords	As previous grades, introducing three-note power chords, half/partial barre chords, occasional use of full barre chords
Part writing	More freely melodic writing featuring idiomatic guitar techniques, more variety in accompaniment writing
Other directions/techniques	Fingerstyle, quartertone, semitone and tone bends, vibrato, distortion/overdrive/crunch, crossed noteheads, hammer-on/pull-off
Improvisation	Basic <i>cont. sim.</i> rhythmic improvisation on a chord sequence

**GRADE 4**

Duration	2.5-4 minutes
Rhythmic values	All rhythmic values
Syncopation	Syncopation becoming a more important feature
Time signatures	All regular time signatures
Range/position	Further extension of range and position, introducing faster shifts
Keys and chords	Wider range of keys and chords, more regular use of full barre chords
Part writing	Mix of riffs, accompaniment and melody – varied part writing
Other directions/techniques	Heavy distortion, change between clean and distortion within song, slurred octaves
Improvisation	Slightly more complex <i>cont. sim.</i> improvisation, four-bar improvised solos

**GRADE 5**

<b>Duration</b>	2.5-4 minutes
<b>Syncopation</b>	Now a regular feature
<b>Time signatures</b>	Occasional irregular time signatures, more frequent changes of time signature
<b>Range/position</b>	Range and position as appropriate to demands of the music, including fast shifts
<b>Keys and chords</b>	Any key
<b>Part writing</b>	Part writing now fully varied, with written or improvised lead sections, riffs, melody and accompaniment of different textures
<b>Other directions/techniques</b>	Mandolin-style picking, more sophistication with sounds, effects and bends
<b>Improvisation</b>	Improvised solos of about eight bars

**GRADE 6**

<b>Duration</b>	3-4.5 minutes
<b>Syncopation</b>	Syncopation becoming complex in places
<b>Time signatures</b>	More use of irregular time signatures
<b>Other directions/techniques</b>	Controlled phrasing including at slow tempos – controlled use of different bends, pinch harmonics, flanger, phase, chorus, wah-wah
<b>Improvisation</b>	Improvised solos of about 12 bars

**GRADE 7**

Duration	3-4.5 minutes
Syncopation	More frequent use of complex syncopation
Improvisation	Improvised solos of about 16 bars

**GRADE 8**

Duration	3.5-5 minutes
Syncopation	Complex syncopation throughout
Other directions/ techniques	Any standard guitar technique
Improvisation	Multiple improvised solos, any length

# FILMING YOUR EXAM

Position the camera slightly to your picking-hand side so that your face, both of your hands and all of the instrument are visible.

If you are using foot pedals, these should also be visible.

Tonal changes and effects must be set and operated by the candidate, either on an amp or with a footswitch or multi-effects unit, visible to the examiner. Tonal changes and effects must not be added in post-production or controlled by another person.

Position your music stand and/or recording microphone so that these do not obscure the view.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

There are five important instructions to note before you plan your filming:

1. All exams must be submitted as one, continuous performance (this includes all songs). If there is any evidence of editing, we will not be able to assess your exam.
2. Please read the instructions above carefully to ensure you have the correct filming angles, and consider the importance of setting up the shot to enable a smooth, continuous performance. This will enable the examiners to assess you according to the 'overall performance' criteria. You must remain in shot at all times during the video.
3. You are allowed assistance with filming your performance: another person can be present to operate your backing tracks. However, indications of pulse, verbal or non-verbal entry cues are not allowed and will result in a syllabus infringement referral.
4. Do not provide any information at the beginning of your performance, such as your name or titles of the songs – simply start the recording and begin your performance.
5. Your books or legally downloaded copies must be in shot when you film your performance. Please make sure they are visible to the examiner so that they can confirm that you are playing from a legal copy – even if you choose to perform from memory. If you have purchased a digital copy and are playing from a tablet or eReader, please show the copy on screen to the camera, ensuring that the watermark is clearly legible, so the examiner can confirm the purchase.

## YOUR FILMING ENVIRONMENT

Here are a few considerations when choosing where to film your performance:

- ▶ Choose a quiet room without disruptions, and remember to put devices such as phones or tablets on silent.
- ▶ Make sure that your recording device has enough battery power and storage capacity.
- ▶ Check light levels before recording to ensure that you are clearly visible on screen. Avoid standing in front of a light source to ensure that you do not appear as a silhouette on screen.
- ▶ Check sound levels to ensure that the recording device captures the range of the instrument clearly, without any distortion.

## RECORDING VIDEO AND AUDIO SEPARATELY (OPTIONAL)

Audio and video may be recorded using separate devices, as long as they are recorded simultaneously. A single external microphone may be used; multiple microphone setups are not permitted. This should be placed so as to pick up the sound in the room, rather than directly in front of the candidate. Please keep additional unused microphones away from your instrument and out of shot to avoid unnecessary referral.

If audio and video have been recorded separately, editing software may be used to merge these elements together and create the final video. Similarly, editing software can be used to trim the beginning and end.

However:

- ▶ The audio and video must be recorded simultaneously
- ▶ The audio must be the same performance as that of the video and not a composite track
- ▶ The recorded audio must not be enhanced in any way, and the following must not be applied to the recording in post-production: EQ, reverb, compression, pitch or timing correction, tonal changes/effects
- ▶ The recorded breaks between songs should not be removed.

## TROUBLESHOOTING SOUND ISSUES

The microphones in mobile devices are built for speech, so you might find that the audio on your recording cuts out or distorts. Check your audio settings to see if this problem can be avoided.

Some devices use automatic microphone compression, or a similar function, which may cause the volume of your recording to fluctuate. Where possible, switch these off in your audio settings.

If your audio is distorted and you have the option in your device settings, try reducing the microphone input level. If not, try moving your recording device further away.

Your device may have a setting labelled 'suppress background noise', 'noise reduction' or similar. Try turning this function off if the option is available.

Other problematic functions you may wish to disable include 'echo cancellation', 'sound correction' and 'audio stability'.

## BACKING TRACKS

Backing tracks must be clearly audible on the submitted video. You may need to move the speaker closer or further away from your camera and microphone in order to find the correct balance. Tracks should be played through an external speaker rather than directly from a phone or tablet. The track must be loud enough for you to hear it while you are performing, and for the examiner to hear it on the video.

Before filming your full performance, make sure you run a soundcheck and adjust the balance between the track and your instrument.

Backing tracks should be played without a click. The official Trinity backing tracks must be used. Using unofficial tracks is a syllabus infringement and may result in mark deduction.

## LIVE ACCOMPANIMENTS (OWN-CHOICE SONGS)

Before filming your full performance, make sure that you check the balance between your instrument and your accompanist. You may need to move closer or further away from the camera and any microphone to achieve the perfect balance.

The accompanist does not need to be in shot during the filming of the performance.

# SUBMITTING YOUR EXAM FOR ASSESSMENT

Please read the following closely before you submit your video performance to our online platform:

- ▶ Play back your video to ensure that the sound quality and visual quality are sufficient for an examiner to mark it.
- ▶ Ensure your video is one continuous recording of all your songs from start to finish, and you have not edited this into different sections or paused or stopped the video at any point.
- ▶ Only submit one take of your performance.
- ▶ Your files should be labelled with your name, subject and grade, for example: **ForenameSurname\_Rock&PopGuitar\_Grade(Number)**.
- ▶ Enter the details of your songs on the relevant screen in the order that you are playing them, indicating your technical focus song and (if applicable) your own-choice song.
- ▶ If applicable, remember to upload a scan or photograph of your own-choice song.
- ▶ Make sure that your video file does not exceed 3GB.
- ▶ If uploading directly from a phone or tablet, you might need to compress the video first, so that it doesn't exceed this limit. There are many apps that can help you do this and you will find them on your device's application store. Play back your compressed file to ensure that the audio and video and still in sync.
- ▶ Do not delete your performance video until you have received your feedback and certificate, just in case there are any technical issues and you are required to resubmit.
- ▶ You may not enter the same performance video for the same exam more than once, unless Trinity requires you to resubmit your video.
- ▶ You may not use the video from your original entry for any other Trinity exam entries. Subsequent submissions with the same video may be invalidated.
- ▶ We strongly advise candidates not to share their performance videos online. Pieces in the music syllabus are under copyright, and many of those rights are not owned by Trinity. Trinity only has the required permissions for usage of these pieces in TCL Press published books and in relation to Trinity exams. As such, if you would like to share your videos online, you should apply to the copyright owner(s) to obtain synchronisation licences. Any candidate sharing performances of copyrighted material will be personally liable for any breach of copyright law.

# ABOUT THE EXAMS

Each face-to-face exam has **two** main components: songs and session skills.

## SONGS (80 MARKS)

Choose **three** songs, including a technical focus song.

## SESSION SKILLS (20 MARKS)

Choose **either** playback **or** improvising.

## SONGS (80 MARKS)



## SESSION SKILLS (20 MARKS)

## FACE-TO-FACE EXAMS: STRUCTURE AND MARK SCHEME

### Maximum marks

#### SONG 1 25

---

A song chosen from the current Guitar song list, played to the Trinity backing track.

#### SONG 2 25

---

*Either* a different song chosen from the current Guitar song list, played to the Trinity backing track.

*Or* an own-choice song.

*Or* a song composed by the candidate.

If song 2 is an own-choice song or one composed by the candidate it may:

- ▶ Be unaccompanied
- ▶ Be played to a backing track (which can be pre-recorded by the candidate)
- ▶ Include added vocals, performed live by the candidate
- ▶ Include an accompaniment played or sung live by another musician

#### SESSION SKILLS 20

---

*Either* playback *or* improvising.

#### SONG 3 30

---

A technical focus song chosen from the current Guitar song list, containing specific technical elements, played to the Trinity backing track.

#### TOTAL 100

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## ORDER OF THE EXAM

Candidates can choose to present the sections of their exam in any order, and should indicate their preferred order on the appointment form. This should be given to the examiner at the start of the exam. If no preference is indicated, the exam will follow the order listed in the [Face-to-face Exam Structure](#).

## EXAM DURATIONS

Exams are designed to include sufficient time for setting up and presenting all components, and overall durations are as follows:



**Initial**  
13 mins



**Grade 1**  
13 mins



**Grade 2**  
15 mins



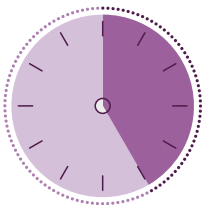
**Grade 3**  
15 mins



**Grade 4**  
20 mins



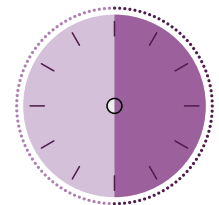
**Grade 5**  
20 mins



**Grade 6**  
25 mins



**Grade 7**  
25 mins



**Grade 8**  
30 mins

## THE EXAM ROOM

The exam room will be equipped with the following:

- ▶ Stereo pair of left and right PA speakers
- ▶ Amplifiers suitable for bass, guitar, keyboards and vocals
- ▶ CD player
- ▶ Small mixer connected to examiner's laptop (used for playing backing tracks)
- ▶ Digital or acoustic piano (contact centre for details)
- ▶ Jack-to-jack and mic leads
- ▶ Table, chairs and a music stand
- ▶ Vocal microphone and adjustable microphone stand
- ▶ Adjustable piano stool
- ▶ A good-quality drum kit which comprises:
  - Snare drum with adjustable drum-kit-sized stand
  - Toms (three minimum): high/medium/low
  - Bass drum (18-22")
  - Hi hat (12-14")
  - Ride cymbal (18-22")
  - Crash cymbal (14-18")
  - Adjustable drum stool

A mains power supply will be available at centres – candidates are responsible for the electrical safety of any of their own equipment used in their exam.

There may be a warm-up room or area where candidates can prepare just before the exam. Facilities will vary between centres.

## TUNING AND SET-UP

Candidates are responsible for ensuring that their instrument is in tune before the start of the exam – examiners are unable to help with this.

Assistance in tuning and set-up is permitted up to and including Grade 5. From Grade 6 onwards, candidates are expected to tune and set up equipment without assistance.

## TYPES OF INSTRUMENT

For Initial to Grade 2, candidates can use either an acoustic/classical, electro-acoustic or electric guitar in the exam. From Grade 3 onwards, an electro-acoustic or electric guitar must be used, although an acoustic guitar may be used for song 2 if this is an own-choice song where an acoustic guitar would be suitable for the style.

Some songs are not suited to performance on an acoustic or electro-acoustic guitar. Care should be taken that the style can be successfully conveyed on the type of instrument being used.

The use of a plectrum is encouraged throughout the syllabus, unless a song is specifically written in a fingerpicked style.

Candidates may use more than one instrument in the exam (eg an electric guitar and an electro-acoustic guitar).

## IN THE EXAM ROOM

Candidates can choose to play standing up or sitting down.

The examiner will have all the backing tracks for songs in the Trinity songbooks so the candidate's backing tracks are only required as back-up copies.

At the beginning of the exam, the examiner will play the first few bars of the backing track of the first song as a sound check, and any adjustments to volume and set-up can be made before the exam begins.

## WHAT TO BRING TO THE EXAM

### ESSENTIAL — CANDIDATES MUST BRING:

- ▶ An original Trinity Rock & Pop songbook and backing tracks, even if performing from memory
- ▶ Their completed appointment form
- ▶ Their own guitar
- ▶ If performing an own-choice song – the original score and one copy for the examiner, plus the backing track in MP3 format on USB stick (if appropriate)

### OPTIONAL — CANDIDATES MAY BRING:

- ▶ Their own guitar lead(s)
- ▶ FX pedals/boxes/equalizers etc
- ▶ Their own amplifier and mains power lead
- ▶ Plectrums
- ▶ A capo
- ▶ Any other equipment required for their performances
- ▶ A set of spare strings
- ▶ A guitar tuner

# SONGS

The guitar arrangements are as authentic as possible to the original songs. They have been created to develop the candidate's technique, musicianship, ensemble skills, timekeeping and stylistic awareness, while providing the opportunity to improvise and embellish creatively when appropriate, just as a player would on stage or in the studio.

Candidates should familiarise themselves with the technical demands of each song, particularly when preparing for song 3 (the technical focus song). Some songs specify certain requirements, and candidates must ensure that they observe these.

Songs 1 and 3 must be played along with the backing track. Only song 2 may be played unaccompanied (if appropriate – see further details below).



**SONGS**  
(80 marks)

## SONG 1

Song 1 must be selected from the songs indicated as 'Song 1 or Song 2' in the Guitar song list, available at [trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list](http://trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list). It must be performed with the Trinity backing track.

## SONG 2

Song 2 may be:

- ▶ selected from the songs indicated as 'Song 1 or Song 2' in the Guitar song list, available at [trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list](http://trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list), performed with the Trinity backing track
- ▶ an own-choice song

Own-choice songs must be equivalent in standard to the songs in the Trinity Guitar songbook for the grade. Parameters indicating the length and level of difficulty required at each grade are listed in the [Parameters tables](#).

The own-choice song can be:

- ▶ Sheet music from a printed or online source
- ▶ An original song that the candidate has written
- ▶ A cover version that the candidate has arranged

Own-choice songs can:

- ▶ Be unaccompanied
- ▶ Be played to a backing track (not including the solo part) – this can be self-created
- ▶ Include added vocals, performed live by the candidate
- ▶ Be accompanied live by a musician, either playing or singing – the additional musician should remain in the exam room for song 2 only and may be a teacher

Candidates must give a copy of their own-choice song to the examiner at the start of the exam; this may be a photocopy.

Own-choice songs may be presented as an original score, handwritten or computer-generated, in one of the following formats:

- ▶ A lead sheet with lyrics, chords and melody line
- ▶ A chord chart with lyrics
- ▶ A full score using conventional staff notation
- ▶ A full score using conventional staff notation and TAB

A song from the 2015-2017 Trinity Rock & Pop syllabus may be selected as an own-choice song, provided that it meets the current own-choice parameters.

### SONG 3

Song 3 must be selected from the songs indicated as 'Song 3 (Technical Focus)' in the Guitar song list, available at [trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list](http://trinitycollege.com/guitar-song-list). It must be performed with the Trinity backing track.

These songs are designed to develop technical skills, and each song has two technical elements identified. Guidance on the preparation of these technical skills is included in the songbooks.

For the technical focus song, higher marks are available in the technical control component to reflect the increased emphasis on this area. Examiners will refer to the technical elements in their comments.

If a candidate includes two or three technical focus songs in their set list, they should clearly indicate which one is to be examined as the technical focus song on the appointment form.

### PERFORMANCE AND INTERPRETATION

Trinity's Rock & Pop exams are designed to encourage musical performances that reflect a candidate's own personal style and approach. This is because we understand that contemporary music is flexible in its stylistic interpretation, particularly at the higher grades. However, performances should not be simplified and musical integrity should always be maintained.

### REPEATS, EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES AND TEMPI

All songs should be prepared in full with all repeats, *da capo* and *dal segno* instructions and 1st and 2nd time bars observed. Candidates are encouraged to include a range of expressive techniques such as vibrato, slides, bends, whammy bar, etc appropriate to the style of the song, particularly in the higher grades. Candidates should observe terms showing tempo, dynamics, character and style of the music.

### BACKING TRACKS

The official Trinity backing tracks must be used for all songs in the Guitar song list. Adapted or edited versions of the tracks from any other source are not permitted.

Backing tracks for own-choice songs must be of good quality and must not include the solo part.

Backing tracks for own-choice songs must be in MP3 format and presented on a USB stick.

## PERFORMING FROM MEMORY

Candidates may perform any or all of their songs from memory. However, this is not compulsory and no additional marks are given for this.

## MUSIC AND COPIES

It is essential that candidates bring an original copy, or an authorised download, of the music being performed into the exam room. If an unauthorised copy is used, Trinity may not award marks for that song. Original copies of own-choice sheet music can be purchased or downloaded from music shops and publishers. Proof of purchase will be required for downloads. Allowances cannot be made for delays in obtaining printed music.

## PAGE TURNERS

Difficult page turns may be overcome by photocopying the relevant pages. A page turner may assist at Grades 6-8 if necessary.

Examiners are not able to help with page turning, and page turners may only be present in the exam room when required.

## COPYRIGHT IN A SONG

Points to remember:

- ▶ Candidates can create a cover version of a song and perform it in an exam or other non-public performance
- ▶ Candidates cannot record a cover version or make recordings available to others (by uploading it to a website or copying it) without the appropriate licence
- ▶ Candidates own the copyright of any songs they have written themselves

Further information is available at [trinityrock.com/syllabus](http://trinityrock.com/syllabus).

## OBTAINING MUSIC FOR THE EXAM

Trinity's Rock & Pop songbooks contain eight songs (including three technical focus songs), plus background information on the songs and performance tips. They are available from [trinityrock.com/shop](http://trinityrock.com/shop) or from your local music shop. See [Publications](#) for further details.

## PARAMETERS FOR OWN-CHOICE SONGS

Own-choice songs should match the standard of songs in the Trinity Guitar songbook for the appropriate grade.

The following tables give guidelines for what might be included at each grade. All techniques are cumulative, but it is not expected that songs will contain everything in the list – this is intended to be a general guide to the type of techniques appropriate at each grade.

Please note that if the length of the song is towards the maximum end of the time limit then examiners may stop the performance once they have heard enough to form a balanced assessment. Songs that exceed the required duration will be stopped when the maximum length is reached. Own-choice songs may be shortened from the original if necessary, for example by cutting instrumental intros and outros, or by limiting the number of verses.

### INITIAL

Duration	45 seconds-2 minutes
Rhythmic values	Mainly crotchets and quavers, plus minims, dotted minims and semibreves in melodic passages, equivalent rests, ties
Syncopation	Simple syncopation
Time signatures	$\frac{4}{4}$ , $\frac{2}{4}$ , $\frac{3}{4}$
Tempos	60-130 bpm
Dynamics	<i>mp</i> , <i>mf</i> , <i>f</i> – few changes, simple contrasts only
Range/position	Basic hand positions
Keys and chords	Simple keys and chords, two-note power chords
Part writing	Mainly small chords of two to four notes, simple full chords, time to change between chords, occasional very straightforward melodic writing
Improvisation	None

**GRADE 1**

Duration	1-2.5 minutes
Rhythmic values	As Initial, with more variety
Syncopation	As Initial
Time signatures	As Initial
Tempos	60-160 bpm
Dynamics	<i>p, mp, mf, f</i> with occasional hairpins
Range/position	Occasionally moving beyond basic positions, but with enough time to move easily to any unusual positions
Keys and chords	As Initial
Part writing	Still mainly chordal but more use of full chords, some melodic sections
Other directions/techniques	<i>Staccato</i> , accents, pause on last note
Improvisation	None

**GRADE 2**

Duration	1.5-3 minutes
Rhythmic values	Occasional semiquavers
Syncopation	Simple syncopation
Time signatures	$\frac{2}{4}$ , occasional changes of time signature
Tempos	50-160 bpm
Dynamics	<i>Crescendo/decrescendo</i> within phrases, greater use of contrasts
Range/position	Slightly more varied than Grade 1, still leaving time for any more challenging positions
Keys and chords	Wider range of keys and chords
Part writing	Riffs and written solos becoming more important alongside chordal sections
Other directions/techniques	RH damp, palm mute, ring, slides, occasional use of hammer-on and pull-off, optional distortion/overdrive/crunch
Improvisation	None

**GRADE 3**

Duration	1.5-3.5 minutes
Rhythmic values	Semiquavers more frequent in accompaniment and melodic material
Syncopation	Mainly simple syncopation
Time signatures	<b>6</b> , <b>12</b> <b>8</b> , <b>8</b>
Tempos	Full range of tempos, tempo changes within songs
Dynamics	<b><i>pp</i></b> <b><i>ff</i></b>
Range/position	Hand positions starting to move up the neck more often, ranges becoming more extended
Keys and chords	As previous grades, introducing three-note power chords, half/partial barre chords, occasional use of full barre chords
Part writing	More freely melodic writing featuring idiomatic guitar techniques, more variety in accompaniment writing
Other directions/techniques	Fingerstyle, quartertone, semitone and tone bends, vibrato, distortion/overdrive/crunch, crossed noteheads, hammer-on/pull-off
Improvisation	Basic <i>cont. sim.</i> rhythmic improvisation on a chord sequence

**GRADE 4**

Duration	2.5-4 minutes
Rhythmic values	All rhythmic values
Syncopation	Syncopation becoming a more important feature
Time signatures	All regular time signatures
Range/position	Further extension of range and position, introducing faster shifts
Keys and chords	Wider range of keys and chords, more regular use of full barre chords
Part writing	Mix of riffs, accompaniment and melody – varied part writing
Other directions/techniques	Heavy distortion, change between clean and distortion within song, slurred octaves
Improvisation	Slightly more complex <i>cont. sim.</i> improvisation, four-bar improvised solos

**GRADE 5**

<b>Duration</b>	2.5-4 minutes
<b>Syncopation</b>	Now a regular feature
<b>Time signatures</b>	Occasional irregular time signatures, more frequent changes of time signature
<b>Range/position</b>	Range and position as appropriate to demands of the music, including fast shifts
<b>Keys and chords</b>	Any key
<b>Part writing</b>	Part writing now fully varied, with written or improvised lead sections, riffs, melody and accompaniment of different textures
<b>Other directions/techniques</b>	Mandolin-style picking, more sophistication with sounds, effects and bends
<b>Improvisation</b>	Improvised solos of about eight bars

**GRADE 6**

<b>Duration</b>	3-4.5 minutes
<b>Syncopation</b>	Syncopation becoming complex in places
<b>Time signatures</b>	More use of irregular time signatures
<b>Other directions/techniques</b>	Controlled phrasing including at slow tempos – controlled use of different bends, pinch harmonics, flanger, phase, chorus, wah-wah
<b>Improvisation</b>	Improvised solos of about 12 bars

**GRADE 7**

Duration	3-4.5 minutes
Syncopation	More frequent use of complex syncopation
Improvisation	Improvised solos of about 16 bars

**GRADE 8**

Duration	3.5-5 minutes
Syncopation	Complex syncopation throughout
Other directions/ techniques	Any standard guitar technique
Improvisation	Multiple improvised solos, any length

# SESSION SKILLS

Contemporary musicians need to develop a range of listening and improvisation skills, whether they are an artist or session musician. The session skills tests have been specifically designed to develop and reinforce those skills.

Candidates choose either **playback** or **improvising**.

## PLAYBACK

Professional musicians need excellent listening and sight reading skills. The playback test develops both.

Candidates choosing this option are required to perform some music they have not seen or heard before.

Candidates are given a song chart and have 30 seconds to study it and try out any sections. The examiner then plays the backing track.

Candidates should listen to the backing track, repeating what they hear, reading the music from the song chart if they wish. The test consists of a series of short melodic phrases, and candidates should repeat each of these straight back in turn. A count-in is given at the beginning of the backing track, and a backing rhythm is played throughout.

In the exam, candidates have two chances to play along with the track:

- ▶ First time – for practice
- ▶ Second time – for assessment

Candidates should follow the musical direction in the written score, and copy the expressive techniques heard on the track. No variation or improvisation is required – the song chart/recording should be copied as accurately as possible, including details of phrasing, articulation and dynamics.

Technical expectations for the playback test are given in the **Playback** tables.

All requirements are cumulative, meaning that tests may also include requirements from lower grades.

Sample tests are available in our Session Skills books (see **Publications**) and free examples can be downloaded from [trinityrock.com](http://trinityrock.com).

## IMPROVISING

Improvisation is a key skill for contemporary musicians. Many of the best songs came from studio improvisation sessions. Improvisation skills allow players to work with other musicians to bounce creative ideas around and develop their own songs or unique cover versions. When on stage, improvisation can help bring excitement and colour to the live performance. Improvisation can develop creative musicianship skills that unlock a variety of musical styles and technical ability. Our tests are designed to introduce candidates to improvisation gradually, creatively and with a range of supporting resources.

Candidates choosing this option are required to improvise in a specified style over a recorded



**SESSION SKILLS**  
(20 marks)

backing track that they have not seen or heard before. The backing track consists of a passage of music played on a loop.

Candidates are given a chord chart and the examiner plays a short section of the backing track so they can get a feel for the tempo and style. They then have 30 seconds to study it and try out any sections. The examiner then plays the backing track.

Candidates should improvise in the given style over the backing track, which is played four times through before fading out. A count-in is given at the beginning of the recording, and a backing rhythm is played throughout.

In the exam candidates have two chances to play along with the track:

- ▶ First time – for practice
- ▶ Second time – for assessment

Candidates should respond to the test by considering the style, the time signature and the harmonic structure of the supplied chart. The improvisation should explore variety and development, while demonstrating a fundamental sense of feel for the suggested groove.

Technical expectations for the improvisation test are given in the [Improvising](#) tables.

All requirements are cumulative, meaning that tests may also include requirements from lower grades.

Sample tests are available in our Session Skills books (see [Publications](#)) and free examples can be downloaded from [trinityrock.com](http://trinityrock.com).

## PLAYBACK

	Initial	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Total length	8 bars			8 to 12 bars	
Length of repeated sections	2 bars			2 to 4 bars	
Time signatures	$\frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{2}{4}$	$\frac{3}{4}$		$\frac{6}{8}$
Note values	semibreves, minims, crotchets	quavers	dotted minims	dotted crotchets, semiquavers, swung quavers	quaver triplets
Rest values	crotchets	minims		semibreves, quavers	dotted crotchets
Dynamics and articulation	no dynamics or phrasing	<i>p</i> and <i>f</i>	accents	<i>mp</i> and <i>mf</i> , <i>staccato</i> and <i>legato</i>	<i>crescendo</i> and <i>diminuendo</i>
Keys	D major, E minor	G major, A minor	C major, D minor	F major, B minor	A major, C minor
Additional parameters	within first position, no chords		ties	blues scale, 2 note chords, second position, H-O and P-O, chromatic melodic notes	3 note chords, slides, palm muting, double stopped melodic playing, syncopation

► Please note that all requirements are cumulative.

## PLAYBACK (CONT.)

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Total length	12 to 16 bars	16 to 20 bars		20 to 24 bars
Length of repeated sections		4 to 8 bars		
Time signatures	$\frac{12}{8}$	$\frac{2}{2}, \frac{9}{8}, \frac{3}{8}$	$\frac{7}{4}, \frac{7}{8}, \frac{5}{4}, \frac{5}{8}$	time signature changes
Note values	dotted quavers	demisemiquavers	crotchet triplets	
Rest values	dotted minims		semiquavers	
Dynamics and articulation	<i>pp</i> , <i>ff</i> and <i>sfz</i>		any common terms and signs	
Keys	E major, G minor	B major plus any major or minor key up to four sharps or flats	any major or minor key up to five sharps or flats	any key
Additional parameters	vibrato, bends, up to 5th position, chord symbols included in the song chart	up to 7th position, harmonics	full fretboard range	any expressive technique

## IMPROVISING

	Initial	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Total bars	4			8	
Time signatures & rhythm	$\frac{4}{4}$		$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{2}{2}$ swung quavers	$\frac{6}{8}$ , syncopation
Harmonic changes	1 chord per bar				some use of 2 chords per bar
Solo break					
Keys	D major, A minor	C major, E minor	A major, D minor	F major, G major	E major, C minor
Chords	I, IV and V chords, simple major and minor chords only	diatonic chord on any degree of the scale (not diminished or augmented)		7th chords	major 7th and minor 7th chords
Styles	simple rock, pop	ballad, heavy rock	country	blues	reggae, R'n'B

► Please note that all requirements are cumulative.

## IMPROVISING (CONT.)

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Total bars	12	16		
Time signatures & rhythm	$\frac{12}{8}$	$\frac{9}{8}$	$\frac{5}{4}, \frac{7}{8}$	time signature changes
Harmonic changes			more varied rate of harmonic change	
Solo break		up to 2 bars		up to 4 bars
Keys	B major, F minor	any key		
Chords	sus 4 chords	power chords, added 6th chords (major and minor), slash chords	major and minor 9ths, diminished and augmented chords	any common chords
Styles	funk, shuffle, disco	Latin, metal	jazz, boogie-woogie, boogie-style rock	any common style including hybrid styles (eg jazz funk, Latin soul, samba)