



UNIVERSITY OF
WEST LONDON
London College of Music Examinations

London College of Music Examinations

**Syllabus for
Step and Graded Examinations
in Acoustic Guitar**

From 2008 until further notice

LCM Examinations

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London College of Music

The London College of Music (LCM) is one of the largest specialist Music and Performing Arts institutes in the UK. It has a long history of music education dating back to 1887, when it was situated in Great Marlborough Street, London, where the college began as an examination body. In 1991 LCM became part of Thames Valley University, which was renamed the University of West London in 2011.

The London College of Music offers an impressive range of innovative courses, respected worldwide and delivered with creativity and passion by practicing industry experts. Courses include Performance and Composition, Popular Music Performance and Recording, Performing Arts, Music Management, Music Technology and Theatre Production.

Further information about full-time programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate students, in addition to the Junior College, is available from:

- the UWL Learning Advice Centre - tel: 020 8579 5000; email: learning.advice@uwl.ac.uk
- the Faculty of the Arts office - tel: 020 8231 2304; email: music@uwl.ac.uk
- uwl.ac.uk/music

London College of Music Examinations

External examinations have been awarded by the London College of Music since the institution's founding in 1887. Today, examinations are held throughout the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and at many overseas centres, and are unique in the graded examinations world in being awarded by a university.

LCM's graded and diploma examinations in most subjects are regulated by Ofqual, which serves as a UK governmental stamp of approval and quality assurance, confirming parity of standards with other similar examinations boards. Furthermore, the resulting mapping of LCM Examinations onto the RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework) means that candidates applying to UK universities through the UCAS system can increase their points tariff if they have been awarded a Pass or higher at Grades 6–8 in a regulated subject.

LCM Examinations are distinctive, both in the qualifications offered and in the administration and running of the exams. We have retained the well-known traditional atmosphere and qualities of the London College of Music: informality, friendliness and approachability, although set in a fully professional and modern context. We are small enough that enquiries to the head office can be dealt with speedily and efficiently, and we are able to get to know many of our representatives and teachers personally by name. Examiners pride themselves on being friendly and approachable, ensuring candidates are put at their ease and are thus able to perform to their full potential; yet they are professional, applying thorough and objective assessment criteria in forming their judgements.

Our range of syllabuses and exam formats is exceptionally wide. Examinations may be taken in piano, all orchestral instruments, classical singing, music theatre, popular music vocals, guitar, electronic keyboard, electronic organ, drum kit, percussion, church music, Irish and Scottish traditional music, jazz (piano, wind and brass), acoustic, electric and bass guitar, ukulele, ensemble, early learning, theory (both classical and popular) and composition. Our diplomas are internationally recognised and include composition, conducting, thesis and theoretical diplomas as well as performing and teaching diplomas in all instruments, across four levels.

We offer a number of pre-Grade 1 exams (Steps). Graded exams include a spoken test element, which encourages candidates to think, both technically and critically, about the music they perform in the exam.

Graded and diploma syllabuses are available free of charge via lcme.uwl.ac.uk, or on request from LCM Examinations.

1. Syllabus introduction

1.1 Coverage of this syllabus

This syllabus is designed to prepare students for the Graded Examinations in Acoustic Guitar awarded by University of West London Qualifications. It should be read in conjunction with the relevant Exam Information Booklet, which details the specific requirements for the subject.

Acoustic Guitar Exam Information Booklets are available free of charge from LCM Examinations (tel: 020 8231 2364), or from local representatives. They can also be downloaded at lcme.uwl.ac.uk.

London College of Music Examinations also offers graded examinations in the subjects listed on our website. Because of differences in content and/or markschemes, syllabuses and repertoire lists for these subjects are published separately. Please contact LCM Examinations or your local representative for details.

1.2 Validity of this syllabus

This syllabus is valid from 1 January 2008 until further notice.

1.3 Rationale

LCM's graded and diploma qualifications make a distinctive contribution to education in and through music, and drama & communication, because of the emphasis placed upon the following combination of characteristics:

- creative thinking;
- practical skills either independent of literacy, or related to it;
- encouragement to think, both technically and critically, about the repertoire performed in practical examinations;
- a distinctively broad stylistic range, as reflected in tasks, endorsements and repertoire;
- the provision of assessment in areas not traditionally included within the scope of graded examinations;
- a strong emphasis towards the acquisition and demonstration of skills and understandings that are of contemporary relevance to the performing arts.

In the standards set, in structure, and organisation, LCM's graded and diploma qualifications are broadly comparable with those of other awarding bodies offering qualifications in music and in drama & communication. However, these syllabuses offer the opportunity to develop pathways into learning that both complement and provide genuine alternatives to the study of the arts within school, FE and HE curricula, and within the context of life-long learning. Because of this, they are capable of being used to extend and enrich full-time education and individual tuition and offer alternative routes that enable teachers to achieve the objective of equipping young people and adults with highly relevant creative, expressive and technological concepts and skills.

1.4 Syllabus aims

A course of study based on LCM's graded and diploma syllabuses is intended to provide:

- a progressive and unified assessment system, enabling candidates to plan and obtain an effective education in and through the arts;
- skills of organisation, planning, problem-solving and communication, through the study of the arts in performance and theory;
- enhanced ability in acquiring the personal disciplines and motivation necessary for life-long learning;
- an enduring love, enjoyment and understanding of the performing arts, from the perspective of both participants and audience;
- an assessment system equipping candidates with added-value to enhance career routes, educational opportunities and decision-making.

1.5 Syllabus objectives

A course of study based on this syllabus is intended to provide:

- a balanced combination of performing skills and the supporting literacy;
- opportunities for learning and assessment that are both creatively challenging and relevant;
- opportunities for mastery learning that are structured and directly related to the course material published for each grade;
- candidates with the basis for study and practice to develop relevant and usable skills and concepts.

1.6 Availability of examinations and entry details

See the website for information on practical examination sessions and centre and representative details.

1.7 Duration of examinations

Step 1	Step 2	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
10 mins	12 mins	13 mins	14 mins	16 mins	18 mins	20 mins	26 mins	30 mins	32 mins

1.8 Candidates with particular needs

Information on assessment, examination and entry requirements for candidates with particular needs is published in the document *Equality of Opportunity, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration*. This can be downloaded from our website: lcme.uwl.ac.uk.

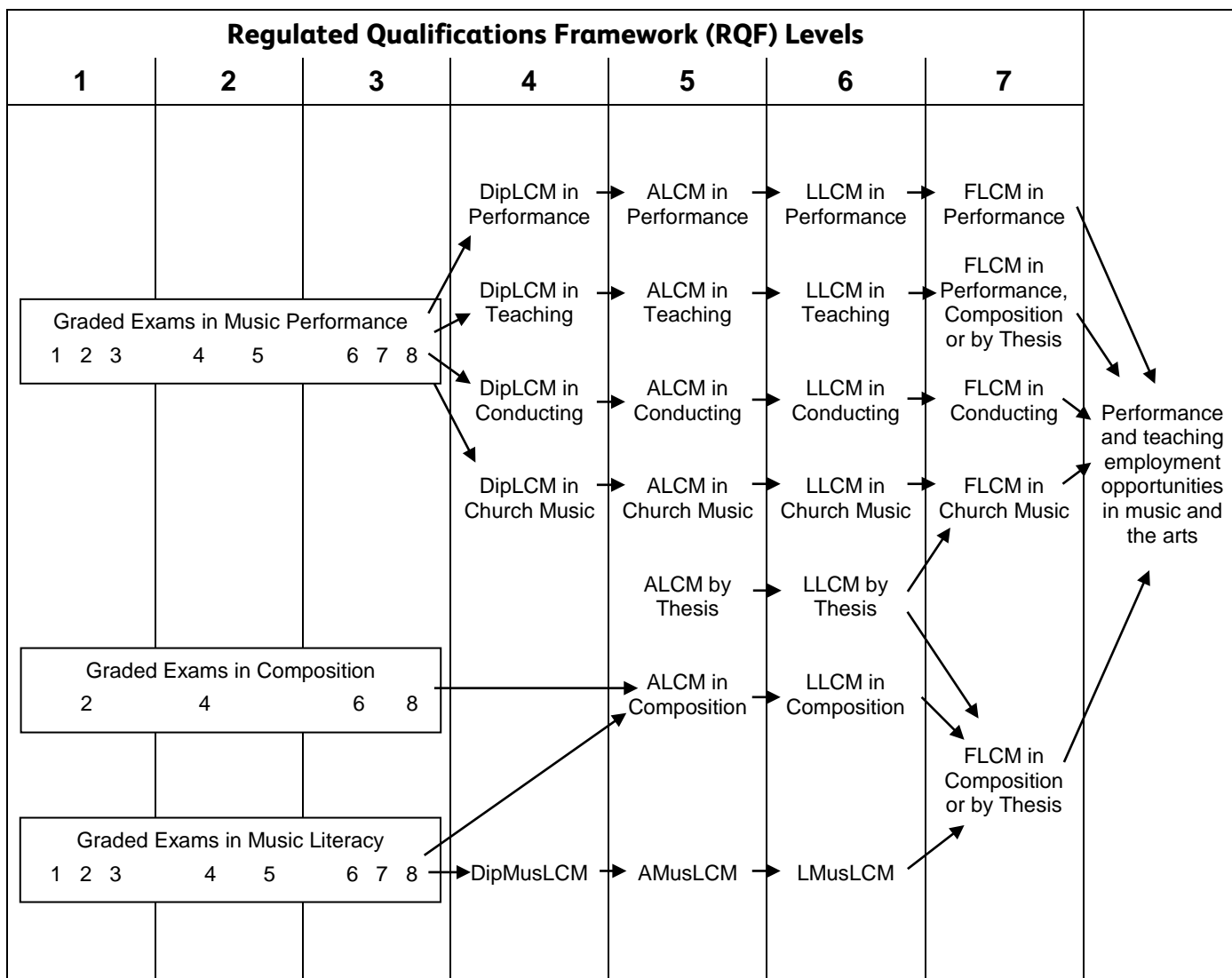
1.9 Target groups

These examinations are open to all. There are no minimum age restrictions, and the choice of learning material is intended to appeal to candidates of all ages. However, in practice, whilst candidates of all ages enter for Step 1 to Grade 5 examinations, it is unlikely that candidates below the age of 16 will possess the musical maturity for success at Grades 6–8.

Graded Examinations in Acoustic Guitar: Likely age groups

Age	Grades	RQF Level
7 – 18+	Steps 1–2	-
10 – 18+	1–3	1
13 – 18+	4–5	2
16 – 18+	6–8	3

1.10 Progression routes



The above chart outlines the overall framework for all LCM Examinations. Non-regulated Step 1 and Step 2 examinations (prior to Grade One) are available in acoustic guitar.

1.11 Regulation

LCM's graded examinations in Acoustic Guitar are regulated in England by Ofqual (formerly QCA), and by the corresponding authorities in Wales (Qualifications Wales) and Northern Ireland (CCEA). They have been placed on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) at Levels 1, 2 and 3.

The table below shows the qualification number, RQF title and credit value of each grade. The awarding organisation is University of West London Qualifications (UWLQ).

Please contact us, or consult the Register of Regulated Qualifications (<http://register.ofqual.gov.uk>), for further details, including unit numbers.

Qualification Number	Qualification Title	Guided Learning Hours	Credits	Total Qualification Time
501/1985/0	UWLQ Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Grade 1)	12	6	60
501/2002/5	UWLQ Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Grade 2)	18	9	90
501/2004/9	UWLQ Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Grade 3)	18	12	120
501/2003/7	UWLQ Level 2 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Grade 4)	24	15	150
501/2006/2	UWLQ Level 2 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Grade 5)	24	18	180
501/2083/9	UWLQ Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Grade 6)	36	22	220
501/2082/7	UWLQ Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Grade 7)	48	27	270
501/2066/9	UWLQ Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Music Performance (Grade 8)	54	32	320

1.12 UCAS tariff points

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) includes regulated graded music examinations in its tariff. Holders of LCM grade 6–8 music qualifications applying for any course of study at a UK Higher Education institution are entitled to tariff points as detailed below.

UCAS Points	A Levels (Grades A–E)		LCM Practical Examinations (Pass, Merit, Distinction)			LCM Theory Examinations (Pass, Merit, Distinction)		
	AS Level	A2 Level	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
56		A*						
48		A						
40		B						
32		C						
30					Distinction			
24		D			Merit			
20	A							
18					Pass			
16	B	E		Distinction				
12	C		Distinction	Merit				
10	D		Merit	Pass				Distinction
9								Merit
8							Distinction	Pass
7							Merit	
6	E		Pass			Distinction	Pass	
5						Merit		
4						Pass		

2. Syllabus content

2.1 Syllabus overview

This syllabus is designed to prepare students for the Graded Examinations in Acoustic Guitar awarded by University of West London Qualifications. It provides a structured approach that enables students to master progressively the understanding, knowledge and skills necessary to play the instrument and to develop capability both as a performer and as an informed listener. The syllabus clearly describes what is expected and how the achievements of the candidate are to be assessed, so that students can be taught to master the requirements and to perform these in a practical examination. Examinations are conducted by trained external examiners and are held at approved centres in the UK and overseas.

In addition to Grades 1–8, (beginner level) Steps 1 and 2 examinations are also available.

2.2 Summary of subject content and description of examination components

These summaries should be read in conjunction with the Grade Descriptions (Section 2.4) and the Pass Band Descriptions (Section 4.3). In-depth details of all examination requirements and specifications are included in the official handbooks and in the Examination Information Booklet. Further information for teachers and advice on syllabus requirements is available from LCM Examinations.

Areas of Study

Teachers preparing candidates for graded music examinations need to ensure that students are able to demonstrate appropriate levels of mastery as described in the Grade Descriptions in each of the following areas of study.

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

Candidates need to be prepared to demonstrate:

1. the ability to perform from memory the chords, scales and arpeggios specified. The primary areas of study are the pitch content of the set exercises, and the ability to perform them from memory, with clarity, fluency, secure technique and accuracy, including the use of particular fingerboard positions as specified.
2. technical mastery of the instrument, including fingering, clarity, plectrum/finger control, tone control and articulation and the ability to shape the exercises musically.

Explicit ability:

perform from memory a specified set of scales and arpeggios, at a tempo appropriate to the grade, with clarity, evenness and accuracy (including numerous fingerboard positions when specified).

perform from memory a specified set of chords, using specified fingerboard positions, appropriate to the grade, with accuracy and clarity.

Implied ability:

demonstrate basic technical fluency, secure fretting-hand technique, picking/plectrum control, articulation and knowledge of keys. Also to include the ability to fret and sound chords clearly without fretbuzz, and knowledge of chord shapes and chord symbols.

Component 2: Performance

Candidates need to be prepared to demonstrate:

1. the ability to choose and perform a selection of studies and/or pieces as specified in the relevant grade handbook (the number and combination of studies and pieces varies between the different grades). The principal area of study is the technical mastery of the instrument, including control of the pitch content of the set pieces and the ability to perform them with accuracy and fluency.
2. the ability to utilise strumming and picking techniques to aid and adapt interpretation of the pieces; use of tonal and specialist techniques to aid creativity.
3. increasing evidence of a sense of musicality as the grades progress.
4. familiarity with chord symbols as appropriate to the grade.
5. increasing ability to communicate effectively to the listener as the grades progress.

Explicit ability:

perform a number of specified studies and/or pieces, using music selected by the candidate in accordance with the grade handbook, appropriate to the grade, with accuracy and fluency.

Implied ability:

demonstrate basic technical fluency (secure timing, fluid picking/plectrum technique, adequate fret-hand control, dexterity in changing between chords), an understanding of harmonic progression, awareness of style, melodic and rhythmic security and inventiveness, a sense of musicality and communication.

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

Candidates need to be prepared to demonstrate:

1. the ability to respond orally to questions asked by the examiner on a number of specified topics. The primary area of study throughout the grades will be a thorough understanding of the specified topics.
2. the ability to articulate answers clearly and confidently, employing appropriate terminology.

Explicit ability:

respond orally to questions asked by the examiner on a number of topics, as specified for the grade.

Implied ability:

a thorough understanding of the specified topics, demonstrated through articulate responses employing appropriate vocabulary.

Component 4: Accompaniment

Candidates need to be prepared to demonstrate:

1. the ability to perform an accompaniment for a melody by following a given chord sequence, according to the examples specified in the relevant grade handbook. The principal area of study is the pitch content of the exercises, and the ability to perform them at sight, with accuracy and fluency.
2. technical mastery of the instrument, including fluency via secure strumming technique or finger picking, dynamic variety and clarity.
3. increasing evidence of a sense of musicality as the grades progress.
4. familiarity with chord symbols as appropriate to the grade.
5. increasing ability to communicate effectively to the listener as the grades progress.

Explicit ability:

provide a suitable accompaniment to a melody following a given chord sequence, appropriate to the grade, with accuracy, fluency and musicality.

Implied ability:

demonstrate basic technical fluency (including dexterity in changing between chords and inventiveness in creating rhythm/picking patterns), a sense of the interrelatedness of melody and harmony, the ability to interpret chord symbols accurately, awareness of style, and a sense of musicality and communication.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

Candidates need to be prepared to demonstrate the ability to:

1. provide accurate musical or verbal responses to questions from the examiner, based on published question types in the grade handbooks. The primary areas of study are the knowledge and understanding of the required parameters of rhythm, pitch and harmony.
2. communicate these answers to the examiner by means of appropriate terminology as required.
3. understand the specific test formats as published in the relevant grade handbook.

Explicit ability:

provide accurate musical or verbal responses to questions set by the examiner, based on published question types in the grade handbooks, relating to discrimination of such musical aspects as rhythm, pitch and harmony.

Implied ability:

aurally discriminate between a variety of musical elements and parameters, such as those outlined above; communicate this to the examiner by means of appropriate terminology as required; demonstrate an understanding of the specific test formats as published in the relevant grade handbook.

2.3 Weightings for examination components

	Fingerboard Knowledge	Performance	Musical Knowledge	Accompaniment	Aural Assessment
Step 1	25 %	75 %	-	-	-
Step 2	15 %	75 %	-	-	10 %
Grades 1–8	10 %	50 %	10 %	20 %	10 %

2.4 Grade descriptions

The standard expected of a candidate at any particular grade is defined by the repertoire of tasks prescribed for that grade. The performance of the candidate in relation to these tasks determines the attainment band that he/she is awarded as a result of the examination. The level of mastery implicit in these tasks and the more general expectations of the candidate are defined by the following grade descriptions.

Steps 1–2 and Grades 1–2

The musical material selected for these grades, and hence the standard of performance expected, is of an essentially elementary nature. Only the most basic, and hence most common, chords and structures are used. Melodic and rhythmic material will be relatively simple. Expectations of dynamics, articulation and phrasing are limited to the most basic types and to occasional use. The repertoire of scales and chords in Component 1 is limited to the least demanding examples. Technical accomplishment is a more important element of assessment than is musicality, and expectations of communication are limited.

Grades 3–4

The musical material selected for these grades, and hence the standard of performance expected, is of a more demanding nature. The number of chords and structures that may be used is increased. Melodic and rhythmic material will be more complex than earlier grades. Expectations of dynamics, articulation and phrasing will extend to a wider variety of type and degree of use. The repertoire of scales, arpeggios and chords in Component 1 is expanded in number, and includes more taxing examples. Musicality is an increasingly important element of assessment in relation to technical accomplishment, and expectations of communication are higher.

Grade 5

The musical material selected for Grade 5 is of a significantly more demanding nature than for previous grades; it is the first grade where one might expect to encounter a standard of performance which might conceivably be suitable for a professional concert. The number of chords and structures which may be used extends to all but the most unusual and unlikely examples. Melodic and rhythmic material will include a moderate degree of complexity. It is expected that dynamics, articulation and phrasing will be varied and will often demonstrate a degree of subtlety. The repertoire of scales, arpeggios and chords in Component 1 is expanded in number to include more taxing examples. Musicality is judged to be an extremely important element of assessment, and expectations of communication are higher.

Grades 6–7

The musical material selected for these grades, and hence the standard of performance expected, may be described as being at the technically less demanding end of the continuum of professional repertoire. The number of chords and structures that may be used extends to the full range of possibilities. Melodic and rhythmic material will include a significant degree of complexity. It is expected that the performances will include passages where dynamics, articulation and phrasing demonstrate considerable dexterity and flexibility. The repertoire of scales, arpeggios and chords in Component 1 is expanded in number to include a large number of types and fingerboard positions. Musicality is judged to be almost as important as technical accomplishment in the assessment, and the candidate is expected to communicate with an emerging sense of musical personality.

Grade 8

The musical material selected for this grade, and hence the standard of performance expected, may be described as being technically some way inside the continuum of professional repertoire. The number of chords and structures that may be used extends to the full range of commonly occurring possibilities. Melodic and rhythmic material should include a significant degree of complexity. It is expected that the demands of dynamics, articulation and phrasing will be consistent and considerable. The repertoire of scales, arpeggios and chords in Component 1 is expanded in number to comprise an extremely wide range of type, requiring different fingerboard positions and exploiting the full range of the instrument. Musicality is judged to be almost as important as technical accomplishment in the assessment, and the candidate is expected to communicate with an emerging or clear sense of musical personality.

3. Assessment

The marking scheme is comprised of a balanced structure of examination components and assessment categories. Taken together they form a matrix that enables the performance of each candidate to be systematically assessed and marked.

3.1 Assessment objectives

During an examination candidates will be assessed on their ability to demonstrate mastery of:

Domain 1: Technical Accomplishment The extent to which the instrument is effectively controlled, assessed via the candidate's performance.	Domain 2: Musicality The ability to make sensitive and musical performance decisions.
Domain 3: Musical Knowledge The synthesis of theoretical, notational and contextual knowledge.	Domain 4: Communication The degree to which the performer communicates with and engages the listener through musical performance on their instrument.

3.2 Coverage of the assessment domains

	Technical Accomplishment	Musicality	Musical Knowledge	Communication
Fingerboard Knowledge	✓	✓	✓	
Performance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Musical Knowledge			✓	✓
Accompaniment	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aural Assessment		✓	✓	✓

3.3 Approximate weightings for assessment domains

	Technical Accomplishment (%)	Musicality (%)	Musical Knowledge (%)	Communication (%)
Step 1	60	10	23	7
Step 2	53	9	31	7
Grades 1–2	46	8	39	7
Grade 3–5	39	11	39	11
Grades 6–8	32	15	39	14

3.4 How marks are awarded during the examination

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

The examiner will consider the performance of the requested scales, arpeggios and chords and will award a mark, taking into account the following:

Assessment Domains	Approximate weightings
Technical Accomplishment: fingerboard accuracy, fluency, dexterity, appropriate and even tempo, fingerboard positions, clarity, prompt response to examiner's instruction.	75 %
Musicality: musical shape, phrasing.	10 %
Musical Knowledge: pitch content of specified scales, arpeggios and chords.	15 %

Component 2: Performance

The examiner will consider the performance of the selected studies and/or pieces and will award a mark, taking into account the following:

Assessment Domains	Approximate weightings		
	Steps 1–2 Grades 1–2	Grades 3–5	Grades 6–8
Technical Accomplishment: accuracy of pitch and rhythm, and the ability to manipulate the instrument with respect to fluency, articulation, dexterity, tempo, dynamics, clarity, rhythmic invention.	55 %	45 %	35 %
Musicality: the ability to make sensitive and musical performance decisions, resulting in a sense of individual interpretative skill, so that the music is performed in a manner reflecting a degree of sensitivity and empathy, and an emerging musical personality; the ability to play with a sense of stylistic awareness.	10 %	15 %	20 %
Musical Knowledge: an understanding of the notation occurring in the repertoire; evidence of a sense of established performance practice and an understanding of the stylistic content.	25 %	25 %	25 %
Communication: the ability to engage the listener, and to communicate a sense of style and personality.	10 %	15 %	20 %

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

The examiner will consider the candidate's responses to the questions, and will award a mark taking into account the following:

Assessment Domain	Weighting
Musical Knowledge: A thorough understanding of all aspects of the specified topics.	100 %

Component 4: Accompaniment

The examiner will consider the performance of the chord sequence as an accompaniment, and will award a mark, taking into account the following:

Assessment Domains	Approximate weightings		
	Grades 1–2	Grades 3–5	Grades 6–8
Technical Accomplishment: the ability to manipulate the instrument with respect to accuracy, fluency, articulation, dexterity, tempo, dynamics, clarity, rhythmic invention.	55 %	45 %	35 %
Musicality: the ability to make sensitive and musical performance decisions, resulting in a sense of individual interpretative skill, so that the music is performed in a manner reflecting a degree of sensitivity and empathy, and an emerging musical personality; the ability to play with a sense of stylistic awareness.	10 %	15 %	20 %
Musical Knowledge: an understanding of the chord symbols, dynamics and other interpretative signs; evidence of a sense of established performance practice.	25 %	25 %	25 %
Communication: the ability to engage the listener, and to communicate a sense of style and personality.	10 %	15 %	20 %

Component 5: Aural Assessment

The examiner will consider the candidate's responses to the tests, and will award a mark based on the following:

Assessment Domain	Weighting
Musical Knowledge: the ability to discriminate aurally a variety of musical elements and parameters, such as pitch, rhythm and harmony.	100 %

3.5 Mark allocation by assessment domain & examination component

Step 1. The approximate weightings of the Assessment Domains are as follows:

	Technical Accomplishment (%)	Musicality (%)	Musical Knowledge (%)	Communication (%)
Fingerboard Knowledge	75	10	15	-
Performance	55	10	25	10

Step 2. The approximate weightings of the Assessment Domains are as follows:

	Technical Accomplishment (%)	Musicality (%)	Musical Knowledge (%)	Communication (%)
Fingerboard Knowledge	75	10	15	-
Performance	55	10	25	10
Aural Assessment	-	-	100	-

Grades 1-2. The approximate weightings of the Assessment Domains are as follows:

	Technical Accomplishment (%)	Musicality (%)	Musical Knowledge (%)	Communication (%)
Fingerboard Knowledge	75	10	15	-
Performance	55	10	25	10
Musical Knowledge	-	-	100	-
Accompaniment	55	10	25	10
Aural Assessment	-	-	100	-

Grades 3-5. The approximate weightings of the Assessment Domains are as follows:

	Technical Accomplishment (%)	Musicality (%)	Musical Knowledge (%)	Communication (%)
Fingerboard Knowledge	75	10	15	-
Performance	45	15	25	15
Musical Knowledge	-	-	100	-
Accompaniment	45	15	25	15
Aural Assessment	-	-	100	-

Grades 6-8. The approximate weightings of the Assessment Domains are as follows:

	Technical Accomplishment (%)	Musicality (%)	Musical Knowledge (%)	Communication (%)
Fingerboard Knowledge	75	10	15	-
Performance	35	20	25	20
Musical Knowledge	-	-	100	-
Accompaniment	35	20	25	20
Aural Assessment	-	-	100	-

4. Awarding and reporting

4.1 Issue of results

A written report will be compiled for each examination. Candidates will be informed of the result of examinations as soon as possible, and not later than four weeks after the examination date, by post. Representatives are not allowed to issue results over the telephone. Certificates for successful candidates (achieving a Pass or higher) are normally dispatched within eight weeks of the date of the examination, but very often they will be received sooner than this. This time is necessary to ensure that all results are properly standardised and have been checked by LCM Examinations.

4.2 Repeats of examinations

Where a candidate is not able to reach the minimum standard for a Pass in an examination, application for re-examination at that grade is permitted, upon payment of the current entry fee. All examination components must be completed on re-examination. Marks from examination components may not be carried forward or credited.

4.3 Awards of Pass, Pass with Merit or Pass with Distinction

The pass awards are differentiated by outcome. Depending on the level of mastery demonstrated during the examination performance a candidate may be awarded either a Pass, or a Pass with Merit, or a Pass with Distinction. Each award broadly corresponds with the following descriptions of achievement and requires that the candidate obtains or exceeds the minimum number of marks set as the boundary for the award.

Distinction (85–100%)

A candidate who achieves a Pass with Distinction will have offered a highly accurate, fluent and musical response in all or most of the components. They will have demonstrated secure technical accomplishment on their instrument, and will have shown evidence of excellent musicality. They will have demonstrated a thorough knowledge and understanding of topics as specified for the grade. At higher grades, they will have communicated, through performance, a sense of real engagement and understanding, and clear sense of individual personality.

Merit (75–84.5%)

A candidate who achieves a Pass with Merit will have offered an accurate, fluent and musical response in all or most of the components. They will have demonstrated a good standard of technical accomplishment on their instrument, and will have shown significant evidence of musicality. They will have demonstrated a largely assured knowledge and understanding of topics as specified for the grade. They will have communicated, through performance, some sense of engagement and understanding and, at higher grades, an emerging sense of individual personality.

Pass (65–74.5%)

A candidate who achieves a Pass will have offered a mostly accurate, fluent and musical response in all or most of the components. They will have demonstrated an acceptable standard of technical accomplishment on their instrument, and will have shown some evidence of musicality. They will have demonstrated some knowledge and understanding of topics as specified for the grade. They will have communicated, through performance, a basic sense of understanding and ability to engage the listener.

Below pass, upper level (55–64.5%)

A candidate who achieves a mark in this band will have demonstrated some inaccuracy, lack of fluency, and lack of musicality in all or most of the components. They will not have demonstrated an acceptable standard of technical accomplishment on their instrument, nor will they have shown much evidence of musical instinct. Their knowledge and understanding of topics as specified for the grade will have been judged to be below the standard required to pass. They will have failed to communicate, through performance, any significant degree of understanding or ability to engage the listener.

Below pass, lower level (0–54.5%)

A candidate who achieves a mark in this band will have demonstrated significant inaccuracy, lack of fluency, and lack of musicality in all or most of the components. Their standard of technical accomplishment on their instrument will have been judged as significantly below that required for the grade, and they will not have shown any significant evidence of musicality. Their knowledge and understanding of topics as specified for the grade will have been minimal in relation to the requirements of the grade. They will have failed to communicate, through performance, a sense of understanding or ability to engage the listener.

4.4 Attainment band descriptions

The guidelines below are not intended to be mutually exclusive, but should function interrelatedly. Thus for any particular attainment band, one or more criteria might exceed those specified, while one or more others might fail to meet the requirements. The specific criteria for each component of the examination are as follows.

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

Step 1 – Grade 5:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- An accurate presentation of all, or nearly all, the requirements, played with clarity and even timing. Promptly presented and performed with appropriate fluency.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- Mostly accurate, clear and even, but with occasional lapses in any one of these. Mostly promptly presented and reasonably fluent.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- A reasonable attempt, but with some inaccuracies. Continuity affected by errors and restarts in places. Occasional lapses in clarity, promptness of presentation and fluency.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- Containing restarts and errors, scales/arpeggios performed at a variable and inappropriate tempo, but showing the potential to pass. Limited level of clarity and hesitations in presenting requirements.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- Occasionally creditable moments, but many restarts and errors so that fluency is almost completely lacking. Very limited clarity. Unable to maintain an even tempo with the scales and arpeggios.

Grades 6–8:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- An accurate, fluent and confident presentation of all, or nearly all, the requirements, played with clarity and even timing.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- Prompt responses; mostly accurate, clear and even, but with occasional lapses in any one of these factors. Occasional lack of assurance, fluency or clarity in comparison with Distinction.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- Evidence of a logical approach, but with some inaccuracies. Inconsistent continuity affected by some errors and restarts. Inappropriate or inconsistent tempo. Occasional lapses in clarity and promptness of presentation.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- Containing restarts and errors, scales/arpeggios performed at a variable and inappropriate tempo, but showing the potential to pass. Presentations lacking clarity and hesitations in presenting requirements.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- Occasionally creditable moments, but many restarts and errors so that fluency is almost completely lacking. Very limited clarity. Unable to maintain an even tempo with the scales and arpeggios.

Component 2: Performance

Step 1 – Grade 5:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- A high level of technical accomplishment, demonstrating accuracy and fluency, appropriate to the repertoire performed. Evidence of excellent musicality and interpretative ideas as the grades progress. A confident and assured performance. A secure understanding of the musical notation/tablatore used should be evident. As the grades progress, the performance should display increasingly convincing evidence of stylistic awareness and an increasing degree of expressive qualities. A clear ability to engage the listener in the performance.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- An ability to cope well with the technical demands of the music. Evidence of appropriate musicality and interpretative ideas as the grades progress. A confident performance. A mostly secure understanding of the musical notation/tablature used should be evident. As the grades progress, some stylistic awareness and expression should be evident. Some ability to engage the listener in the performance.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- Fairly accurate, reasonably fluent, but occasionally hesitant. There is some evidence of appropriate musicality and interpretative ideas. A reasonably confident performance. Significant evidence of an understanding of the musical notation/tablature used. As the grades progress, the beginnings of stylistic awareness and expression should become apparent. A basic ability to engage the listener in the performance.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- Some correct playing, but a degree of discontinuity in the performance, accompanied by technical inaccuracies. Fluency and clarity need more work in order to be of an acceptable standard. Nevertheless, some signs that a sense of musicality and interpretation is potentially attainable. Evidence of an understanding of the musical notation/tablature used. Stylistic awareness and expression are not clearly communicated.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- There may be some correct playing, but a proportionally greater number of inaccuracies, and a lack of continuity which compromises the sense of performance. Fluency and clarity are well below an acceptable standard. Ideas of interpretation and musicality are not clearly communicated. Some evidence of an understanding of the musical notation/tablature used. Little evidence of stylistic awareness and expression.

Grades 6–8:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- A high level of technical accomplishment, demonstrating accuracy and fluency, appropriate to the repertoire performed. A mature sense of musical style, and an ability to take charge of expressive elements in the music. A confident and assured performance. A secure understanding of the musical notation/tablature used should be evident. At this level, performers should communicate a sense of individual interpretative skill, in relation to the substance of the music. A clear ability to engage the listener fully in the performance.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- An ability to cope well with the technical demands of the music. A confident performance. A secure understanding of the musical notation/tablature used should be evident. At this level, performers should communicate some sense of individual interpretative skill, in relation to the substance of the music. An ability to engage the listener in the performance.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- Fairly accurate, reasonably fluent, but occasionally hesitant. There is some evidence of appropriate musicality. A reasonably confident performance. Evidence of an understanding of the musical notation/tablature used. Performers should communicate something of the substance of the music. There is a basic ability to engage the listener in the performance.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- Some accurate and musical playing, but compromised by discontinuity in the performance and technical inaccuracies. Nevertheless, some signs that a sense of musicality is potentially attainable. Evidence of an understanding of the musical notation/tablature used. A basic, but limited, communication of the substance of the music. Little evidence of an ability to engage the listener in performance.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- Inaccuracies proportionately greater than correct playing, and a lack of continuity which jeopardises the sense of performance. Musicality is not clearly evident in the playing. Some evidence of an understanding of the musical notation/tablature used. Little communication of the substance of the music. Very limited, or no, ability to engage the listener in performance.

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

Grade 1–5:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- Confident responses, accurate and well communicated.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- Generally accurate, but a little hesitant in response.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- Fairly accurate, but limited responses not showing genuine understanding.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- Various inaccuracies and significant hesitancy, but showing some potential of attaining a pass at this level.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- Numerous inaccuracies suggesting that areas of the syllabus specifications have not been covered or understood.

Grades 6–8:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- Confident and informative responses, accurate and well communicated.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- Generally accurate responses, but a little cautious and not always totally assured in terms of musical knowledge.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- Fairly accurate, but limited responses which sometimes needed prompting.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- Lacking in confidence with various inaccuracies and significant hesitancy, but showing some potential of attaining a pass at this level.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- Numerous inaccuracies, with significant hesitancy, suggesting that areas of the syllabus specifications have not been covered or understood.

Component 4: Accompaniment

Grade 1–5:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- A clear ability to cope well with the technical demands of the music: a good level of accuracy, with fluent chord changes. Ability, as the grades progress, to show effective musical instincts via the use of inventive playing. Generally secure clarity.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- Ability to play fluently and generally continuously, and to cope with the technical demands of the music. An acceptable standard of clarity. As grades progress, the beginnings of inventiveness should become evident.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- Fairly accurate, reasonably fluent and continuous, but occasionally hesitant. Clarity of a generally acceptable standard. Limited interpretation and inventiveness.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- A discontinuity in the performance, accompanied by inaccuracies in chords and lapses in following the chord chart. Clarity and invention very limited. Nevertheless, some signs that technical command is potentially attainable.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- Inaccuracies proportionately greater than correct playing, and a lack of continuity which jeopardises the sense of performance. Lack of clarity and invention.

Grades 6–8:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- A confident and assured performance which demonstrates a high level of technical ability along with a mature sense of musical style. An ability to demonstrate harmonic development and empathy with the melody. A sense of individuality during the performance in which all musical elements are confidently articulated. Secure clarity, accuracy, timing and fluency.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- Fluent playing, with a fairly secure command over the technical requirements of the music. Some

expressiveness, invention and empathy with the melody. Reasonably secure level of clarity.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- Despite some errors, a reasonably accurate, fluent and continuous performance, showing the ability to cope with most of the technical demands, but revealing only limited musical invention, expression and empathy with the melody. Clarity of a generally acceptable standard.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- A poor level of fluency and timing, accompanied by inaccuracies in chords and lapses in following the chord chart. Clarity and invention limited. Nevertheless, showing some potential of attaining a pass at this level.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- Showing significant weakness in coping with the main demands of the music, and little sign of expressive interpretation. Very limited level of clarity.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

Step 2 – Grade 5:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- Demonstrating secure aural awareness through prompt and consistently accurate, or mostly accurate, responses.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- Accuracy in most of the tests, but with one or more incorrect responses.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- Ability to respond sufficiently accurately in enough of the tests to achieve the pass mark.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- A variety of errors in responses, but showing some potential of attaining a pass at this level.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- Most or all of the responses are inaccurate.

Grades 6–8:

Distinction (85 % – 100 %):

- Accurate or mainly accurate responses, demonstrating a keen sense of aural perception and the ability to articulate the answers.

Merit (75 % – 84.5 %):

- Accuracy in some of the tests, but with one or more incorrect responses.

Pass (65 % – 74.5 %):

- Ability to respond sufficiently accurately in enough of the tests to achieve the pass mark.

Below Pass – Upper Level (55 % – 64.5 %):

- A variety of errors in responses, but showing some potential of attaining a pass at this level.

Below Pass – Lower Level (below 55 %):

- Most or all of the responses are inaccurate.

5. Regulations and information

For examination regulations, please see the Regulations and Information document on the website (lcme.uwl.ac.uk).