
London College of Music Examinations

Rock Guitar

Handbook Grade 8

From 2019

Rock Guitar: Grade 8

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 8

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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.

Prepared Performances

Requirements

Information

Performance of three pieces

Performance duration

The minimum duration of the music performed is 12 minutes. The maximum duration (including gaps between pieces to change amp settings, backing tracks etc) is 22 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 that they form a balanced programme of music which demonstrates a variety of techniques and musical influences drawn from the rock genre. Alternative transcriptions and backing tracks for the pieces below are also acceptable, provided that they are accurate versions of the original artists' recordings.

Grade 8 performance list

Savoy — Jeff Beck (from In Session with Jeff Beck)

Satch Boogie — Joe Satriani (from Jam with Joe Satriani)

The Spirit of Radio — Rush (from Authentic Play Along — Rush)

Bat Country — Avenged Sevenfold (from Guitar Play-Along Vol. 134: Avenged Sevenfold)

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.

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, you 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 an assured ability to switch between lead and rhythm playing, as appropriate to the backing track.

Confident and secure 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.

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 seven 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 five split bars, some of these containing three different chords.

Improvisation structure

- **Verse 1** (listening)
Listen and digest the chord progression, without playing
- **Verses 2 to 4** (lead playing)
A 4-beat count-in will be given and then during the next three verses you should improvise a lead guitar solo
- **Verses 5 to 7** (rhythm playing)
A 4-beat count-in will be given and then during the last three 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 four verses, but in the last three 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 \flat 5
- Dominant 9
- Minor 9
- Dominant 7 \sharp 9

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 type, however there are numerous ways of playing these chords and any alternative fingerings or fingerboard positions are acceptable.

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. At this grade a thorough working knowledge of the fretboard is expected, demonstrated by fluent movement across the fretboard when improvising. Use of all five provided fretboard positions for a particular scale type is expected for the lead improvisation section.

Three-note-per-string fingering

A sample three-note-per-string fingering for the major scale has also been provided; you may find this useful as it combines notes from different fretboard positions and can be an effective way of shifting from one position on the fretboard to another. It also facilitates techniques such as slurring.

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.

Alternative scale options

There are a number of additional scale options that could be used over parts of the chord progressions, such as the dorian and mixolydian modal scales and the harmonic minor scale. The decision as to which (if any) additional scales to use is left to your discretion.

Arpeggios, chord tones and chromaticism

Practical demonstration of the use of arpeggios is expected by this grade. You should also demonstrate an understanding of harmonic awareness through your playing, so that your choice of notes relates well to the accompanying chords. For instance, over a Dm7 \flat 5 chord you may wish to play an A \flat note (the \flat 5th) so as to emphasise the tonality of the chord. Where a chord contains a non-diatonic note (a note that is not from the scale), you may wish to consider incorporating that note into your phrasing over the chord. You might also wish to consider occasionally using non-diatonic notes as ‘passing notes’— adding some chromaticism to your licks.

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. An ability to develop rhythmic and melodic ideas and maintain energy and interest over the full duration of the track is expected. 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 confident skill in the use of at least some of these techniques is expected to be fluently 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, 'percussive strumming' (strumming whilst damping the strings with the fretting hand) 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 \flat 5
root on E string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for Cm7 \flat 5 (root on E string) at 7fr.

Diagram shows fingerings: 2, 3, 4, 1. X marks are present at the 7th fret of the 1st and 5th strings.

T	7
A	8
B	8

Cm7 \flat 5
root on A string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for Cm7 \flat 5 (root on A string) at 3fr.

Diagram shows fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4. X marks are present at the 3rd fret of the 1st and 5th strings.

T	4
A	3
B	3

C9
root on E string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C9 (root on E string) at 7fr.

Diagram shows fingerings: 1, 1, 3, 4. X mark is present at the 7th fret of the 5th string.

T	8
A	7
B	8

C9
root on A string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C9 (root on A string) at 2fr.

Diagram shows fingerings: 1, 3, 3, 3. X mark is present at the 2nd fret of the 1st string.

T	3
A	3
B	3

Cm9
root on E string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for Cm9 (root on E string) at 8fr.

Diagram shows fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 4. X mark is present at the 8th fret of the 5th string.

T	10
A	8
B	8

Cm9
root on A string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for Cm9 (root on A string) at 1fr.

Diagram shows fingerings: 1, 3, 4. X marks are present at the 1st fret of the 1st and 5th strings.

T	3
A	3
B	3

C7 \sharp 9
root on D string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C7 \sharp 9 (root on D string) at 9fr.

Diagram shows fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4. X marks are present at the 9th fret of the 1st and 2nd strings.

T	11
A	9
B	10

C7 \sharp 9
root on A string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C7 \sharp 9 (root on A string) at 2fr.

Diagram shows fingerings: 1, 3, 4. X marks are present at the 2nd fret of the 1st and 5th strings.

T	4
A	3
B	3

Scales

C natural minor

3fr.

1	1	1	1	1	1
2				2	2
	3	3	3		
4	4	4		4	4

5fr.

	1	1	1		
2	2	2		1	1
			3		
4	4	4	4	3	3
				4	

7fr.

			1		
1	1	1	2	1	1
				2	
3	3	3	4		3
4	4			4	4

10fr.

1	1	1	1		1
2	2			2	2
		3	3		
4	4	4	4	4	4

12fr.

		1	1		
1	2	2	2	1	1
3	4	4	4	3	3
4				4	4

C pentatonic minor

3fr.

1	1	1	1		1
				2	
		3	3		
4	4			4	4

5fr.

		1	1		
2	2			2	2
4	4	4	4	4	4

8fr.

1	1	1	1	1	1
	3	3	3		
4				4	4

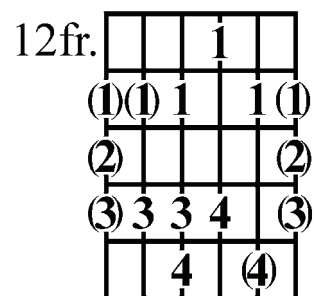
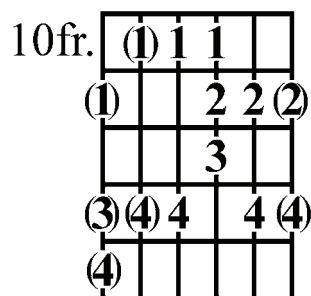
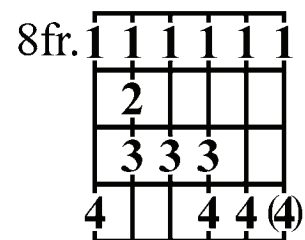
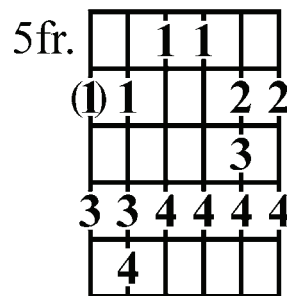
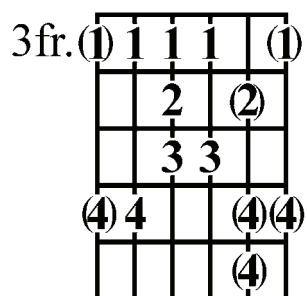
10fr.

1	1	1			
2				2	2
			3		
4	4	4		4	4

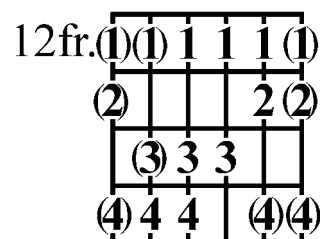
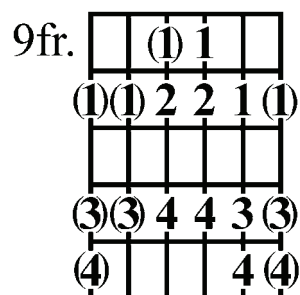
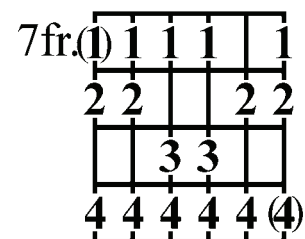
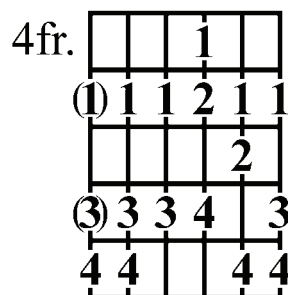
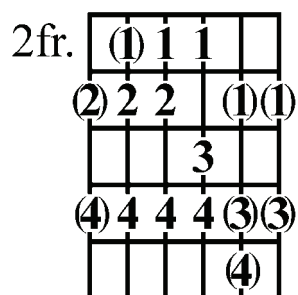
12fr.

			1		
2	2	2		1	1
4	4	4	4		3
				4	

C blues

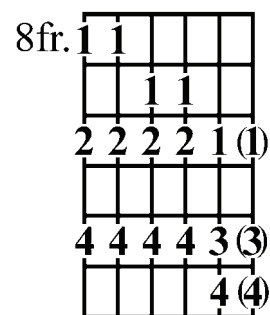


C major

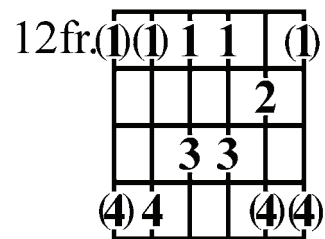
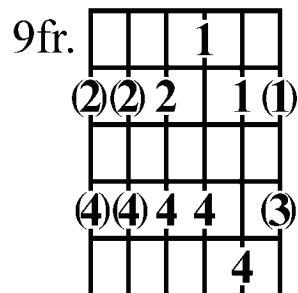
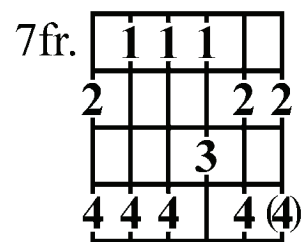
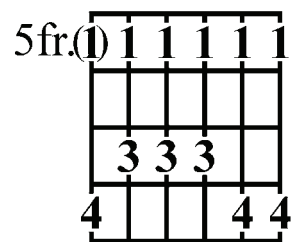
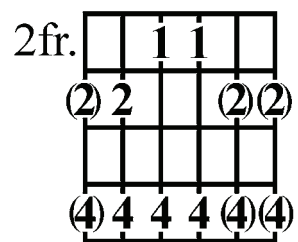


C major

(Three-note-per-string fingering)



C pentatonic major



Sample tests

Example 1

$\frac{4}{4}$ Cm / Cm7 / | Fm7 / Fm9 / | B \flat | Cm |
****A \flat** | Dm7 \flat 5 | G7 / A \flat / | B \flat A \flat G7 ||**

- C natural minor could be used as the basis for improvisation over this progression.
- Chord tones from the G7 arpeggio (G B D F) could be used over the G7 chord — particularly the note B, as this doesn't occur in the C natural minor scale.

Example 2

$\frac{4}{4}$ Bm / G A | Bm7 | Em7 / D A | G |
****F \sharp 7 / G / | F \sharp 7 / Em / | C \sharp m7 \flat 5 | F \sharp 7 \sharp 9 ||****

- B pentatonic minor could be used as the basis for improvisation over this progression.
- One or more chord tones from the F \sharp 7 arpeggio (F \sharp A \sharp C \sharp E) could be used over the F \sharp 7 chord — particularly the notes A \sharp and C \sharp as these do not occur in the B pentatonic minor scale.
- The use of differing chord tones could be used to reflect the movement between the G and A major chords and between D and A major.

Example 3

$\frac{4}{4}$ B \flat 7 | A \flat | B \flat 7 | B \flat 7 |
****E \flat 7 | Edim7 | B \flat 7 / G \flat 9 / | F9 E9 F9 / ||****

- B \flat blues scale could be used as the basis for improvisation over this progression.
- Chord tones could be used very effectively in several places to reflect the chords being played. For example, the note D from the B \flat 7 arpeggio (B \flat D F A \flat), which does not occur in the B \flat blues scale, would help bring out the tonality of that chord.
- Chord tones from the Edim7 arpeggio (E G B \flat D \flat) could be used over the Edim7 chord – in particular the E note would highlight the 'blues' note of the B \flat blues scale.

Example 4

4/4 | **A** / **D** **A** | **E** / **F#m** / | **D/F#** | **Esus4** / **E** / |
| **C#m7** | **F#m7** | **Bm9** / **Bm7** / | **E9** / **E7** / ||

- A pentatonic major scale could be used as the basis for improvisation over this progression.
- Chord tones from a number of chords could be used for harmonic emphasis within the solo, particularly within the split bars to help highlight the movement of these faster chord changes. For example, in bar 4, the note A could be emphasised over the Esus4 chord, followed by a G# note over the E major chord.

Example 5

4/4 | **F** / **F/E** / | **F/D** / **F/C** / | **Bb** / **Bbmaj7** / | **C9** |
| **Am7** | **Dm9** | **Gm7** | **Am7 Bb C7** / ||

- F major scale could be used as the basis for improvisation over this progression.
- Chord tones from the F major chord (F A C) could be used over the various F chords in the first two bars, with the additional use of the note E over the F/E chord, the note D over the F/D and the note C over the F/C to emphasise the harmonic movement that occurs.

Aural Assessment

Requirements

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

Rhythm test

A 4-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'. Bars 1 and 3 will be identical.

Pitch test

Some examples of the type of riffs that will occur at this grade are shown below, 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. Some non-diatonic notes (non-scale tones) may also be included.

Example 1 (F pentatonic minor)

Example 1 (F pentatonic minor) musical notation. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff. Below the staff, the fretboard positions are indicated by numbers 1 through 3, and the corresponding guitar strings are shown with arrows indicating the fretting hand's movement.

Example 2 (A blues)

Example 2 (A blues) musical notation. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff. Below the staff, the fretboard positions are indicated by numbers 5 through 8, and the corresponding guitar strings are shown with arrows indicating the fretting hand's movement.

Example 3 (B pentatonic major)

Example 3 (B pentatonic major) musical notation. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, and G#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff. Below the staff, the fretboard positions are indicated by numbers 7 through 8, and the corresponding guitar strings are shown with arrows indicating the fretting hand's movement.

Example 4 (A natural minor)

Example 4 (A natural minor) musical notation. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of no sharps or flats (A natural), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff. Below the staff, the fretboard positions are indicated by numbers 5 through 8, and the corresponding guitar strings are shown with arrows indicating the fretting hand's movement.

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 may be in any major or minor key. Any diatonic major, minor, dominant 7 and minor 7^b5 chords from the key may occur in the progression. There will be one chord per bar in the first three bars, but the final bar will contain two chords.

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

Example 1

$\frac{4}{4}$ A | F[#]m | Bm | D / E7 / ||

Example 2

$\frac{4}{4}$ Am | Dm | F | Bm7^b5 / E7 / ||

Example 3

$\frac{4}{4}$ C | G | Dm | Em / F / ||

Example 4

$\frac{4}{4}$ Cm | Dm7^b5 | G7 | Fm / B^b7 / ||

Example 5

$\frac{4}{4}$ D | G | F[#]m | Bm / A / ||

Example 6

$\frac{4}{4}$ Em | G | Bm | Am / D / ||