

London College of Music Examinations

Acoustic Guitar Syllabus

Qualification specifications for:
Step, Grades, Recital Grades

Valid from:
2020 until further notice

updated 01.01.2025

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1.1 Introduction

London College of Music Examinations (LCME)

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; they are unique in the graded examinations sector in being awarded by a university, ensuring the added quality assurance of the University of West London (UWL), who is the issuer of certificates. Graded and diploma exams in most subjects are regulated by Ofqual and other UK regulators. Candidates applying to UK universities through the UCAS system are eligible to claim UCAS points if they achieve a pass or higher at Grades 6 to 8 in a regulated subject.

What makes LCM Examinations distinctive

LCME's graded and diploma qualifications make a distinctive contribution to education in music, drama and communication, because of the emphasis placed upon:

- creative thinking
- an encouragement to think technically and critically about the repertoire performed, and the opportunity to communicate this in practical examinations
- a distinctively broad stylistic range of tasks and repertoire, with a strong emphasis towards the acquisition and demonstration of skills and understandings that are of contemporary relevance to the performing arts
- the provision of assessment in areas not traditionally included within the scope of graded examinations
- the provision of flexible examination formats and arrangements

Syllabus objectives

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

- a balanced combination of performing skills, supported by knowledge and understanding
- an enduring love, enjoyment and understanding of the performing arts, from the perspective of both participants and audience
- the basis to develop relevant and usable skills and concepts
- skills in organisation, planning, problem solving and communication
- enhanced ability in acquiring the personal disciplines and motivation necessary for lifelong learning
- opportunities for mastery learning that are structured and directly related to the repertoire published for each grade
- opportunities for learning and assessment that are creatively challenging
- a progressive and unified assessment system, enabling candidates to plan and obtain an effective education in the arts, equipping candidates with added-value to enhance career routes, educational opportunities and decision-making

1.2 Syllabus validity

This syllabus is valid for Steps, Grades and Recital Grades exams in Acoustic Guitar from Spring 2020 until further notice.

1.3 Changes to the syllabus

This syllabus replaces the Acoustic Guitar Syllabus (2008 until further notice), Acoustic Guitar Information Booklet (2008 until further notice) and Acoustic Guitar Performance Awards Combined Syllabus and Information Booklet (2012 until further notice). These are now combined into one syllabus. Major changes to the syllabus are as follows:

- New performance repertoire and studies.
- New handbooks for all levels.
- The levels Initial and Preliminary have been renamed Step 1 and Step 2.
- Live Performance Awards have been renamed Recital Grades.

1.4 Exam options

The following is an overview of the solo graded examinations contained in this syllabus:

	Grades	Recital Grades
Exam component		
Fingerboard Knowledge	✓	✗
Performance	✓	✓
Musical Knowledge	✓	✗
Accompaniment	✓	✗
Aural Assessment	✓	✗
Structure	Grades 1 to 8	Levels 1 to 8
Assessment	Examination	Examination
Grading	Distinction: 85–100% Merit: 75–84% Pass: 65–74%	Distinction: 85–100% Merit: 75–84% Pass: 65–74%
Ofqual regulation	✓	✗

Introductory examinations

LCME also offers two introductory examinations in Acoustic Guitar: Step 1 and Step 2 (previously named Initial and Preliminary). The pass bands are the same as for the graded examinations: Distinction (85–100% of the total marks available), Merit (75–84%) and Pass (65–74%). These exams are not regulated by Ofqual.

1.5 Exam entry

Exam dates, locations and fees

Details of exam dates, locations, fees and how to book an exam are available on the LCME website:

lcme.uwl.ac.uk/enter

Age groups and requirements for prior learning

LCM Examinations are open to all and there are no minimum age restrictions. There are no prerequisite qualifications required for entering any step or graded exam; candidates can enter at any level provided they have the required knowledge, skills and understanding.

Exam durations

Step 1	Step 2	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
10 mins	10 mins	15 mins	15 mins	15 mins	20 mins	20 mins	25 mins	25 mins	30 mins

Marking

Qualifications are awarded by University of West London Qualifications (UWLQ). Exams are conducted by trained external examiners and are held at approved centres in the UK and overseas. Candidates will be assessed on their technical accomplishment, musicality, musical knowledge and communication. In awarding marks, examiners will take into account the extent to which each of these assessment domains is demonstrated within the individual exam components; the assessment criteria used by the examiners for graded examinations is given in Section 7: Assessment. A Pass in each individual exam component is not required to pass overall.

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. Results are available online within days and will be sent by post not later than four weeks after the examination date. Certificates for successful candidates 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.

Reasonable adjustments and special considerations

Information on assessment, examination and entry requirements for candidates with specific needs is published in the Equality of Opportunity, Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration policy available on the LCME website.

Enquiries, complaints and appeals

Information on how to make an enquiry, complaint or appeal is published in the Enquiries and Appeals policy and the Complaints Procedure documents available on the LCME website.

1.6 Exam regulations

Full details of all general exam regulations are published in the Regulations and Information document available on the LCME website.

1.7 Performance guidelines

Instruments

Acoustic or electro-acoustic guitars are acceptable in the exam. The use of solid-body electric guitars is permitted but not recommended for these exams (candidates using a guitar that they wish to amplify will need to supply their own amplifier and be able to set up this amplification and any effects units promptly and unaided). The use of nylon-strung classical guitars is not recommended for these exams from Grade 3 onwards.

Tuning

For exam purposes instruments should be tuned to standard 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.

2. Summary of subject content

2.1 Introductory and graded examinations

Full information about each exam component is given in Section 4: Exam requirements.

Exam components

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

Component 2: Performance

Component 3: Musical Knowledge (Grades 1 to 8 only)

Component 4: Accompaniment (Grades 1 to 8 only)

Component 5: Aural Assessment (Step 2 and Grades 1 to 8 only)

Component weightings

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

2.2 Recital Grades

Exam components

Component 1: Performance

Steps 1 and 2: Candidates perform one rhythm study and two melodies from the relevant exam handbook. If preferred, one of the melodies can be an own choice melody of similar standard and length to those contained in the handbook.

Grades 1 and 2: Candidates perform one rhythm study, one fingerstyle study and one melody / solo piece from the relevant exam handbook. If preferred, the melody can be an own choice melody of similar standard and length to those contained in the handbook.

Grades 3 to 5: Candidates perform one rhythm study and two solo pieces from the relevant exam handbook. If preferred, one of the pieces can be an own choice piece of similar standard and length to those contained in the handbook.

Grades 6 to 8: Candidates perform four pieces. At least two of these must be selected from the relevant exam handbook. If preferred, up to two of the pieces can be own choice pieces of similar standard and length to those contained in the handbook.

Component weightings

	Performance (Rhythm Study)	Performance (Fingerstyle Study)	Performance (Melody / Solo Piece)
Steps	40%	—	60%
Grades 1 and 2	40%	30%	30%

	Performance (Rhythm Study)	Performance (Fingerstyle Study)	Performance (Melody / Solo Piece)
Grades 3 to 5	40%	—	60%
Grades 6 to 8	—	—	100%

Regulation

Recital Grades in Acoustic Guitar are not currently regulated by Ofqual.

3.1 Introductory examinations

Steps 1 and 2

The musical material selected for these grades, and therefore the standard of performance expected, is of an elementary nature. Only the most basic, and therefore most common, chords and structures are used. Melodic and rhythmic material will be 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.

3.2 Graded examinations

Grades 1 and 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 therefore 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 and 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 and 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.

4. Exam requirements

Step 1

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

25 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords and scales below to be performed from memory. Scales are to be performed ascending only.

Chords		
C, G; Am, Em		

Scales	Range	Tempo
C, G major	1 octave (ascending only)	84bpm (one note per beat)

Component 2: Performance

75 marks

Rhythm Study (25 marks)

Candidates perform one rhythm study, chosen from the studies contained in the exam handbook and prepared in advance.

Melodies (50 marks)

Candidates perform two melodies. At least one must be chosen from the melodies contained in the exam handbook:

- Blow the Man Down
- This Little Light of Mine
- Streets of Laredo
- Buffalo Gals

One of the melodies can be an own choice melody, provided it is of at least similar technical standard and duration to those within the handbook.

Step 2

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

15 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords and scales below to be performed from memory. Scales are to be performed ascending and descending.

Chords		
C, G, D; Am, Em, Dm		

Scales	Range	Tempo
C, G major	1 octave (ascending and descending)	100bpm (one note per beat)

Component 2: Performance

75 marks

Rhythm Study (25 marks)

Candidates perform one rhythm study, chosen from the studies contained in the exam handbook.

Melodies (50 marks)

Candidates perform two melodies. At least one must be chosen from the melodies contained in the exam handbook:

- At the Foot of Yonder Mountain
- Banaha
- The Penguin March
- Towards the Sea

One of the melodies can be an own choice melody, provided it is of at least similar technical standard and duration to those within the handbook.

Component 3: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 25.

Grade 1

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords and scales below to be performed from memory. Scales are to be performed ascending and descending. In addition to the chords and scales listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from the previous grade.

Chords		
A, E; D7, A7, E7, B7		
Scales	Range	Tempo
D major, A natural minor	1 octave (ascending and descending)	108bpm (one note per beat)

Component 2: Performance

50 marks

Rhythm Study (25 marks)

Candidates perform one rhythm study, chosen from the rhythm studies contained in the exam handbook.

Melody or Fingerstyle Study (25 marks)

Candidates perform either one melody or one fingerstyle study, chosen from the fingerstyle studies contained in the exam handbook. The melody can be chosen from the melodies included in the exam handbook or it can be an own choice melody, provided it is of at least similar technical standard and duration to the melodies within the handbook:

- By Nightfall
- The Raggle Taggle Gypsy
- Sloop John B
- Surfin' Cowboys

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

10 marks

Candidates will be engaged in a short discussion with the examiner, relating primarily to the Rhythm Study and Melody / Fingerstyle Study performed in the Performance component. For examination requirements see page 24.

Component 4: Accompaniment

20 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and will perform an accompaniment to a short melody played by the examiner (either live on guitar or piano, or using a recording). The melody will be played once for candidates to listen to. It will then be played a further three times without stopping. Only the candidate's performance of the accompaniment over the final two playings of the melody will be assessed. The range of chords required will be limited to the requirements set for the Fingerboard Knowledge component. The time signature of the melody will be 4/4.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 25.

Grade 2

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords and scales below to be performed from memory. Scales are to be performed ascending and descending. In addition to the chords and scales listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from previous grades.

Chords		
F, C7, G7; Cmaj7, Gmaj7, Dmaj7, Amaj7, Fmaj7; Am7, Em7, Dm7		
Scales	Range	Tempo
A major, A dorian	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	120bpm (one note per beat)

Component 2: Performance

50 marks

Rhythm Study (25 marks)

Candidates perform one rhythm study, chosen from the rhythm studies contained in the exam handbook.

Melody or Fingerstyle Study (25 marks)

Candidates perform either one melody or one fingerstyle study, chosen from the fingerstyle studies contained in the exam handbook. The melody can be chosen from the melodies included in the exam handbook or it can be an own choice melody, provided it is of at least similar technical standard and duration to the melodies within the handbook:

- Ayo Mama
- The Star of County Down
- Shufflin' Blues
- Topia

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

10 marks

Candidates will be engaged in a short discussion with the examiner, relating primarily to the Rhythm Study and Melody / Fingerstyle Study performed in the Performance component. For examination requirements see page 24.

Component 4: Accompaniment

20 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and will perform an accompaniment to a short melody played by the examiner (either live on guitar or piano, or using a recording). The melody will be played once for candidates to listen to. It will then be played a further three times without stopping. Only the candidate's performance of the accompaniment over the final two playings of the melody will be assessed. The range of chords required will be limited to the requirements set for the Fingerboard Knowledge component. The time signature of the melody will be 4/4.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 25.

Grade 3

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords and scales below to be performed from memory. Scales are to be performed ascending and descending. In addition to the chords and scales listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from previous grades.

Chords

Dsus2, Asus2, Fsus2; Csus4, Gsus4, Dsus4, Asus4, Esus4, Fsus4

Scales	Range	Tempo
G major, A natural minor, A mixolydian	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	160bpm (one note per beat)

Component 2: Performance

50 marks

Rhythm Study (25 marks)

Candidates perform one rhythm study, chosen from the rhythm studies contained in the exam handbook.

Solo Piece (25 marks)

Candidates perform one solo piece. The piece can be chosen from the pieces included in the exam handbook or it can be an own choice piece, provided it is of at least similar technical standard and duration to the pieces within the handbook:

- Planxty Irwin
- Harvest
- Another Time
- Misty Hill

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

10 marks

Candidates will be engaged in a short discussion with the examiner, relating primarily to the Rhythm Study and Solo Piece performed in the Performance component. For examination requirements see page 24.

Component 4: Accompaniment

20 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and will perform an accompaniment to a short melody played by the examiner (either live on guitar or piano, or using a recording). The melody will be played once for candidates to listen to. It will then be played a further three times without stopping. Only the candidate's performance of the accompaniment over the final two playings of the melody will be assessed. The range of chords required will be limited to the requirements set for the Fingerboard Knowledge component. The time signature of the melody will be either 3/4 or 4/4.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 25.

Grade 4

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords and scales below to be performed from memory. Scales are to be performed ascending and descending. In addition to the chords and scales listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from previous grades.

Chords		
G6, D6, A6, E6; Cadd9, Gadd9, Aadd9, Eadd9, Fadd9		
Scales (open position)	Range	Tempo
E major, E natural minor, E blues	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	100bpm (two notes per beat)
Scales (fretted)	Range	Tempo
C, G, D, A major	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	100bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Performance

50 marks

Rhythm Study (25 marks)

Candidates perform one rhythm study, chosen from the rhythm studies contained in the exam handbook.

Solo Piece (25 marks)

Candidates perform one solo piece. The piece can be chosen from the pieces included in the exam handbook or it can be an own choice piece, provided it is of at least similar technical standard and duration to the pieces within the handbook:

- A Cornish Tune
- Hobnail Blues
- The Sailor's Hornpipe

- The Open Road

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

10 marks

Candidates will be engaged in a short discussion with the examiner, relating primarily to the Rhythm Study and Solo Piece performed in the Performance component. For examination requirements see page 24.

Component 4: Accompaniment

20 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and will perform an accompaniment to a short melody played by the examiner (either live on guitar or piano, or using a recording). The melody will be played once for candidates to listen to. It will then be played a further three times without stopping. Only the candidate's performance of the accompaniment over the final two playings of the melody will be assessed. The range of chords required will be limited to the requirements set for the Fingerboard Knowledge component. The time signature of the melody will be either 3/4 or 4/4.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 25.

Grade 5

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords, scales and arpeggios below to be performed from memory. Scales and arpeggios are to be performed ascending and descending.

Chords		
All major and minor barre chords		
Scales	Range	Tempo
All major, natural minor and blues scales	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	116bpm (two notes per beat)
Arpeggios	Range	Tempo
G, A, E major; A, E minor	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	88bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Performance

50 marks

Rhythm Study (25 marks)

Candidates perform one rhythm study, chosen from the rhythm studies contained in the exam handbook.

Solo Piece (25 marks)

Candidates perform one solo piece. The piece can be chosen from the pieces included in the exam handbook or it can be an own choice piece, provided it is of at least similar technical standard and duration to the pieces within the handbook:

- Drowsy Maggie / Cooley's Reel
- Midsummer

- Autumn Breeze
- Since I Lay My Burden Down

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

10 marks

Candidates will be engaged in a short discussion with the examiner, relating primarily to the Rhythm Study and Solo Piece performed in the Performance component. For examination requirements see page 24.

Component 4: Accompaniment

20 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and will perform an accompaniment to a short melody played by the examiner (either live on guitar or piano, or using a recording). The melody will be played once for candidates to listen to. It will then be played a further three times without stopping. Only the candidate's performance of the accompaniment over the final two playings of the melody will be assessed. The range of chords required will be limited to the requirements set for the Fingerboard Knowledge component. The time signature of the melody will be either 3/4 or 4/4.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 25.

Grade 6

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords, scales and arpeggios below to be performed from memory. Scales and arpeggios are to be performed ascending and descending.

Chords		
All minor 7, dominant 7 and major 7 chords		

Scales	Range	Tempo
All major scales in three different fingerboard positions	1 octave (ascending and descending)	132bpm (two notes per beat)
All pentatonic major and pentatonic minor scales	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	132bpm (two notes per beat)

Arpeggios	Range	Tempo
All major arpeggios	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	100bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Performance

50 marks

Candidates perform two pieces, at least one of which must be selected from the relevant exam handbook. If preferred, one of the pieces can be an own choice piece, provided it is of similar standard and length to those contained in the handbook:

- A Short Train Ride
- Blackberry Blossom

- March and the Messenger
- Tabhair Dom Do Lámh

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

10 marks

Candidates will be engaged in a short discussion with the examiner, relating primarily to the pieces performed in the Performance component. For examination requirements see page 24.

Component 4: Accompaniment

20 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and will perform an accompaniment to a short melody played by the examiner (either live on guitar or piano, or using a recording). The melody will be played once for candidates to listen to. It will then be played a further three times without stopping. Only the candidate's performance of the accompaniment over the final two playings of the melody will be assessed. The range of chords required will be limited to the requirements set for the Fingerboard Knowledge component. The time signature of the melody will be either 3/4, 4/4 or 6/8.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 25.

Grade 7

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords, scales and arpeggios below to be performed from memory. Scales and arpeggios are to be performed ascending and descending.

Chords

All major chords in three different fingerboard positions

All diminished 7 chords

C, G, D, A, E major in 1st and 2nd inversion

Scales	Range	Tempo
All natural minor scales in three different fingerboard positions	1 octave (ascending and descending)	144bpm (two notes per beat)
All harmonic minor, mixolydian and dorian modal scales	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	144bpm (two notes per beat)
Arpeggios	Range	Tempo
All minor arpeggios	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	112bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Performance

50 marks

Candidates perform two pieces, at least one of which must be selected from the relevant exam handbook. If preferred, one of the pieces can be an own choice piece, provided it is of similar standard and length to those contained in the handbook:

- Eternal Way
- Promise of Spring
- The Laird of Drumblair / The Mason's Apron
- Danny Boy
- The Way Home

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

10 marks

Candidates will be engaged in a short discussion with the examiner, relating primarily to the pieces performed in the Performance component. For examination requirements see page 24.

Component 4: Accompaniment

20 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and will perform an accompaniment to a short melody played by the examiner (either live on guitar or piano, or using a recording). The melody will be played once for candidates to listen to. It will then be played a further three times without stopping. Only the candidate's performance of the accompaniment over the final two playings of the melody will be assessed. The range of chords required will be limited to the requirements set for the Fingerboard Knowledge component. The time signature of the melody will be either 3/4, 4/4 or 6/8.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 25.

Grade 8

Component 1: Fingerboard Knowledge

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords, scales and arpeggios below to be performed from memory. Scales and arpeggios are to be performed ascending and descending.

Chords

All major chords in four different fingerboard positions

All minor chords in three different fingerboard positions

Am, Em, Dm in 1st and 2nd inversion

Scales	Range	Tempo
All major scales in five different fingerboard positions	1 octave (ascending and descending)	160bpm (two notes per beat)
Harmonised scales	Range	Tempo

C major in 3rds, C major in 6ths, G major in 10ths	1 octave (ascending and descending)	66bpm (two notes per beat)
Arpeggios	Range	Tempo
All dominant 7 arpeggios	2 octaves (ascending and descending)	120bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Performance

50 marks

Candidates perform two pieces, at least one of which must be selected from the relevant exam handbook. If preferred, one of the pieces can be an own choice piece, provided it is of similar standard and length to those contained in the handbook:

- Battle of Aughrim / Cattle in the Cane
- Emma
- Black is the Colour
- This Father's Love
- Reed All About It!

Component 3: Musical Knowledge

10 marks

Candidates will be engaged in a short discussion with the examiner, relating primarily to the pieces performed in the Performance component. For examination requirements see page 24.

Component 4: Accompaniment

20 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and will perform an accompaniment to a short melody played by the examiner (either live on guitar or piano, or using a recording). The melody will be played once for candidates to listen to. It will then be played a further three times without stopping. Only the candidate's performance of the accompaniment over the final two playings of the melody will be assessed. The range of chords required will be limited to the requirements set for the Fingerboard Knowledge component. The time signature of the melody will be either 3/4, 4/4 or 6/8.

Component 5: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 25.

5.1 Information

Candidates may be asked questions relating to any of the topics listed below. The range, depth and complexity of the questions increases as the grades progress. Although accuracy and appropriateness of response are the principal criteria of assessment, examiners will also look for articulacy, use of correct terminology and a sense of engagement with, and understanding of, the music performed. The exam handbooks give examples and full details of the requirements for this section of the examination.

5.2 Requirements

Grades 1 and 2

Questions to test the candidate's knowledge about the basic anatomy of the guitar: notes on the fingerboard, parts of the guitar.

Grades 3, 4 and 5

Questions to test the candidate's knowledge of the solo pieces performed, for example, key, time signature, understanding of dynamics and repeat marks, techniques used.

Grades 6, 7 and 8

Discussion and questions arising from, but not limited exclusively to, the music performed, covering not only the topics listed in previous grades but also the selection of pieces, repertoire, widening musical and stylistic awareness and, where appropriate to the pieces performed, altered tunings, use of the capo and transposition.

6.1 Information

Candidates' aural abilities will be assessed via five tests appropriate to the grade. The exam handbooks give examples and full details of the requirements for this section of the examination.

6.2 Requirements

Rhythm Tests (Tests A, B and C)

Test A: Keeping time

Candidates will be played a 4-bar melody, twice. On the second playing they will clap or tap the main pulse, accenting the first beat of each bar. The range of time signatures and rhythmic complexity will increase as the grades progress.

Test B: Recognising the time signature

Without hearing the melody again, candidates will be asked to identify the time signature.

Test A: Repeating a rhythm

The examiner will play a short extract from the same melody, twice. Candidates will be asked to clap or tap the exact rhythm that was played.

Pitch Test (Test D)

Candidates will be asked to reproduce on guitar a short melodic phrase after the examiner plays it twice. The tests grow in rhythmic and melodic range and complexity as the grades progress. The range of time signatures and keys increases with the grade.

Harmony Test (Test E)

This test involves recognising chords and movement between chords. The range of chords and cadential movements increases as the grades progress.

7.1 Assessment domains

Assessment objectives

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to demonstrate mastery of the following.

Technical accomplishment: The extent to which the instrument is effectively controlled, assessed via the candidate's performance.

Musicality: The ability to make sensitive and musical performance decisions.

Musical Knowledge: The synthesis of theoretical, notational and contextual knowledge.

Communication: The degree to which the performer communicates with and engages the listener through musical performance on their instrument.

Coverage of the assessment domains

The following table shows the assessment domains which apply within each exam component:

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

Approximate weighting of the assessment domains

The following tables show the approximate weighting of the relevant assessment domains within each component of the exam.

	Technical Accomplishment	Musicality	Musical Knowledge	Communication
Fingerboard Knowledge	75%	10%	15%	—
Performance				
Steps 1 and 2, Grades 1 and 2	55%	10%	25%	10%
Grades 3 to 5	45%	15%	25%	15%
Grades 6 to 8	35%	20%	25%	20%
Musical Knowledge	—	—	100%	—
Accompaniment				
Grades 1 and 2	55%	10%	25%	10%
Grades 3 to 5	45%	15%	25%	15%
Grades 6 to 8	35%	20%	25%	20%
Aural Assessment	—	—	100%	—

7.2 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.

	Distinction 85–100%	Merit 75–84%	Pass 65–74%	Below Pass 0–64%
Fingerboard Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate, fluent and prompt presentation of the requirements, played with clarity and even timing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly accurate, clear and even presentation of the requirements. With occasional lack of assurance, fluency or clarity in comparison with Distinction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonable attempt, but with some inaccuracies. Inconsistent continuity affected by some errors and restarts. Occasional lapses in clarity, promptness of presentation and fluency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing restarts and errors, scales/arpeggios performed at variable and/or inappropriate tempos. Presentations lacking clarity and hesitations in presenting requirements.
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident and assured performance demonstrating a high level of accuracy, clarity and fluency. As the grades progress, evidence of excellent musicality and interpretative ideas, and, at the higher grades, an ability to take charge of expressive elements in the music. Secure understanding of the musical notation/tabature used. Evidence of stylistic awareness and, as the grades progress, an increasing degree of expressive qualities and a sense of individual interpretative skill, in relation to the substance of the music. Clear ability to engage the listener in the performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident performance demonstrating an ability to cope well with the technical demands of the music. Accuracy, timing, clarity are generally secure, with occasional lapses in clarity and fluency. As the grades progress, evidence of appropriate musicality and interpretative ideas. Mostly secure understanding of the musical notation/tabature used should be evident. Some stylistic awareness and expression should be evident, and as the grades progress, some sense of individual interpretative skill, in relation to the substance of the music. An ability to engage the listener in the performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonably confident performance. Fairly accurate, reasonably fluent, but occasionally hesitant. Some evidence of appropriate musicality and interpretative ideas. Evidence of an understanding of the musical notation/tabature used. Some evidence of stylistic awareness and expression is apparent, and in the higher grades, some evidence of communicating something of the substance of the music. Basic ability to engage the listener in the performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Some evidence of an understanding of the musical notation/tabature used. Stylistic awareness and expression are not clearly communicated. Little, or no, communication of the substance of the music. Little, or no, evidence of an ability to engage the listener in performance.
Musical Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident responses, accurate and well communicated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally accurate, but a little hesitant in response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairly accurate, but limited responses not showing genuine understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inaccuracies and significant hesitancy, indicating that areas of the syllabus specifications have not been covered or understood.

Accompaniment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of technical ability, secure clarity, accuracy, timing and fluency. • Fluent chord changes and, at the higher grades, an ability to demonstrate harmonic development and empathy with the melody. • Ability, as the grades progress, to show effective musical instincts via the use of inventive playing and, at the higher grades, a sense of individuality during the performance in which all musical elements are confidently articulated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly secure command over the technical requirements of the music, reasonably secure level of clarity. • Fluent and generally continuous performance. • As grades progress, the beginnings of inventiveness should become evident and, at the higher grades, some expressiveness, invention and empathy with the melody are evident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly accurate, clarity of a generally acceptable standard. • Reasonably fluent and continuous, but occasionally hesitant. • Limited interpretation and inventiveness and, at the higher grades, limited expression and empathy with the melody. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discontinuities in the performance, accompanied by inaccuracies in chords and lapses in following the chord chart. • Lack of clarity and invention and little sign of expressive interpretation.
Aural Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt and accurate responses, at the higher grades demonstrating a keen sense of aural perception. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy in most of the tests, but with one or more incorrect responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to respond sufficiently accurately in enough of the tests to achieve the pass mark. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of errors in responses.

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

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%)

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%)

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%)

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%)

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. The 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 sufficient 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.

8. Regulated qualifications

8.1 Regulated qualification information

The table below shows the qualification number, title, Guided Learning Hours (GLH), Total Qualification Time (TQT) 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: register.ofqual.gov.uk, for further details.

Graded examinations

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

8.2 RQF levels

The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) has eight levels plus entry level. The table below shows the broad equivalences between UWLQ qualifications and other qualifications within the RQF and higher education.

RQF Level	UWLQ Qualification	Equivalent Standard
1	Grades 1, 2 and 3	GCSE Grades 3 to 1
2	Grades 4 and 5	GCSE Grades 9 to 4
3	Grades 6, 7 and 8	A Level
4	DipLCM in Music Performance and Teaching	First year undergraduate degree module
5	ALCM in Music Performance and Teaching	Second year undergraduate degree module
6	LLCM in Music Performance and Teaching	Final year undergraduate degree module
7	FLCM in Music Performance	Masters degree module

8.3 UCAS tariff points

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) includes regulated graded music examinations at Grades 6 to 8 in its tariff as follows:

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

LCM Examinations
University of West London
St Mary's Road
London
W5 5RF

020 8231 2364
lcme.uwl.ac.uk
lcm.exams@uwl.ac.uk