

SAXOPHONE

Musical Performance Graded Exams Specification Guide

Grades 1 - 8

EXAM STRUCTURE

Solo Performance (*3 x 20 Marks*)

Candidates are required to prepare and perform three pieces specified for the grade in the relevant Subject Repertoire List; or any material as set by another regulated awarding body for the same Grade.

Scales and Technical Work (*10 marks*)

Examiners will select a representative sample from the scales and technical work listed in the relevant Subject Repertoire List and ask candidates to perform them.

Sight Reading / Musicianship Tests / Own Composition (*15 marks*)

Candidates may choose, with their tutor's guidance, to be examined by one of three options:

Musicianship Tests, or

Own Composition, or

Sight Reading Test

Discussion (15 marks)

At all levels, examiners will establish a friendly rapport with candidates and question them according to Grade. They will require candidates to demonstrate that they:

- **Recognise** the symbols
- **Understand** what things mean and their context
- Can **do** what the words or symbols mean
- **Explain** how to do it with their instrument or voice
- Can **decide** how they have got it right

EXAM GUIDANCE

Pieces

Candidates are required to prepare and perform three pieces specified for the grade in the relevant Subject Repertoire List; or any material as set by another regulated awarding body for the same Grade.

Candidates are required to prepare the whole of the pieces they have selected, but the examiner may stop the candidate at any given point or ask for certain sections to be performed, or to omit repeats where appropriate.

Please see [here](#) for a recommended repertoire list.

Scales / Technical Work

The examiner will request a representative sample of those specified for a particular examination.

Candidates will not be expected to perform scales specified for earlier grades.

Grade One

The scales, chords, and arpeggios of F major and G major.

Grade Two

The scales, chords and arpeggios of A and E major, A and E harmonic minor

Grade Three

The scales, chords, and arpeggios of A \flat and E \flat major, G and F harmonic minor

Grade Four

The scales, chords and arpeggios of F sharp major, F sharp harmonic minor; plus, the chords of C, C7, C diminished, and A minor.

Grade Five

The scales, chords, and arpeggios of D ♭ and C melodic minor; plus, the scales and chord on 1 and 4 of G major and G harmonic minor.

Grade Six

The scales, chords and arpeggios of B and B ♭ major; B and B ♭ melodic minor; plus, the chromatic scale from C to G; and Dominant 7th arpeggios in C and F.

Grade Seven

All major scales and harmonic minor scales with sharps in the key signature (except B and B minor).
The chromatic scale on G on one & four strings.
Diminished arpeggios (all inversions): C, E ♭, G ♭ & A; C#, E, G & B; D, F, A ♭ & B.

Grade Eight

All major scales and harmonic minor scales with flat in the key signature (except B ♭ and B ♭ minor)
The chromatic scale on A on one & two strings.
Augmented arpeggios (all inversions): C, E, & G#; D ♭, F & A; D, F#, & B ♭

Sight-reading

Candidates will be asked to perform an unseen piece after a short amount of preparation time. The standard of the unseen piece will be approximately that of two grades below. For example, a Grade Six candidate will be set a piece of Grade Four standard.

Musicianship

Grade One

Test 1: To clap a rhythm in 2/4 time, two bars in length, played twice by the examiner.

Test 2: To identify any note in the arpeggio C/E/G/C', Middle C being given.

Test 3: To hum, sing or whistle a five-note phrase played twice by the examiner.

Grade Two

Test 1: To clap a rhythm in 2/4 time, two bars in length, played twice by the examiner.

Test 2: To identify any note C to G, played from C.

Test 3: To hum, play or sing a group of 5 or 6 notes played twice by the examiner, and to complete the phrase by adding **one** note.

Grade Three

Test 1: To clap a rhythm in 2/4 or 3/4 time, two bars in length, played twice by the examiner, and identify the time as 2/4 or 3/4.

Test 2: To identify any note(s) in the chords of C, G, or F, played from the root note.

Test 3: To hum, sing or whistle a group of five or six notes played twice by the examiner, and then to complete the phrase by adding two or three notes.

Grade Four

Test 1: To clap a rhythm of two or three bars in 2/4, 3/4 or 4/4 time played twice by the examiner, to state the time and then to identify the melody as major or minor.

Test 2: To identify triads as major or minor and then to name the notes in them, the root being named by the examiner.

Test 3: To hum, sing or whistle a group of notes- two bars - played by the examiner, and then to complete the melody by adding four or five notes.

Grade Five

Test 1: To clap a rhythm in 3/4, 4/4 or 6/8 time of three or four bars, played twice by the examiner, and to state the time, and then to say if the melody is in a major or minor key.

Test 2: To identify triads as major, minor, or diminished; and then to name the notes in them, the root note being named by the examiner.

Test 3: To hum, sing or whistle a two-bar phrase played twice by the examiner, and then to continue with a two-bar answering phrase.

Grade Six

Test 1: To clap a rhythm in 4/4, 6/8, or 9/8 time - two or three bars, played twice by the examiner, to state the time and then to identify whether the phrase is in a major or minor key.

Test 2: To identify any type of triad, and then to name the notes in them, the root note having been named by the examiner.

Test 3: To hum, sing or whistle three or four bars played twice by the examiner, and then to continue by adding an answering phrase of similar length.

Test 4: To identify a cadence as Perfect or Plagal.

Grade Seven

Test 1: To clap a rhythm in 3/4, 6/8, 9/8 or 5/4 time, for three or four bars, played twice by the examiner, to identify the time and then to identify whether the phrase is in a major or minor key.

Test 2: To hum, sing or whistle a group of three or four bars, played twice by the examiner, and then to complete by adding an answering phrase of three or four bars.

Test 3: To identify triads, played in any position, and then to name the notes in them, the root note being given by the examiner.

Test 4: To identify a cadence as Perfect or Interrupted.

Test 5: To name the notes in any supertonic triad (major keys only), the Tonic chord having been played and named by the examiner.

Grade Eight

Test 1: To clap a rhythm in 2/2, 6/8, 5/4, or 7/8 time - four bars played twice by the examiner, to identify the time-signature, and to say if the melody is in a major or minor key.

Test 2: To hum, sing or whistle a 4-bar phrase played twice by the examiner, and then continue for four further bars with an answering phrase, not necessarily in sequence.

Test 3: To identify triads as major, minor, diminished or augmented, and to name the notes in them, the root note being given by the examiner.

Test 4: To identify a cadence as Perfect or Imperfect.

Test 5: To name the notes in a mediant triad in a major key, and the tonic chords having been played and named by the examiner.

Discussion

Questions are based principally on the music performed; but in addition, examiners are at liberty to ask questions on notes, rests, musical terms and signs, key and time-signatures, according to the Grade. Also specifically on minor keys; perfect, major, and minor intervals (Grade 3 upwards).

Grades One - Two

At Grades One and Two examiners will ask simple, direct questions to assess the candidate's ability to recall information but, as grades progress, examiners expect candidates to articulate in more technical language; and at the higher grades to expand on their answers without prompting.

N.B From Grade One upwards, questions may be asked on the Sight Reading Test.

Grade Three

Candidates are required to:

- Remember and describe the interval construction of the harmonic minor scale both in tones and semi- tones as well as intervals.
- Recognise and describe intervals as a second, third, fourth, sixth and seventh.

Grade Four

Candidates are required to:

- Locate, recognise, explain, and demonstrate any ornament used in the examination.
- Remember and describe the interval construction of the melodic minor scale both in tones and semi- tones as well as intervals.

Grade Five

Candidates are required to:

- Locate, name, and play any note of the scales used when described by the examiner by its degree name.
- Recognise, locate, play, and describe the construction of any diminished or augmented interval used within the examination.

Grade Six onwards

Candidates are required to:

- Explain the construction of any kind of triad and name the notes in it
- Know, describe, locate, and explain the construction and function of any type of cadence. Keyboard instrument players may be asked to demonstrate this and single line players to perform the Bass line in any given key set for their scales.

Own - Composition

Candidates for Grades 1 to 8 may perform their own compositions in lieu of Musicianship Tests.

Candidates opting for the Own Composition tests rather than Musicianship Tests must provide a copy of their composition for the examiner in advance.

Grade One

Candidates should compose and prepare their own composition of about 8 bars in the key of C major (concert pitch). It should be balanced as an opening 4-bar phrase which forms a "question" and a 4-bar phrase that forms an "answer".

Grade Two

Perform an own composition of about sixteen bars in the key of C, G or F major. It should be balanced as an opening 4-bar phrase which forms a "question", a 4-bar phrase that forms an "answer", a repeat of the opening 4-bar phrase, and a second "answering" phrase.

Grade Three

Perform an own composition in simple binary form in the key of C, G, F, D or B flat major.

Grade Four

Perform an own composition in simple binary form in the key of D or B flat major, including a modulation to a related key.

Grade Five

Perform an own composition in simple ternary form in a key of up to and including three Sharps or three Flats, including a modulation to a related key.

Grade Six

Perform an own composition in variation form to the theme of Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star or your own choice of theme. It should have balanced phrases and move to at least two related keys.

Grade Seven

Perform an own composition in Rondo form. It should have balanced phrases and move to at least two related keys.

Grade Eight

Perform an own composition in Sonata form. It should have balanced phrases and move to at least two related keys.

EXAMINATION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

Grade 1 - 3 (RQF Level 1)

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Perform a variety of songs that are level-appropriate for each grade	1.1 Demonstrate careful preparation, musical awareness and the beginning of thoughtful interpretation by applying skills, knowledge and understanding in the presentation of performances 1.2 Perform with a secure sense of timing and rhythm and show a solid range of dynamics with fair attention to articulation and phrasing 1.3 Perform with a reasonable sense of

	continuity, confidence and ability to convey mood to the audience
2. Demonstrate technical ability through use of set technical demands in performances	<p>2.1 Perform with a good command of fundamental techniques and control of instrument</p> <p>2.2 Perform with a good quality of sound with a reasonable control of tone, dynamics and articulation</p>
3. Demonstrate effective communication skills	<p>3.1 Demonstrate an overall sense of performance presentation with basic confidence and some capacity for audience engagement</p> <p>3.2 Show a good sense of self-awareness and presentation skills with consideration of audience engagement</p>

Grade 4 - 5 (RQF Level 2)

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Perform a variety of songs that are level-appropriate for each grade	<p>1.1 Create musical performances that exhibit a solid musical awareness while conveying a more personal and creative interpretation of the material</p> <p>1.2 Give a performance that is rhythmically secure and has a strong sense of pulse</p> <p>1.3 Perform with a good sense of continuity, confidence and ability to convey the mood to the audience with a strong understanding of the musical style/feel</p>
2. Demonstrate technical ability through use of set technical demands in performances	<p>2.1 Perform with a solid command of intermediate techniques and control of instrument</p> <p>2.2 Perform with a good quality sound, with a good control of tone, dynamics and articulation</p>
3. Demonstrate effective communication skills	3.1 Demonstrate an overall sense of performance presentation with solid confidence

	3.2 Show a good sense of self-awareness and engagement with the audience
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Grade 6 - 8 (RQF Level 3)

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Perform a variety of songs that are level-appropriate for each grade	<p>1.1 Deliver a secure and sustained performance that showcases confidence and personal interpretation, captivating the audience</p> <p>1.2 Give a performance that is rhythmically secure and has a strong sense of pulse</p> <p>1.3 Perform with an excellent sense of continuity, confidence, and the ability to convey the mood to the audience, showcasing a strong understanding of the musical style and feel</p>
2. Demonstrate technical ability through use of set technical demands in performances	<p>2.1 Perform with a high proficiency in advanced techniques and exhibit sensitive control across the entire instrument</p> <p>2.2 Perform with a high-quality sound, with a sensitive control of tone, dynamics and articulation</p>
3. Demonstrate effective communication skills	<p>3.1 Demonstrate a high level of musical sensitivity and confidence in performance presentation</p> <p>3.2 Show an excellent sense of self-awareness and engagement with the audience</p>

Marking Criteria

Examiners will evaluate candidates based on their skill, knowledge, and depth of understanding. The examination is designed to assess not only the ability to recall definitions but also the candidate's comprehension and application of concepts. Marks will be awarded for ingenuity, versatility, musicianship, and stylistic awareness, in addition to technical proficiency and musical accuracy.

Pass Marks

Each exam is marked with the percentage boundaries for each certification as follows:

Pass: 65 - 79%

Merit: 80 - 89%

Distinction: 90 - 100%

Pieces

Mark Category	Mark Boundaries	Criteria
Unsuccessful	0-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Few if any of the technical demands of the piece are met.• Intonation is either severely uncontrolled or very inconsistent.• Tempo/pulse is not established or poorly maintained.• Little or no realisation of the style and performance details.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interpretation is largely ineffective.
Pass	13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical demands are generally met throughout. • Intonation is generally secure and the majority of the notes are correct. • Tempo is correctly chosen and the pulse is broadly stable. Rhythms are accurate overall. • A reasonable understanding of the style with a fair demonstration of performance details. • The interpretation is generally reliable with some lapses.

Merit	16-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical demands are met with only very minor issues. • Intonation is largely good and there is a high degree of accuracy in the notes • Tempo is effective and the pulse is maintained throughout. Rhythm has only minor inaccuracies. • A very good understanding of the style with a good attention to detail. • A committed and musical interpretation with few flaws.
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Distinction	18-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The technical demands are handled with ease and accuracy. • Intonation is uniformly excellent with no errors in the notes. • A fluent, appropriate tempo with excellent and flexible pulse as needed. Rhythm is securely controlled throughout the performance . • Excellent understanding of the style with close attention to detail. • An assured and highly musical interpretation.
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Scales and Technical Work

Mark Boundaries	Criteria
0	No attempt at all
1-3	Little attempt or very poorly known
4-5	Some correct work but a large number of errors
6-7	One or two incorrect notes or some errors in pulse/intonation
8	Well known with minor errors of pulse or intonation
9	Fluent and accurate

Discussion

Mark Boundaries	Criteria
0	No answers given or all incorrect
1-5	The candidate responds to direct questions only/responds to only limited questions and requires considerable prompting. They give inaccurate conclusions/answers. They have little grasp of any content of the exam.
6-8	The candidate responds to some questions but requires considerable prompting. They give mostly inaccurate conclusions/answers. They have little grasp of the content of the exam aside from limited aspects.

9-11	The candidate responds but may be unsure or requires some prompting. They give general answers or may have some inaccurate conclusions/answers. They have some overall grasp of the content of the exam but may not be fully prepared to discuss areas.
12-13	The candidate responds relatively confidently and mostly correctly. They can justify some of their thoughts and have a general overall grasp of the content of the exam.
14-15	The candidate responds confidently and correctly. They can justify their thoughts and have a good overall grasp of the content of the exam.

REGULATED QUALIFICATION INFORMATION

Officially Recognised Qualifications

SAXOPHONE Performance Exam	RQF* Credits	EQF** Credits	Qualification Title	Qualification number
Grade 1	1	2	TLM Level 1 Award in Musical Performance - Grade 1	603/4575/5
Grade 2	1	2	TLM Level 1 Award in Musical Performance - Grade 2	603/4576/7
Grade 3	1	2	TLM Level 1 Award in Musical Performance - Grade 3	603/4577/9
Grade 4	2	3	TLM Level 2 Certificate in Musical Performance - Grade 4	603/4578/0
Grade 5	2	3	TLM Level 2 Certificate in Musical Performance - Grade 5	603/4579/2
Grade 6	3	4	TLM Level 3 Certificate in Musical Performance - Grade 6	603/4580/9
Grade 7	3	4	TLM Level 3 Certificate in Musical Performance - Grade 7	603/4581/0
Grade 8	3	4	TLM Level 3 Certificate in Musical Performance - Grade 8	603/4582/2

* Regulated Qualifications Framework in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

** European Qualifications Framework

Duration of Study

The duration of study needed to gain a qualification is dependent on each individual. Regulated qualifications are all assigned a total qualification time as set out below. The total qualification time is an estimate of the hours spent learning with a teacher and the hours spent learning individually.

	Guided Learning Hours	Independent Learning Hours	Total Qualification Time (hours)
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

UCAS Points

Students who achieve Grades 6 to 8 will receive UCAS tariff points from the UK Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

The following points apply:

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
UCAS Points	UCAS Points	UCAS Points
Pass: 8	Pass: 12	Pass: 18
Merit: 10	Merit: 14	Merit: 24
Distinction: 12	Distinction: 16	Distinction: 30

FURTHER EXAM GUIDANCE

Accompaniment

Where pieces are to be played to an accompaniment, it is the responsibility of each candidate to provide a competent accompanist or accompaniment and the necessary music. The playing of the accompaniment must be adequate to enable examiners to make their assessment without the distraction of making unnecessary allowances. An accompanist will only remain in the room for the portion of the examination for which s/he is required. A piano, electronic keyboard, guitar or other appropriate instrument may be used to accompany the Pieces.

If a CD backing track is used, the candidate must be able to operate the audio equipment competently from Grade 1 onwards. No allowance will be made for time wasted because equipment is not fully prepared

Photocopies

Photocopying of publications is not permissible and candidates using unauthorised photocopies at examinations will be disqualified. It is acceptable, however, to use a photocopy for the second copy when the syllabus requires one to be handed to the examiner, provided the original is also brought to the examination. It is also acceptable to use photocopies of parts of long pieces to avoid awkward page turns, again provided the original is also brought to the examination.

Memory

Performing from memory is not compulsory at any level. However, it is encouraged.

Age Groups

Musical performance graded exams Debut - 8 are open to all ages.