
London College of Music Examinations

Rock Guitar

Handbook Grade 6

From 2019

Rock Guitar: Grade 6

This handbook is part of a progressive series of handbooks, primarily intended for candidates considering taking London College of Music examinations in rock guitar. The series provides a solid foundation of musical education for any rock guitar student, whether intending to take an exam or not. Candidates must always refer to the current Rock Guitar Syllabus: from 2019.

Syllabus validity

This handbook is valid for examinations from Summer 2019.

Entering for an exam

Exam entries can be made online at lcme.uwl.ac.uk/enter

Audio recordings

Audio recordings of the pieces and backing tracks are available from lcme.uwl.ac.uk

Cover design

Each LCME Rock Guitar handbook has a unique cover design. Designers MuirMcNeil used the instrument name to create a multi-layered typographic 'seed' composition, using interlocking fonts from their TwoPlus type system. This composition was then zoomed, cropped and modified by a colour palette specific to the instrument, generating a one-off cover design for each book. The seed composition is scaled in calibrated increments, the early grades zooming deep into the artwork, the higher grades revealing more of the typographic basis of the composition. As a result, bold, abstract, geometric cover designs develop progressively in their detail and complexity through the series.

Rock Guitar: Grade 6

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Introduction

Tuning

For exam purposes instruments should be tuned to concert pitch (A=440Hz). The use of an electronic tuner or other tuning aid is permitted. The examiner will offer an E or A note to tune to on request.

Notation

Fretboxes

Fretboxes are used to illustrate the chords required at this level. The vertical lines represent the strings (with the line furthest to the right representing the high E string); horizontal lines represent the frets. 0 above a string line indicates that an open (unfretted) string should be played. The numbers on the lines show the recommended fingering.

Tab

As well as traditional musical notation the pieces within this book are also notated using tablature. The horizontal lines represent the strings (with the top line being the high E string). The numbers on the string lines refer to the frets — 0 on a line means play that string open (unfretted). Tablature does not include rhythm notation, so you should look at the traditional notation and listen to the recordings to guide you.

Fingering and picking options

Throughout the exam, it is your choice whether to use a plectrum, fingers or a combination of both; a thumbpick can be used if desired. The fingerings given in this book are likely to be effective for a wide range of players, however any alternative fingerings that produce an effective musical result are acceptable.

Component 1: 60 marks

Prepared Performances

Requirements

Performance of three pieces

Information

Performance duration

The minimum duration of the music performed is 10 minutes. The maximum duration (including gaps between pieces to change amp settings, backing tracks etc) is 18 minutes. Edited or abridged versions of lengthy pieces are acceptable, to ensure that the performance fits within the maximum duration.

Piece selection

The pieces on the performance list below are intended for guidance, but you are free to choose any pieces to perform, including own compositions, provided they form a balanced programme of music which demonstrates a variety of techniques and musical influences drawn from the rock genre.

Grade 6 performance list

Albatross — Fleetwood Mac (from In Session With Peter Green)

Parisienne Walkways — Gary Moore (from Jam with Gary Moor)

Crazy Train — Ozzy Osbourne (from Guitar Play-Along Vol. 3: Hard Rock)

You Really Got Me — Van Halen (from Jam With Van Halen)

Justin — Korn (from In Session With Korn)

Obtaining the notation and audio

The performance list provides details of publications which include an accurate transcription and backing tracks of the original artists' recordings. You can, if preferred, use an alternative transcription and backing track to those listed. Any alternative transcriptions and backing tracks must be accurate versions of the original artists' recordings, as the listed versions establish the standard of playing expected for this section of the exam.

Own choice pieces

The technical standard of own choice pieces must be at least of a similar standard to the pieces on the performance list. If the standard of the piece is significantly below that of those listed for the grade this may be reflected in the marking. In selecting a suitable piece you should refer to the main guitar parts (excluding any guitar solos) of the listed pieces in order to assess the standard expected. Where a piece originally contains an improvised guitar solo, this can be reproduced or replaced with an alternative solo that is stylistically appropriate. If an own composition is performed, the compositional element of the piece will not be assessed.

Backing tracks

All the backing tracks needed must be brought to the exam. Audio must normally be in CD format; if you wish to play backing tracks in other formats you must bring a self-contained playback unit, including suitable amplification and speakers, and be able to set this up promptly and unaided.

Performance style

Performances should be an accurate reproduction of the main guitar theme, riffs and/or rhythm part of the pieces. Own choice pieces must be rock-oriented in performance style and arrangement, for example, the performance of a traditional classical guitar piece or a jazz standard would not be appropriate for this exam. Prior to the performance commencing, you will be allowed a brief soundcheck to choose your sound and volume level. A clean or a distorted sound can be used, and you can bring distortion or other effects units to the exam providing you can set them up promptly and unaided.

Solos

The guitar solos in the performance list can exceed the technical standard expected for a grade exam. Where a piece originally contains an improvised guitar solo, this can be reproduced or replaced with an alternative solo that is stylistically and technically appropriate.

Vocals

For pieces that feature a vocal line, you may find that singing during the performance will help you to follow where you are within the song. Consequently, you are welcome to sing the vocal line while performing the rhythm guitar part for the piece. Singing will not be part of the assessment and a vocal microphone will not be provided in the exam room.

Performing from memory

You are encouraged to perform the pieces from memory, although this is not a requirement. If notation is used it should not detract in any way from the confidence and presentation of the performance.

Alternate tunings

If you wish to use an alternative tuning for an own-choice piece should be able to change to this tuning promptly and accurately, or preferably have another instrument already tuned for this purpose.

Guidance

The pieces selected should demonstrate both lead and rhythm playing techniques across the programme, demonstrating a confident ability to switch between lead and rhythm playing, as appropriate to the backing track.

Confident and good control of the instrument throughout the programme is expected, as is clear evidence of musical maturity in all aspects of the performance. Expressive qualities should be clearly evident throughout and used appropriately to enhance the overall effect of the balanced programme of music being performed. There should be strong evidence of stylistic awareness to ensure that the material and techniques being presented are appropriate to the genre of rock guitar playing.

Component 2: 30 marks

Improvisation

Requirements

Lead and rhythm improvisations over a previously unseen chord progression

Information

In the exam

You will be shown an 8-bar chord progression in 4/4 time. This will be played five times without stopping (on a backing track). After the final playing, the backing track will end on the first chord of the progression played once. Each chord progression may include up to two evenly divided split bars.

Improvisation structure

- **Verse 1** (listening)
Listen and digest the chord progression, without playing
- **Verses 2 to 3** (lead playing)
A 4-beat count-in will be given and then during the next two verses you should improvise a lead guitar solo
- **Verses 4 to 5** (rhythm playing)
A 4-beat count-in will be given and then during the last two verses, you should improvise a rhythm guitar part

Preparation time

You will be given a short time to study the chord chart and will be allowed a brief soundcheck with the track, prior to the performance commencing, to choose your sound and volume level. A clean or a distorted sound can be used, and you can bring distortion or other effects units to the exam providing you can set them up promptly and unaided.

Backing track

The backing track will include drums, bass and rhythm guitar for the first three verses, but in the last two verses the recorded rhythm guitar part will be omitted so you can perform your own rhythm guitar part. The rhythm guitar part that is recorded on the backing track gives an indication of the standard

that is expected. Your rhythm playing should be stylistically appropriate and with a feel that is in keeping with the backing track.

Chords

The following chords may occur in the chord progressions:

- Minor 7 chords: at any pitch
- Major 7 chords: at any pitch
- Diminished 7 chords: at any pitch
- Dominant 7 sus4 chords: at any pitch

In addition, any chords introduced at previous grades may also occur.

Fingerboard positions

The chords that occur at this grade have been notated with a root note of C, but all of the chord shapes are transpositional, meaning the shapes can be moved up or down the fretboard to any pitch without the need to change fingering. In order to avoid large fretboard shifts, two shapes are provided for each chord, however there are numerous ways of playing these chords and any alternative fingerings or fingerboard positions are acceptable. When playing the chord progressions, you should carefully select which position to play each chord in so as to avoid large cumbersome shifts up or down the fretboard.

Scales

In order to improvise a lead guitar solo accurately and effectively, you will need to learn a range of appropriate scales upon which to base your improvisation. For exam purposes the first chord in the progression will be the key chord and will indicate the scales that would generally be best to use for improvising a lead solo. Although other scale options and improvisation approaches are acceptable, the following scales will provide a core foundation for improvisation at the appropriate level of technical development:

- Natural minor
- Pentatonic minor
- Blues
- Major
- Pentatonic major

Scale shapes

The core scales for this grade are shown at the end of this chapter with a keynote of C. As all of the shapes are transpositional they can be moved up or down the fretboard to any key without the need to change fingering. A good working knowledge of the fretboard is expected, demonstrated by fluent movement between positions when improvising.

Fingerboard positions

Five different fretboard fingerings are illustrated for each scale type. Finger numbers in brackets are scale notes that are either above or below the scale octave, but which may still prove very useful in improvisation. Use of three of the provided fretboard positions for a particular scale type is expected for the lead improvisation section. When selecting which fretboard positions to use, you should consider which positions will work well with each other, and which are

readily accessible in suitable fret positions in the required key. Although the use of only three fretboard positions is expected, you are encouraged to familiarise yourself with all the scale fingerings shown in order to develop your knowledge of the fretboard and also to explore the most effective positions for different keys, musical styles and techniques.

Choice of scales

The examiner will not provide any advice regarding identifying the key or guidance on which scale to use. However, for the purposes of this exam grade, bear in mind the following:

- If the starting chord is minor, then a natural minor or pentatonic minor scale (with the same starting pitch) could be used.
- If the starting chord is major, then a major or pentatonic major scale (with the same starting pitch) could be used.
- If the progression starts with a dominant 7 chord, then a blues scale (with the same starting pitch) could be used.
- If the progression starts with a fifth chord, then a blues scale or pentatonic minor scale (with the same starting pitch) could be used.

Arpeggios and chord tones

Some practical demonstration of the use of arpeggios is expected by this grade. You should also demonstrate some harmonic awareness through your playing, so that your choice of notes relates well to the accompanying chords. For instance, over a C major 7th chord you may wish to play (and perhaps start or end a phrase with) any of the following notes: C, E, G or B — these being the notes that make up that chord.

Sample tests

Included at the end of this chapter are examples of the style and standard of the tests that will be given at this grade. Below each chart are suggestions of scales and arpeggios that could be used for improvisation. These are given for guidance in this book; they will not appear in the examination. Audio recordings of these, with backing tracks in the style of those that will be used in the exam, can be downloaded from the LCME website.

Guidance

Performance advice

The examiner will be looking for accuracy and confidence in the execution, with a high level of clarity and fluency. There should be clear evidence of stylistic interpretation, inventiveness and creativity that is maintained throughout the track. Dynamic markings are not included, to enable you to display your own dynamic interpretation.

Lead playing techniques

The improvised solo should be accurate in terms of note selection and timing in relation to the accompaniment with well-defined melodic phrasing and shaping. The use of specialist techniques such as string bending, vibrato, slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs), slides, tapping and sweep-picking should be used to enhance the musical performance, and use of at least some of these techniques is

expected to be demonstrated. Keep an awareness of where you are in the chord chart during the lead section, so that the 4-beat count-in to commence your rhythm playing doesn't take you by surprise — the examiner will not restart the backing track once it is underway.

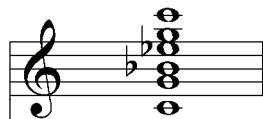
Rhythm playing techniques

Effective and creative rhythmic variations are expected. Where it would enhance the performance, use of rhythmic techniques such as palm-muting, 'ghost-strums', staccato, accents, chord arpeggiation and chord slides (sliding a chord shape from a higher or lower fret position) are encouraged. On some chord changes the beat may be 'anticipated' (playing the chord slightly ahead of the beat to create a rhythmic accent and sense of movement). When switching to rhythm playing, consider quickly adjusting the volume and/or tone on your guitar, as the settings you have used for lead playing may overpower the accompaniment if used for rhythm playing.

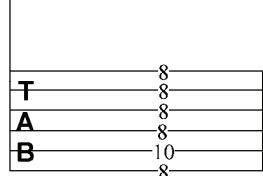
Chords

Cm7

root on E string

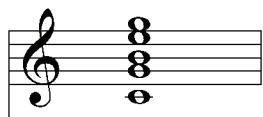


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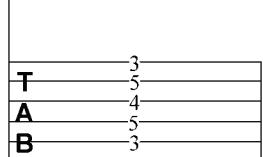


Cmaj7

root on A string



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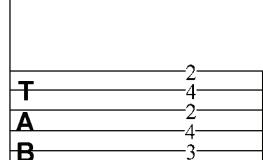


C°7

root on A string



2fr.

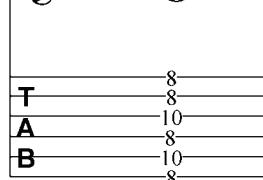


C7sus4

root on E string

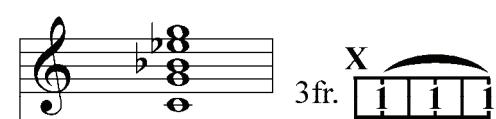


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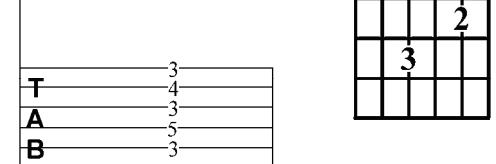


Cm7

root on A string

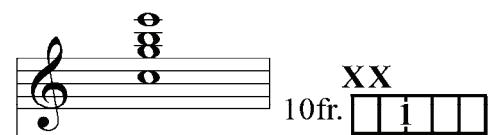


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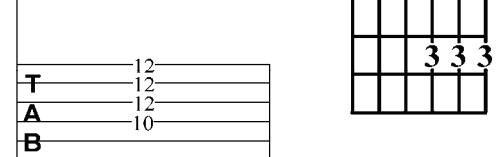


Cmaj7

root on D string

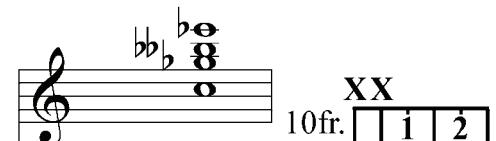


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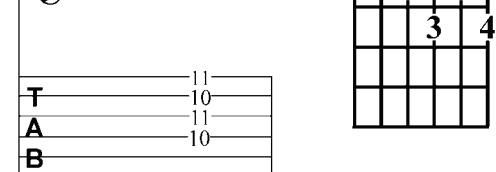


C°7

root on D string

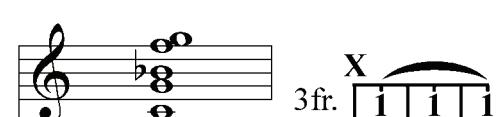


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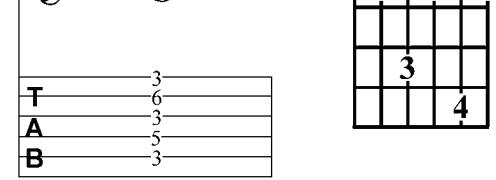


C7sus4

root on A string

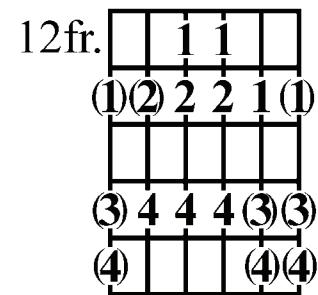
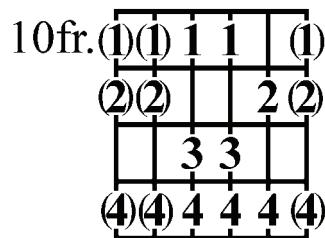
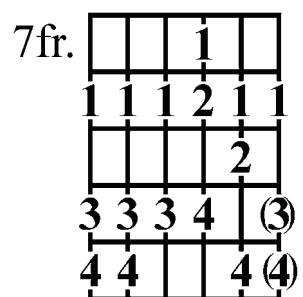
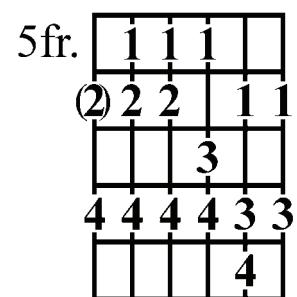
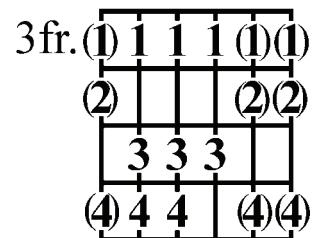


3fr.

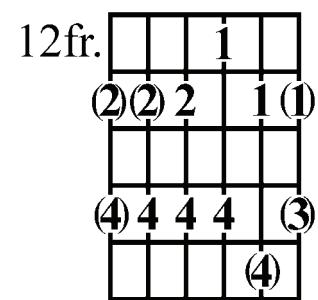
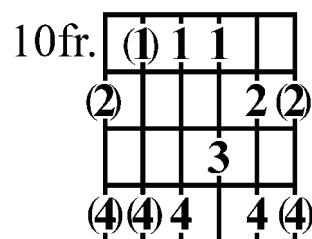
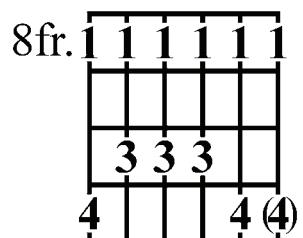
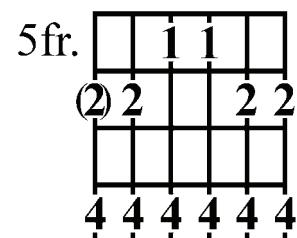
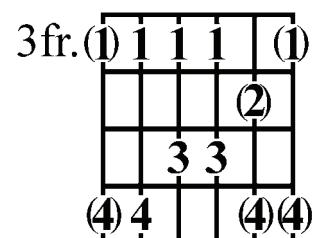


Scales

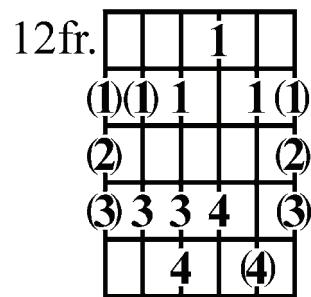
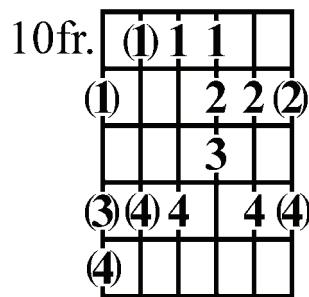
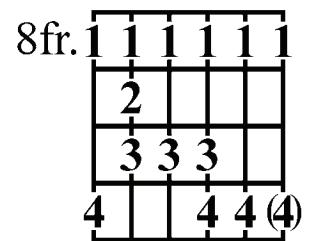
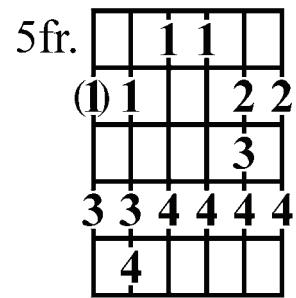
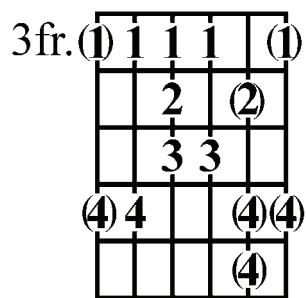
C natural minor



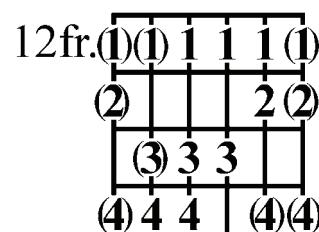
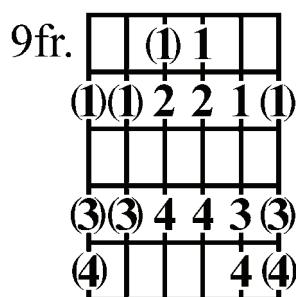
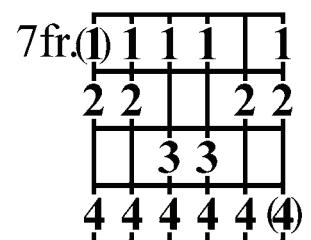
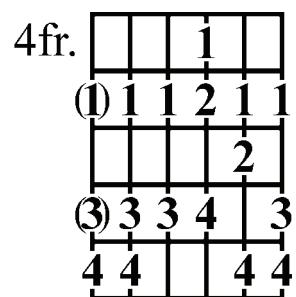
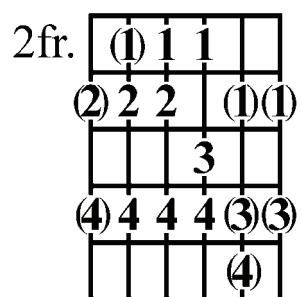
C pentatonic minor



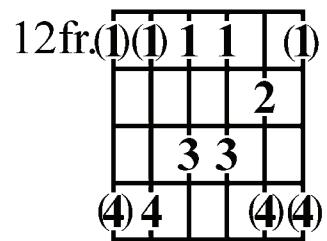
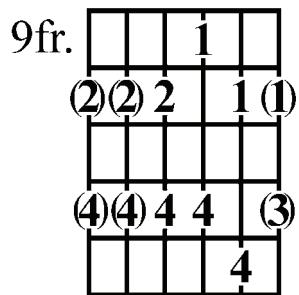
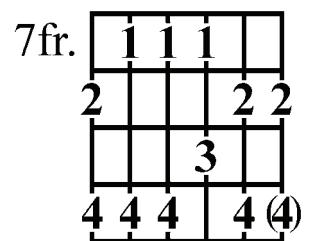
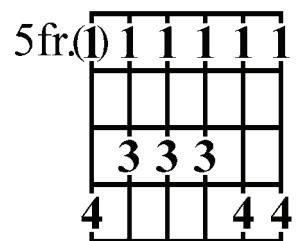
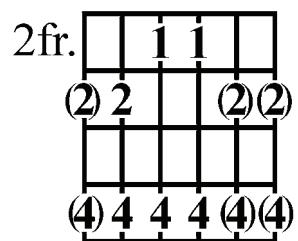
C blues



C major

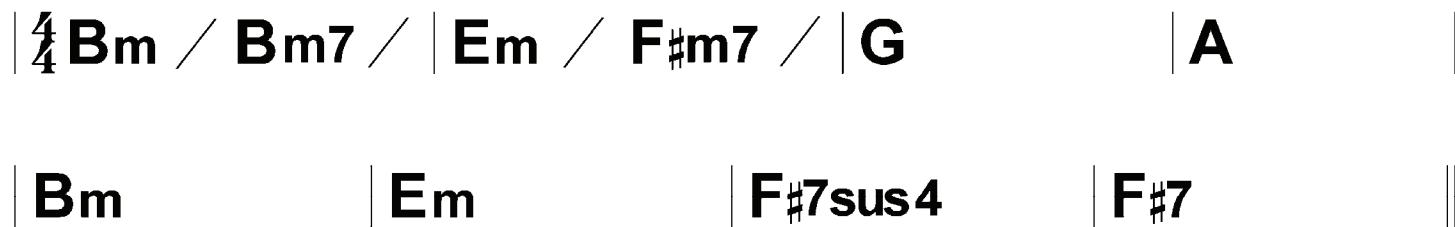


C pentatonic major



Sample tests

Example 1

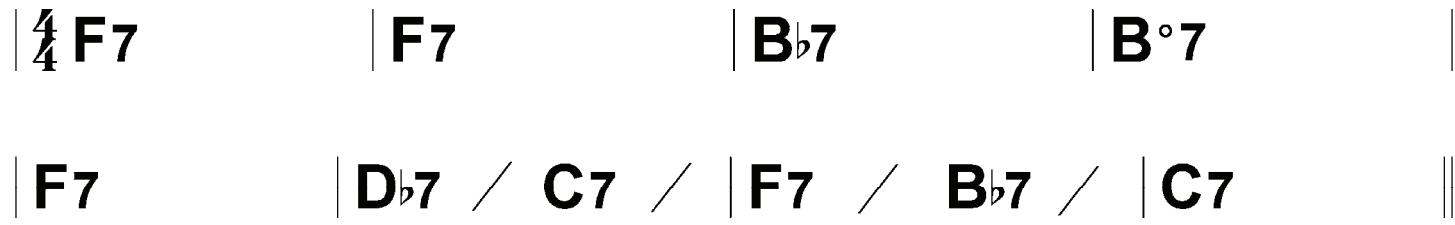


4 Bm / Bm7 / Em / F#m7 / G | A ||

Bm | Em | F#7sus4 | F#7 ||

- B natural minor scale could be used to improvise over this progression.
- One or more chord tones from the F#7 arpeggio (F# A# C# E) could be used over the F#7 chord — particularly the A# note (which doesn't occur in the B natural minor scale).

Example 2

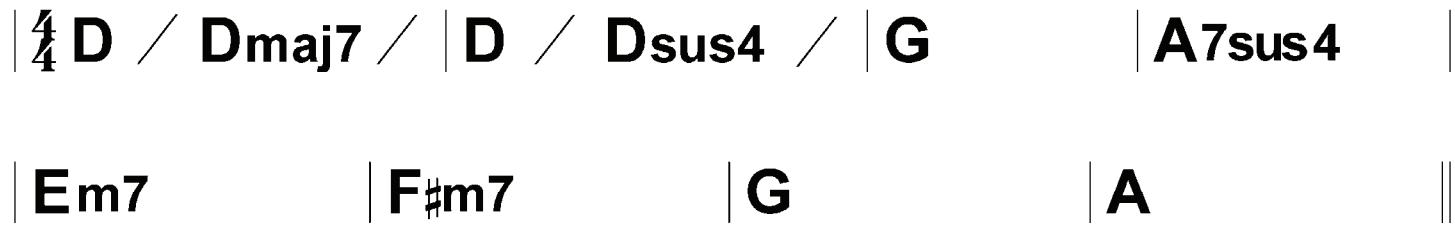


4 F7 | F7 | Bb7 | B°7 ||

F7 | Dbb7 / C7 / F7 / Bb7 / C7 ||

- F blues scale could be used to improvise over this progression.
- One or more chord tones from the B°7 arpeggio (B D F Ab) could be used over the B°7 chord. In addition, the use of chord tones could be used effectively over any of the dominant 7 chords.

Example 3



4 D / Dmaj7 / D / Dsus4 / G | A7sus4 ||

Em7 | F#m7 | G | A ||

- D major scale could be used to improvise over this progression.
- The chord tone note of D could be used over the A7sus4 chord.

Example 4

4 C5 / C5dim / | C5 / C5dim / | A♭5 | B♭5 |
| F5 | F5aug | G5 | G7sus4 ||

- C pentatonic minor or C blues scale could be used to improvise over this progression.
- The chord tone note of G♭ could be used over the C5 dim chord, and the chord tone note of C♯ could be used over the F5 aug chord.

Example 5

4 F♯ | B / F♯ / | C♯ | D♯m |
| F♯ | G♯m7 / A♯m7 / | C♯sus4 | C♯ ||

- F♯ pentatonic major scale could be used to improvise over this progression.
- One or more chord tones from the C♯ chord (C♯ E♯ G♯) could be used over the C♯ chord in bar 3 and the final bar.

Component 3: 10 marks

Aural Assessment

Requirements

A series of aural tests, designed to assess your listening ability and musicianship

Rhythm test

A 2-bar riff will be played three times via a recording. During the third playing you will clap along with the exact rhythm of the riff.

The time signature will be 4/4 and the rhythm may be either ‘straight’ or ‘swung’. Note durations will not be shorter than semiquavers. Ties and triplets may be included.

Pitch test

Some examples of the type of riffs that will occur at this grade are shown overleaf, with the rhythm to be clapped indicated below the tab.

The same riff will be played two further times, with a click track. A gap will be left after each playing so you can practise the riff. You will then be asked, after a 1-bar count-in, to play along with the click track, accurately reproducing the riff on the guitar.

The examiner will state which scale the riff is based on. The riff may be in any key and will start on either the keynote or 5th of the scale. The range of scales from which the riff will be derived is limited to major, pentatonic major, blues, natural minor and pentatonic minor.

Example 1 (A blues)

Music notation for Example 1 (A blues) in 4/4 time, treble clef. The first measure shows a blues scale pattern: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. The second measure shows a blues scale pattern: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. The guitar neck tablature below shows the strings T, A, B. The first measure has notes at the 5th, 5th, 7th, and 5th frets. The second measure has notes at the 5th, 6th, and 7th frets. The tablature includes downward and upward arrows indicating string crossings.

Example 2 (A major)

Music notation for Example 2 (A major) in 4/4 time, treble clef. The first measure shows a major scale pattern: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. The second measure shows a major scale pattern: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. The guitar neck tablature below shows the strings T, A, B. The first measure has notes at the 5th, 5th, 4th, and 5th frets. The second measure has notes at the 5th, 4th, 5th, 4th, and 7th frets. The tablature includes downward and upward arrows indicating string crossings.

Example 3 (F pentatonic minor)

Music notation for Example 3 (F pentatonic minor) in 4/4 time, treble clef. The first measure shows a pentatonic minor scale pattern: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7. The second measure shows a pentatonic minor scale pattern: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7. The guitar neck tablature below shows the strings T, A, B. The first measure has notes at the 3rd, 3rd, and 1st frets. The second measure has notes at the 1st, 1st, and 4th frets. The tablature includes downward and upward arrows indicating string crossings.

Example 4 (C pentatonic major)

Music notation for Example 4 (C pentatonic major) in 4/4 time, treble clef. The first measure shows a pentatonic major scale pattern: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7. The second measure shows a pentatonic major scale pattern: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7. The guitar neck tablature below shows the strings T, A, B. The first measure has notes at the 8th, 5th, 7th, and 5th frets. The second measure has notes at the 5th, 7th, 5th, 7th, and 5th frets. The tablature includes downward and upward arrows indicating string crossings.

Chord recognition

A 4-bar chord progression will be played four times, using a simple strumming rhythm. During the fourth playing you will play along, accurately reproducing the chords. During the first three playings you can practise, but will only be assessed during the fourth playing. You do not need to play the chords in the same positions as on the recording, nor copy the exact rhythm of the strumming provided the overall timing is secure — the assessment will focus on the accurate reproduction of the chord pitches. You may also be asked to name any or all of the chords in the progression.

The examiner will state the key and the progression will start on the key chord. The chord progression will be in the key of either A minor, D minor or E minor. The range of chords that might appear in each progression is as follows:

- A minor: Am Dm Em F G
- D minor: Dm Gm Am B♭ C
- E minor: Em Am Bm C D

There will be one chord per bar.

Below are examples of the type of chord progressions that will occur at this grade in the chord recognition tests.

Example 1

| **4 Am** | **Dm** | **F** | **G** ||

Example 2

| **4 Dm** | **B♭** | **C** | **Gm** ||

Example 3

| **4 Em** | **Am** | **C** | **Bm** ||

Example 4

| **4 Am** | **G** | **Em** | **F** ||

Example 5

| **4 Dm** | **Am** | **Gm** | **C** ||

Example 6

| **4 Em** | **C** | **D** | **Bm** ||