

London College of Music Examinations

Electric Guitar Syllabus

Qualification specifications for:
Step, Grades and Recital Grades

Valid from:
2019 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 Electric Guitar from Winter 2019 until further notice. There will be a 2-session overlap with the 2006 syllabus, which will be valid for exams until Spring 2020.

1.3 Changes to the syllabus

This syllabus replaces the Electric and Bass Guitar Syllabus (2006 until further notice), Electric Guitar Exam Information Booklet (2013 until further notice) and Electric Guitar Performance Awards Combined Syllabus and Information Booklet. These are now combined into one syllabus. Major changes to the syllabus are as follows:

- Additional topics have been added to the Spoken Tests component for all grades.
- The level Preliminary has been renamed Step.
- Live Performance Awards have been replaced by Recital Grades. The chord charts for the Lead Playing and Rhythm Playing components of Recital Grades are now shown to candidates in the exam, and not prepared in advance.

1.4 Exam options

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

	Grades	Recital Grades
Exam component		
Scales and Arpeggios	✓	✗
Chords	✓	✗
Rhythm Playing	✓	✓
Lead Playing	✓	✓
Spoken Tests	✓	✗
Aural Assessment	✓	✗
Specialism (Grades 6 to 8)	✓	✗
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 an introductory examination in Electric Guitar: Step. 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%). This exam is 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 our 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	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
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 our 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 our website.

1.6 Exam regulations

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

1.7 Performance guidelines

Instruments and amplification

Candidates can use an electric or acoustic guitar, or both, during the exam. Amplification will be provided for electric guitar players.

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: Scales and Arpeggios

Component 2: Chords

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

Component 4: Lead Playing

Component 5: Spoken Tests

Component 6: Musicianship

Component 7: Specialism (Grades 6 to 8 only)

Component weightings

	Scales and Arpeggios	Chords	Rhythm Playing	Lead Playing	Spoken Tests	Aural Assessment	Specialism
Step	8%	12%	30%	30%	10%	10%	—
Grades 1 and 2	10%	10%	30%	30%	10%	10%	—
Grades 3 and 4	12%	8%	30%	30%	10%	10%	—
Grade 5	10%	8%	30%	30%	12%	10%	—
Grades 6 to 8	10%	8%	25%	25%	12%	10%	10%

2.2 Recital Grades

Exam components

The requirements for each exam component are the same as for the equivalent graded exam (see Section 4: Exam requirements) unless specified otherwise below.

Component 1: Rhythm Playing

Candidates will be given two previously unseen chord charts. Candidates will have 30 seconds to study each chart before playing. The musical styles are left to the candidate's discretion. The chord charts may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 of the equivalent graded exam.

Component 2: Lead Playing

Step, Grades 1 to 5: Requirements are the same as for the equivalent graded exam.

Grades 6 to 8: Candidates will be shown two chord progressions. Each will be played three times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second and third cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progressions, using appropriate scales selected from Component 1. The chord charts may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2.

Component weightings

	Rhythm Playing	Lead Playing
Step, Grades 1 to 5	60%	40%
Grades 6 to 8	50%	50%

Regulation

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

3.1 Introductory examinations

Step

The musical material selected for these grades, and hence the standard of performance expected, is of an elementary nature. Only the most basic, and hence most common, chords and structures are used. Melodic and rhythmic material should be simple. Expectations of dynamics, articulation and phrasing are limited to the most basic types and to occasional use. The repertoire of scales and arpeggios 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 hence most common, chords and structures are used. Melodic and rhythmic material should be simple. Expectations of dynamics, articulation and phrasing are limited to the most basic types and to occasional use. The repertoire of scales and arpeggios 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 which may be used is increased. Melodic and rhythmic material should be more complex. Expectations of dynamics, articulation and phrasing will extend to a wider variety of type and degree of use. The repertoire of scales and arpeggios 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 should 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 and arpeggios 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 which may be used extends to the full range of possibilities. Melodic and rhythmic material should 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 and arpeggios 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 which may be used extends to the full range of 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 and arpeggios 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

Component 1: Scales

8 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the scales below. All are to be performed ascending and descending, from memory. The use of open strings is permitted.

	Range	Tempo
Scales		
C major, A natural minor, G pentatonic major, E blues	1 octave	80–112bpm (one note per beat)

Component 2: Chords

12 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords below to be played from memory. Non-barre (open position) chords are expected.

- Major chords: C, D, E, G
- Minor chords: Am, Dm, Em
- Dominant 7th chords: A7, B7, E7

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and given 30 seconds to study it before playing. The musical style is left to the candidate's discretion. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2.

Component 4: Lead Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord progression. This will then be played three times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second and third cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progression, using an appropriate scale selected from Component 1. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2.

Component 5: Spoken Tests

10 marks

Candidates will be asked a selection of questions, relating primarily to notes on the fingerboard (based on the scales in Component 1). For examination requirements see pages 24 and 25.

Component 6: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 26.

Grade 1

Component 1: Scales

10 marks

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

	Range	Tempo
'Open' scales		
E natural minor, G pentatonic major, E blues	2 octaves	100–120bpm (one note per beat)
'Fretted' scales		
A major, A pentatonic minor	2 octaves	100–120bpm (one note per beat)

Component 2: Chords

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords below to be played from memory. Non-barre (open position) chords are expected.

- Major chords: A, C, D, E, G
- Minor chords: Am, Dm, Em
- Dominant 7th chords: A7, B7, D7, E7
- Major 7th chords: AMaj7, CMaj7, DMaj7

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and given 30 seconds to study it before playing. The musical style is left to the candidate's discretion. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2.

Component 4: Lead Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord progression. This will then be played three times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second and third cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progression, using an appropriate scale selected from Component 1. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2.

Component 5: Spoken Tests

10 marks

Candidates will be asked a selection of questions, relating primarily to notes on the fingerboard (based on the scales in Component 1). For examination requirements see pages 24 and 25.

Component 6: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 26.

Grade 2

Component 1: Scales

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the scales below. All are to be performed ascending and descending, from memory. All scales are to be played without the use of open strings.

	Range	Tempo
Scales		
C and G major, A natural minor, D pentatonic major, B pentatonic minor, A and G blues	2 octaves	126–144bpm (one note per beat)

Component 2: Chords

10 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords below to be played from memory. In addition to the chords listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from the previous grade.

- Non-barre chords: Am7, Bm, C7, Em7, FMaj7, G7, GMaj7
- Chords using half-barre: Dm7, F, F#m

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and given 30 seconds to study it before playing. The musical style is left to the candidate's discretion. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 4: Lead Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord progression. This will then be played three times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second and third cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progression, using an appropriate scale selected from Component 1. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 5: Spoken Tests

10 marks

Candidates will be asked a selection of questions, relating primarily to notes on the fingerboard (based on the scales in Component 1). For examination requirements see pages 24 and 25.

Component 6: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 26.

Grade 3

Component 1: Scales and Arpeggios

12 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the scales and arpeggios below. All are to be performed ascending and descending, from memory. Scales and arpeggios may be selected by the examiner in any key.

	Range	Tempo
Scales		
All major, natural minor, pentatonic major, pentatonic minor and blues scales	2 octaves	160–176bpm (one note per beat)
Arpeggios		
All major and minor fretted arpeggios	2 octaves	120–138bpm (one note per beat)

Component 2: Chords

8 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords below to be played from memory. All chords at this grade are to be performed using barre chord shapes.

- All major chords
- All minor chords

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and given 30 seconds to study it before playing. The musical style is left to the candidate's discretion. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2.

Component 4: Lead Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord progression. This will then be played three times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second and third cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progression, using appropriate scales and arpeggios selected from Component 1. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2.

Component 5: Spoken Tests

10 marks

Candidates will be asked a selection of questions, relating primarily to notes on the fingerboard (based on the scales in Component 1). For examination requirements see pages 24 and 25.

Component 6: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 26.

Grade 4

Component 1: Scales and Arpeggios

12 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the scales and arpeggios below. All are to be performed ascending and descending, from memory. Scales and arpeggios may be selected by the examiner in any key.

	Range	Tempo
Scales		
All major, natural minor, pentatonic major and blues scales in two different fingerboard positions	2 octaves	100bpm (two notes per beat)
Arpeggios		
All minor 7th, dominant 7th and major 7th fretted arpeggios	2 octaves	76bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Chords

8 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords below to be played from memory. In addition to the chords listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from the previous grade.

- All minor 7th chords
- All dominant 7th chords
- All major 7th chords

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and given 30 seconds to study it before playing. The musical style is left to the candidate's discretion. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 4: Lead Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord progression. This will then be played four times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second, third and fourth cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progression, using appropriate scales and arpeggios selected from Component 1. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 5: Spoken Tests

10 marks

Candidates will be asked a selection of questions, relating primarily to notes on the fingerboard (based on the scales in Component 1). For examination requirements see pages 24 and 25.

Component 6: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 26.

Grade 5

Component 1: Scales and Arpeggios

10 marks

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

	Range	Tempo
Scales		
All pentatonic minor and blues scales in five different fingerboard positions	1 octave	120bpm (two notes per beat)
All pentatonic major scales in three different fingerboard positions	2 octaves	120bpm (two notes per beat)
All major scales in three different fingerboard positions	1 octave	120bpm (two notes per beat)
All harmonic minor scales	2 octaves	120bpm (two notes per beat)
Scales in 5ths		
All pentatonic minor scales in 5ths	2 octaves	46bpm (two notes per beat)
Arpeggios		
All minor 7th, dominant 7th, major 7th, suspended 4th, major 6th and minor 6th fretted arpeggios in two different fingerboard positions	1 octave	92bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Chords

8 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords below to be played from memory. In addition to the chords listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from previous grades.

- All minor 6th chords
- All major 6th chords
- All sus 4th chords

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and given 30 seconds to study it before playing. The musical style is left to the candidate's discretion. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 4: Lead Playing

30 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord progression. This will then be played four times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second, third and fourth cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progression, using appropriate scales and arpeggios selected from Component 1. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 5: Spoken Tests

12 marks

Candidates will be asked a selection of questions, relating primarily to notes on the fingerboard (based on the scales in Component 1). For examination requirements see pages 24 and 25.

Component 6: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 26.

Grade 6

Component 1: Scales and Arpeggios

10 marks

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

	Range	Tempo
Scales		
All major and natural minor scales in five different fingerboard positions	1 octave	144bpm (two notes per beat)
All dorian and mixolydian modal scales	2 octaves	144bpm (two notes per beat)
Chromatic scales, beginning on any note	2 octaves	144bpm (two notes per beat)
Scales in 8ths		
All major and pentatonic minor scales in 8ths	1 octave	52bpm (two notes per beat)
Scales in 3rds		
All major scales in 3rds	1 octave	52bpm (two notes per beat)
Arpeggios		
All augmented 5th, diminished 7th, minor 9th, dominant 9th and major 9th arpeggios in two different fingerboard positions	1 octave	112bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Chords

8 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords below to be played from memory. In addition to the chords listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from previous grades.

- All minor 9th, dominant 9th and major 9th chords
- All diminished 7th chords
- All augmented 5th chords

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

25 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and given 30 seconds to study it before playing. The musical style is left to the candidate's discretion. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 4: Lead Playing

25 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord progression. This will then be played four times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second, third and fourth cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progression, using appropriate scales and arpeggios selected from Component 1. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 5: Spoken Tests

12 marks

Candidates will be asked a selection of questions, relating primarily to notes on the fingerboard (based on the scales in Component 1). For examination requirements see pages 24 and 25.

Component 6: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 26.

Component 7: Specialism

10 marks

Option 1: Slide/bottleneck playing or Finger-tapping or Fingerstyle (or flatpicking)

Candidates perform a single unaccompanied piece or series of excerpts (lasting about two minutes in total). This may be an existing guitar piece, a self-composition or an arrangement. The main feature of the performance should be either slide/bottleneck playing, finger-tapping or fingerstyle (or flatpicking).

Option 2: Sight reading from standard treble clef notation or from tablature

Candidates will be presented with a short melody to play at sight after 1 minute of preparation time, written in standard notation or tablature (candidate's choice).

Option 3: Rhythm guitar playing or Improvisation

Candidates can choose to perform either another rhythm playing chord chart or improvise over another chord progression. The chord charts will be of similar styles and standard to the charts given in the Rhythm Playing and Lead Playing components.

Grade 7

Component 1: Scales and Arpeggios

10 marks

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

	Range	Tempo
Scales		
All pentatonic major scales in five different fingerboard positions	1 octave	152bpm (two notes per beat)
All dorian and mixolydian modal scales in two different fingerboard positions	2 octaves	152bpm (two notes per beat)
Pentatonic minor and blues scales in the keys of F, F \sharp , G, G \sharp , A, B \flat , B and C	3 octaves	152bpm (two notes per beat)
All phrygian and lydian modal scales	2 octaves	152bpm (two notes per beat)
All whole tone scales	2 octaves	152bpm (two notes per beat)
Scales in 8ths		
All natural minor scales in 8ths	1 octave	72bpm (two notes per beat)
Arpeggios		
Minor 7th arpeggios including \sharp or \flat 5ths and/or \flat 9ths	1 octave	116bpm (two notes per beat)
Dominant 7th arpeggios including \sharp or \flat 5ths and/or \sharp or \flat 9ths	1 octave	116bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Chords

8 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords below to be played from memory. In addition to the chords listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from previous grades.

- All major and minor chords, using non-root or altered bass notes (chord inversions and 'slash' chords)
- All dominant 7th chords, including \sharp or \flat 5ths, and/or \sharp or \flat 9ths
- All minor 7th including \sharp or \flat 5ths, and/or \flat 9ths

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

25 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and given 30 seconds to study it before playing. The musical style is left to the candidate's discretion. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 4: Lead Playing

25 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord progression. This will then be played four times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second, third and fourth cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progression, using appropriate scales and arpeggios selected from Component 1. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 5: Spoken Tests

12 marks

Candidates will be asked a selection of questions, relating primarily to notes on the fingerboard (based on the scales in Component 1). For examination requirements see pages 24 and 25.

Component 6: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 26.

Component 7: Specialism

10 marks

Option 1: Slide/bottleneck playing or Finger-tapping or Fingerstyle (or flatpicking)

Candidates perform a single unaccompanied piece or series of excerpts (lasting about three minutes in total). This may be an existing guitar piece, a self-composition or an arrangement. The main feature of the performance should be either slide/bottleneck playing, finger-tapping or fingerstyle (or flatpicking).

Option 2: Sight reading from standard treble clef notation or from tablature

Candidates will be presented with a short melody to play at sight after 1 minute of preparation time, written in standard notation or tablature (candidate's choice).

Option 3: Rhythm guitar playing or Improvisation

Candidates can choose to perform either another rhythm playing chord chart or improvise over another chord progression. The chord charts will be of similar styles and standard to the charts given in the Rhythm Playing and Lead Playing components.

Grade 8

Component 1: Scales and Arpeggios

10 marks

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

	Range	Tempo
Scales		
All dorian and mixolydian modal scales in three different fingerboard positions	1 octave	160bpm (two notes per beat)
All phrygian and lydian modal scales in two different fingerboard positions	1 octave	160bpm (two notes per beat)
Major scales in the keys of F#, G, G#, A, B, B and C	3 octaves	160bpm (two notes per beat)
Natural minor scales in the keys of F, F#, G, G#, A, B, B and C	3 octaves	160bpm (two notes per beat)
Chromatic scales, beginning on F, F#, G, G#, A, B, B and C	3 octaves	160bpm (two notes per beat)
All locrian modal scales	2 octaves	160bpm (two notes per beat)
Arpeggios		
Dominant 11th arpeggios in two different fingerboard positions	1 octave	126bpm (two notes per beat)
Dominant 13th arpeggios in two different fingerboard positions	1 octave	126bpm (two notes per beat)

Component 2: Chords

8 marks

The examiner will ask for a selection of the chords below to be played from memory. In addition to the chords listed below, candidates may be asked for any of the requirements from previous grades.

- All major chords in five different fingerboard positions
- All dominant 7th chords in five different fingerboard positions
- All dominant 11th and dominant 13th chords in two different fingerboard positions

Component 3: Rhythm Playing

25 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord chart and given 45 seconds to study it before playing. The musical style is left to the candidate's discretion. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 4: Lead Playing

25 marks

Candidates will be shown a chord progression. This will then be played four times by the examiner without stopping (either live or recorded). During the second, third and fourth cycles candidates will improvise over the chord progression, using appropriate scales and arpeggios selected from Component 1. The chord chart may contain any of the chords listed in Component 2 and any chords set for previous grades.

Component 5: Spoken Tests

12 marks

Candidates will be asked a selection of questions, relating primarily to notes on the fingerboard (based on the scales in Component 1). For examination requirements see pages 24 and 25.

Component 6: Aural Assessment

10 marks

Candidates will be asked to complete a series of aural tests. For examination requirements see page 26.

Component 7: Specialism

10 marks

Option 1: Slide/bottleneck playing or Finger-tapping or Fingerstyle (or flatpicking)

Candidates perform a single unaccompanied piece or series of excerpts (lasting between three and five minutes in total). This may be an existing guitar piece, a self-composition or an arrangement. The main feature of the performance should be either slide/bottleneck playing, finger-tapping or fingerstyle (or flatpicking).

Option 2: Sight reading from standard treble clef notation or from tablature

Candidates will be presented with a short melody to play at sight after 1 minute of preparation time, written in standard notation or tablature (candidate's choice).

Option 3: Rhythm guitar playing or Improvisation

Candidates can choose to perform either another rhythm playing chord chart or improvise over another chord progression. The chord charts will be of similar styles and standard to the charts given in the Rhythm Playing and Lead Playing components.

5. Spoken Tests

Candidates may be asked questions relating to any of the topics listed below. Knowledge of notes on the fingerboard (taken from the scales and arpeggios listed in the relevant grade) is a core requirement, particularly at earlier grades. The relevant grade handbooks contain full details and examples of the spoken tests.

Step

- Notes on the fingerboard (selected from the scales set in Component 1)
- Basic anatomy of the guitar

Grade 1

- Notes on the fingerboard (selected from the scales set in Component 1)
- Fretting-hand positioning and fluency when picking the strings
- Anatomy, mechanism and basic techniques of the instrument
- Rudimentary, practical understanding of the use of the basic functions on an amplifier

Grade 2

- As for the previous grade, but in greater range and detail
- Understanding of the practical application of controls on an amplifier

Grade 3

- Notes on the fingerboard up to the 12th fret, including knowledge of all major and minor arpeggios
- Knowledge of the instrument, including anatomy, tone production, methods of achieving clarity and fluency
- Basic knowledge of the types of guitar effects

Grade 4

- Notes on the fingerboard up to the 15th fret, including knowledge of all the scales and arpeggios set in Component 1
- Knowledge of the instrument as for the previous grade, but in greater detail and extended to include methods of guitar tuning and string replacement
- Practical understanding of using guitar effects pedals

Grade 5

- Naming intervals from major scales
- Identifying any note on the fingerboard
- Knowledge of the ways in which the tone can be varied on the guitar
- Application of scales and arpeggios, including knowledge of which chords occur in each key
- Knowledge of the instrument as for the previous grade, but in greater depth and detail
- Secure knowledge of the main types of effects pedal

Grade 6

- As for the previous grade, but in greater range and depth and extended to include application of extended chords
- Knowledge of the different categories of effects pedals and types of pedals that fall under each heading

Grade 7

- As for the previous grade, but in greater depth and detail and extended to include an in-depth knowledge of chord relationships and keys, application of altered chords and chromatic intervals
- Knowledge of the qualities, characteristics and common controls of different effects pedals, and an understanding of how the sound is altered by different pedals
- Awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of valve and transistor amps

Grade 8

- As for the previous grade, but in greater depth and range and extended to include chord construction, transposition and application of extended chords.
- Practical understanding of the different categories of effects pedal, and an understanding of how to 'chain' guitar effects.
- Awareness of the pros and cons of using a guitar effects processor compared to individual pedals

6. Aural Assessment

Candidates' aural abilities will be assessed via tests appropriate to the grade, which may include some of the following:

- Repetition of rhythms
- Repetition of melodic phrases
- Keeping time, and (from Grade 4 onwards) recognition of time signature
- Pitch tests (including recognition of intervals and scale types)
- Harmony tests, involving recognition of chord types or (from Grade 7 onwards) cadences

The relevant grade handbooks contain full details and examples of the aural assessment tests.

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
Scales and Arpeggios	✓	✓	✓	
Chords	✓	✓	✓	
Rhythm Playing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lead Playing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spoken Tests			✓	
Aural Assessment			✓	
Specialism (Grades 6 to 8)	✓	✓	✓	✓

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
Scales and Arpeggios				
Step, Grades 1 to 8	75%	10%	15%	
Chords				
Step, Grades 1 to 8	80%	5%	15%	
Rhythm Playing				
Step, Grades 1 and 2	55%	10%	25%	10%
Grades 3 to 5	45%	15%	25%	15%
Grades 6 to 8	35%	20%	25%	20%
Lead Playing				
Step, Grades 1 and 2	55%	10%	25%	10%
Grades 3 to 5	45%	15%	25%	15%
Grades 6 to 8	35%	20%	25%	20%

Spoken Tests				
Step, Grades 1 to 8				100%
Aural Assessment				
Step, Grades 1 to 8				100%
Specialism (Grades 6 to 8)				
Grades 6 to 8	25%	25%	25%	25%

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%
Scales and Arpeggios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate and fluent presentation of all the requirements, played with clarity and even timing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly accurate, clear and even, with occasional lack of assurance, fluency or clarity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some inaccuracies Inconsistent continuity affected by errors and restarts. Inappropriate or inconsistent tempo. Lapses in clarity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing restarts and errors and at a variable and/or inappropriate tempo. Presentations lacking clarity.
Chords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate and confident presentation of all the requirements, played with clarity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly accurate and clear, but with occasional lapses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some inaccuracies. Continuity affected by retakes. Lapses in clarity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing retakes and errors. Presentations lacking clarity.
Rhythm Playing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident and assured performance which demonstrates a high level of technical ability, and, at the higher grades, a mature sense of musical style and an ability to take charge of expressive elements in the music. Ability to correctly interpret any musical instructions, and a sense of individuality during the performance in which all musical elements are confidently articulated, and, as the grades progress, to show effective musical instincts via the use of inventive rhythm playing. Secure clarity, accuracy, timing and fluency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fluent playing, with a fairly secure command over the technical demands of the music. Some expressiveness, and, as the grades progress, showing some inventiveness in rhythmic style. Reasonably secure level of clarity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite some errors, a reasonably accurate, fluent and continuous performance, with occasional hesitations. Ability to cope with most of the technical demands, but revealing little musical invention and expression. Clarity of a generally acceptable standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor level of fluency and timing, accompanied by inaccuracies in chords and lapses in following the chord chart. Clarity and invention limited.

	Distinction 85–100%	Merit 75–84%	Pass 65–74%	Below Pass 0–64%
Lead Playing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident and assured performance which demonstrates a high level of technical ability, and, at the higher grades, a mature sense of musical style. • Ability to develop well-defined melodic shaping, and, as the grades progress, demonstrate a high level of inventiveness and creativity. • Secure clarity and awareness of tone production. • From Grade 2 onwards, increasing evidence of stylistic awareness and clear ability to incorporate specialist techniques (when musically appropriate). • From Grade 7 onwards, an ability to cope convincingly with modulations in the chord chart. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly accurate performance with an appropriate level of fluency, but (from Grade 7 onwards) key changes may be rather reactive. • Compared with Distinction, phrasing may be less well-defined and, as the grades progress, there may be less demonstration of stylistic awareness and the appropriate application of specialist techniques. • Reasonable level of clarity and tone production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite some errors, a reasonably accurate performance. Fairly fluent, but (from Grade 7 onwards) occasionally hesitant with slow and reactive key changes. • Clarity and tone production of a generally acceptable standard. • Phrasing, style and creativity rather limited, revealing little musical invention and expression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various lapses in accuracy and fluency, demonstrating (from Grade 7 onwards) difficulty in coping with key changes. • Limited phrasing, style and invention, and, at the early grades, poor scale choice, resulting in numerous inaccuracies.
Spoken Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident responses, accurate and well communicated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally accurate responses, but a little hesitant and not always totally assured in terms of musical knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly accurate, but limited responses which sometimes needed prompting and didn't show genuine understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacking in confidence with various inaccuracies and significant hesitancy.
Aural Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly prompt and accurate responses, with the ability to articulate the answers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly accurate, with one or more incorrect responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to respond sufficiently accurately in enough of the tests to achieve the pass mark. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of errors in responses.
Specialism (Grades 6 to 8)	<p>Sight Reading option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident and generally accurate in notes, rhythm and timing, with readily discernible phrasing that captures the shape of the piece. <p>Other options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of accuracy, fluency and control of the instrument. A clear sense of performance demonstrating individual musicality and expression, and an understanding of the music and style. 	<p>Sight Reading option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly accurate and generally fluent. <p>Other options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very secure level of control of the instrument, with secure accuracy and fluency, and a clear sense of musicality, expression and style. 	<p>Sight Reading option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modest level of accuracy in both pitch and rhythm, but with an unrealistic and inconsistent tempo. <p>Other options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent level of control of the instrument, with reasonable accuracy and fluency, and some sense of musicality and expression. 	<p>Sight Reading option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worthwhile attempt, but many errors and a lack of fluency in the performance. <p>Other options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable performance, but not always able to control the instrument sufficiently to ensure accuracy and fluency • Limited evidence of musicality, expression and style.

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. 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 of, and 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. Their standard of technical accomplishment on their instrument will have been judged as significantly below that required for the grade, and they will not have shown any significant evidence of musicality. Their knowledge and understanding of topics as specified for the grade will have been minimal in relation to the requirements of the grade. They will have failed to communicate, through performance, a sense of understanding or ability to engage the listener.

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				