

London College of
Music Examinations

Examinations Registry

Popular Music Theory Exams



Preliminary to Grade Eight
Information Booklet

Qualifications are awarded and certificated by
University of West London

Valid from 2010
until further notice

© 2001 & 2010 Examinations Registry
Worldwide rights reserved

Popular Music Theory exams are organised by The Examinations Registry in partnership with London College of Music Exams (one of the world's most respected music examination boards, established since 1887) and are accredited and certificated by the University Of West London. The exams are regulated by Ofqual and have been placed on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. UCAS points towards university entrance are awarded from Grade 6 onwards.

Any enquiries regarding these examinations should be addressed to:

Examinations Registry

Registry Mews
11 to 13 Wilton Road
Bexhill
Sussex
TN40 1HY

Tel: 01424 22 22 22

Fax: 01424 21 32 21

E mail: info@ExamRegistry.com

For detailed information about popular music theory exams,
including past papers and worksheets, visit:

www.PopularMusicTheory.org

W

elcome to a series of unique music theory examinations... that is designed specifically for students of Popular Music.

Regardless of which instrument you play, and whichever style of popular music you like, if you have any interest in learning about the musical foundations of popular music – then these exams are for you!

- The exams offer a comprehensive and structured approach to studying the theory behind playing popular music.
- Students of popular music can gain internationally recognised qualifications that are equivalent in stature to those available in the classical music education field.
- The emphasis is on the musical knowledge and information that you need in order to improve your playing, in all styles of popular music.

Making Theory Relevant And Practical

A comprehensive course handbook is available for each grade. By working through the handbooks, you'll learn about keys, chords, scales, rhythms, harmony and improvisation – as well as developing a broad musical knowledge (including instrumentation, musical terms and the history of popular music).

All topics are covered in a way that is directly relevant to the music you play, with the focus very much on how to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical music-making context.

Improve Your Musicianship AND Gain A Qualification

With nine examination levels available, the exams cater for instrumentalists and vocalists at every level – from beginner to advanced.

Studying for an exam will help you gain the relevant musical knowledge to enable you to improve your musicianship and level of musical awareness. It also provides you with the opportunity to gain an internationally recognised qualification which can act as a valuable foundation and access route to higher education (with UCAS points awarded from Grade six onwards).

Working towards the exams will give you an in-depth understanding of all the important aspects of popular music. Put simply...**it will make you a better musician.**

This information booklet outlines the subject content for each grade. It should be used in conjunction with the Examination Syllabus; this can be downloaded from www.PopularMusicTheory.org

Section 1 – Scales and keys

Candidates are expected to have a good knowledge of the notes that make up scales – this is essential if the scales learnt in theory are to be used in a practical context.

- From Preliminary to Grade 4 inclusive, some answers can be expressed by naming the notes in letter names (e.g. A natural minor = A B C D E F G A), although candidates who are also able to write out scales using notation (in a clef of their choosing) have the possibility of gaining higher marks. From Grade 5 onwards all answers must be given in standard notation.
- Candidates should have an understanding of scale spellings (e.g. pentatonic major scale = 1 2 3 5 6 8).
- Candidates should be able to identify or write out key signatures.

All scales and key signatures are fully illustrated and explained in the grade handbooks – which also contain sample questions and answers.

Preliminary Grade

- C major
- G major
- A natural minor
- E natural minor

Grade One

As Preliminary Grade plus:

- C pentatonic major
- G pentatonic major
- A pentatonic minor
- E pentatonic minor

Grade Two

As Grade One plus:

- D major
- F major
- B natural minor
- D natural minor
- D pentatonic major
- F pentatonic major
- B pentatonic minor
- D pentatonic minor

Grade Three

Scales to the range of 2 sharps and 2 flats:

- Major, pentatonic major, natural minor and pentatonic minor.
- Blues scales: C, G, D, F and B \flat .

Grade Four

Scales to the range of 3 sharps and 3 flats:

- Major, pentatonic major, natural minor, pentatonic minor and harmonic minor.
- Blues scales: C, G, D, A, F, B \flat and E \flat

Grade Five

Scales to the range of 4 sharps and 4 flats:

- Major, pentatonic major, natural minor, pentatonic minor and harmonic minor.
- Blues scales: C, G, D, A, E, F, B \flat , E \flat and A \flat .
- Dorian modal scales: D, A, E, B, F \sharp , G, C, F and B \flat .
- Mixolydian modal scales: G, D, A, E, B, C, F, B \flat and E \flat .

Grade Six

Scales to the range of 5 sharps and 5 flats:

- Major, pentatonic major, natural minor, pentatonic minor and harmonic minor.
- Blues scales: C, G, D, A, E, B, F, B \flat , E \flat , A \flat and D \flat .
- Dorian modal scales: D, A, E, B, F \sharp , C \sharp , G, C, F, B \flat and E \flat .
- Mixolydian modal scales: G, D, A, E, B, F \sharp , C, F, B \flat , E \flat and A \flat .
- Lydian modal scales: F, C, G, D, A, E, B \flat , E \flat , A \flat , D \flat and G \flat .
- The chromatic scale starting on any tonic.

Grade Seven

Scales in all keys:

- Major, pentatonic major, natural minor, pentatonic minor, blues and harmonic minor,
- Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian and Mixolydian modal scales.
- Chromatic and whole tone.

Grade Eight

All requirements from all previous grades, plus in all keys:

- Locrian modal scale.
- Phrygian major modal scale.
- Jazz melodic minor scale.
- Lydian b7 (Lydian dominant) modal scale.
- Altered scale.
- Diminished scale.

Maximum marks that may be awarded in this section of the examination:

Preliminary Grade:	45
Grade One:	40
Grade Two:	35
Grades Three to Eight:	20

Section 2 – Chords

Candidates are expected to have a good knowledge of chord symbols and the notes that make up chords – this is essential if the chords learnt in theory are to be used in a practical context.

- From Preliminary to Grade 4 inclusive, some answers can be expressed by naming the notes in letter names (e.g. A minor = A C E), although candidates who are also able to write out chords using notation (in a clef of their choosing) have the possibility of gaining higher marks. From Grade 5 onwards all answers must be given in standard notation.
- Candidates should have an understanding of chord spellings (e.g. C major = 1 3 5).

All chords are fully illustrated and explained in the grade handbooks – which also contain sample questions and answers.

Preliminary Grade

- Major triads: C, G
- Minor triads: Am, Em

Grade One

As Preliminary Grade, plus:

- Cmaj7, Gmaj7
- Am7, Em7

Grade Two

As Grade One plus:

- Major chords: D, F, Dmaj7, Fmaj7
- Minor chords: Bm, Dm, Bm7, Dm7
- Dominant 7th chords: G7, D7, A7, C7

Grade Three

All major, minor and diminished triads from major and natural minor scales, within a range of keys to 2 sharps and 2 flats, plus:

- Major 7th chords: C, G, D, F, B \flat
- Minor 7th chords: A, E, B, D, G
- Dominant 7th chords: G7, D7, A7, C7, F7

Grade Four

From major and natural minor scales, within a range of keys to 3 sharps and 3 flats:

- Major, minor and diminished triads.
- Major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th and minor 7th \flat 5 chords.
- Sus 2 and sus 4 chords, 5th 'power' chords.

Grade Five

As for the previous grades, but extended to a range of keys to 4 sharps and 4 flats, plus:

- Major and minor 6th
- Diminished 7th chords.
- 1st and 2nd inversions of major and minor triads.
- Dominant 7th chords from harmonic minor scales in a range of keys to 4 sharps and 4 flats.

Grade Six

As for the previous grades, but extended to a range of keys to 5 sharps and 5 flats, plus:

- All triads, minor/major 7th, minor 7th \flat 5, major 7th \sharp 5, minor 7th, dominant 7th, major 7th and diminished 7th chords from harmonic minor scales to a range of keys to 5 sharps and 5 flats.
- 9th chords (major, minor and dominant).
- 1st and 2nd inversions of all triads.

Grade Seven

As for the previous grades, but extended to all keys, plus:

- Minor and dominant 11ths.
- Major, minor and dominant 13ths.
- Dominant 7th and minor 7th chords with \sharp or \flat 5ths.
- 1st, 2nd and 3rd inversions of major 7th, minor 7th and dominant 7th chords.

Grade Eight

All requirements from all previous grades, plus in all keys:

- Dominant 7ths with \sharp or \flat 9ths; minor 7ths with \flat 9ths; major 7ths and dominant 7ths with \sharp 11ths.
- Commonly used altered bass 'slash' chords (e.g. Am/F \sharp).
- Commonly used 'add' chords (e.g. Cadd9)

Maximum marks that may be awarded in this section of the examination:

Preliminary and Grade One:	35
Grade Two:	30
Grades Three to Eight:	20

Section 3 – Rhythm Notation

Candidates should have a practical understanding of time signatures, as well as note and rest values (including correct grouping).

Illustrations and explanations of all relevant aspects of rhythm notation are shown in the grade handbooks – which also contain sample questions and answers.

Preliminary Grade

- Whole notes (semibreves)
- Half notes (minims)
- Quarter notes (crotchets)
- Equivalent rests
- $\frac{4}{4}$ time signature

Grade One

As for the previous grade, plus eighth notes (quavers) and rests.

Grade Two

As for the previous grades plus:

- 16th notes (semiquavers) and rests.
- Dotted notes and rests.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature.

Grade Three

As for the previous grades, plus $\frac{2}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ time signatures.

Grade Four

As for the previous grades, plus tied notes.

Grade Five

As for the previous grades plus: triplets; $\frac{9}{8}$ and $\frac{12}{8}$ time signatures.

Grade Six

As for the previous grades plus:

- Syncopated rhythms.
- 32nd notes (demisemiquavers) and rests.
- 64th notes (hemidemisemiquavers) and rests.

Grade Seven

As for previous grades, but of greater complexity, plus $\frac{5}{4}$ time signature.

Grade Eight

As for previous grades, plus $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{3}{2}$ $\frac{6}{4}$ $\frac{7}{4}$ $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{7}{8}$ time signatures.

Maximum marks that may be awarded in this section of the examination:

Preliminary Grade:	20
Grades One and Two:	13
Grades Three to Eight:	10

Section 4 – Knowledge of Popular Music

From *Grade One onwards*, candidates will be asked questions in three areas:

- History of Popular Music: influential popular music groups, vocalists and instrumentalists from 1950 to the present day; at higher grades candidates should be aware of the styles, history and development of popular music.
- Instrumentation (from Grade 3 onwards): instruments commonly used in popular music, including (at higher grades) a knowledge of their ranges and associated technology.
- Language of Popular Music (from Grade 3 onwards): musical signs and terminology.

Further information on all aspects of this section of the examination is given in the grade handbooks – which also contain sample questions and answers.

Grade One

A basic awareness of influential popular music groups, vocalists and instrumentalists from 1950 onwards (from a pre-set list of four comprising: The Beatles, Elvis Presley, The Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix).

Grade Two

An awareness of influential popular music groups, vocalists and instrumentalists from 1950 onwards (from a pre-set list of four comprising: Chuck Berry, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, Madonna).

Grade Three

- A knowledge of influential popular music groups, vocalists and instrumentalists from 1950 onwards (from a pre-set list of four comprising: James Brown, Eric Clapton, Michael Jackson, Nirvana).
- A basic knowledge of instruments commonly used in popular music.
- A basic knowledge of common musical signs and terminology.

Grade Four

- A knowledge of influential popular music groups, vocalists and instrumentalists from 1950 onwards (from a pre-set list of four comprising: Bob Dylan, The Sex Pistols, Bob Marley, Pink Floyd).
- A good knowledge of instruments commonly used in popular music.
- A good knowledge of common musical signs and terminology.

Grade Five

- A broad knowledge of influential popular music groups, vocalists and instrumentalists from 1950 onwards (selected by the candidate from pre-set lists shown below) together with an awareness of how their music was influenced by performers from earlier periods.

List A

The Beatles
Chuck Berry
Bob Dylan
Eric Clapton
The Who
Diana Ross
The Doors
The Grateful Dead
Stevie Wonder
The Eagles

List B

Elvis Presley
Led Zeppelin
Michael Jackson
The Sex Pistols
Little Richard
Oasis
Sting
Tina Turner
The Beach Boys
Otis Redding

List C

The Rolling Stones
Madonna
James Brown
Bob Marley
Abba
Buddy Holly
Van Halen
Aretha Franklin
Kraftwerk
Bruce Springsteen

List D

Jimi Hendrix
David Bowie
Nirvana
Pink Floyd
Spice Girls
Metallica
Garth Brooks
Queen
Grandmaster Flash
Black Sabbath

- An in-depth knowledge of instruments commonly used in popular music including: their ranges and functions; an understanding of transposing instruments; a basic knowledge of specialist notation systems including guitar and bass tablature and drum notation.
- A broad knowledge and clear understanding of common musical signs and terminology.

Grade Six

In-depth questions on the history of popular music from 1950, designed to determine candidates understanding and knowledge of popular music styles.

Grade Seven

As for the previous grade, but in greater depth, plus a wider knowledge of the history and development of popular music dating back before 1950, where necessary, and including the influence of technological developments.

Grade Eight

As for the previous grade, but in greater depth, and with a wide knowledge of the history and development of popular music throughout the 20th century, including the influence of other forms of music and the societal contexts.

Maximum marks that may be awarded in this section of the examination:

Grades One and Two:	12
Grades Three to Eight:	15

Section 5 – Harmony

This section only appears from Grade Two onwards

Questions in this section largely focus on the candidate's ability to relate the knowledge of scales and chords, from Sections 1 and 2, to practical music-making situations – such as improvisation and composition of chord progressions.

Further information on all aspects of this section of the examination is given in the grade handbooks – which also contain sample questions and answers.

Grade Two

- The pattern of major and minor triads in the key of C major.
- The technical terms for the I, IV and V chords.

Grade Three

- The pattern of triads built from major and natural minor scales, up to and including 2 sharps and 2 flats.
- The technical terms for the I, IV and V chords.
- V-I and IV-I cadences in major keys up to 2 sharps and 2 flats.
- Constructing chord progressions in the keys of C, G and F major.
- The application of major and natural minor scales in improvisation.

Grade Four

In a range of keys up to and including 3 sharps and 3 flats:

- the patterns of major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th and minor 7th \flat 5 chords built from major and natural minor scales;
- constructing chord progressions, and constructing and identifying V-I and IV-I cadences, using chords built from major and natural minor scales;
- the application of major, pentatonic major, natural minor and pentatonic minor scales in improvisation.

Grade Five

In a range of keys up to and including 4 sharps and 4 flats:

- the patterns of major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th and minor 7th \flat 5 chords built from major and natural minor scales;
- constructing chord progressions using chords built from major and natural minor scales and the dominant 7th chord built from the harmonic minor scale;
- constructing and identifying commonly occurring cadential chord movements;
- the application of major, pentatonic major, natural minor, pentatonic minor and blues scales in improvisation.

Grade Six

In a range of keys up to and including 5 sharps and 5 flats:

- the patterns of major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th and minor 7th $\flat 5$ chords built from major and natural minor scales;
- constructing and identifying commonly occurring cadential chord movements;
- constructing chord progressions using: chords built from major and natural minor scales; the dominant 7th chord built from the harmonic minor scale; and chords built from the following:
 - Dorian modal scales – D, A, E, B, F#, C#, G, C, F, B \flat and E \flat ;
 - Mixolydian modal scales – G, D, A, E, B F#, C, F, B \flat , E \flat and A \flat ;
 - Lydian modal scales – F, C, G, D, A, E, B \flat , E \flat , A \flat , D \flat and G \flat .
- the application of scales and modal scales from Section 1 in improvisation.

Grade Seven

As for previous grades, but in greater depth and to the full range of keys, plus:

- the composition and identification of chord progressions using Phrygian harmony;
- the composition and identification of chord progressions involving key changes to near and related keys;
- using chord symbols to harmonise a melody in any key;
- the application of scales and modal scales from Section 1 in improvisation, including recognition of key changes to near and related keys.

Grade Eight

As for previous grades, but in greater depth and detail, plus:

- using chord symbols to harmonise a melody which may change key (to near and related keys only);
- the composition of chord progressions demonstrating modulation to a full range of keys;
- analysing chord progressions that use non-diatonic chords;
- the application of scales and modal scales from Section 1 to improvisation, including recognition of key changes to any key.

Maximum marks that may be awarded in this section of the examination:

Grade Two:	10
Grades Three to Eight:	25

Section 6 – Transposition

This section only appears from Grade Three onwards

In this section candidates will be asked to transpose, or identify transposed, chord progressions and (at higher grades) melodies.

Further information on all aspects of this section of the examination is given in the grade handbooks – which also contain sample questions and answers.

Grade Three

- Transposing a chord progression, presented in chord symbols, up or down one whole step (whole tone) within a range of keys up to 2 sharps and 2 flats.

Grade Four

- Transposing a chord progression, presented in chord symbols, up or down one whole step (whole tone) or half step (semitone) within a range of keys up to 3 sharps and 3 flats.

Grade Five

- Transposing a chord progression, presented in chord symbols, into any key within a range of keys up to 4 sharps and 4 flats.

Grade Six

- Transposing chords, presented in chord symbols, into any key within a range up to 5 sharps and 5 flats.
- Transposing melodies up or down a whole step (whole tone) within a range of keys up to 5 sharps and 5 flats.

Grade Seven

- Transposing chords, presented in chord symbols, into any key.
- Transposing melodies into near or related keys.
- Transposing between the treble and bass clef.

Grade Eight

- Transposing chords, presented in chord symbols, into any key.
- Transposing melodies into any key.
- Transposing between the treble and bass clef.

Maximum marks that may be awarded in this section of the examination:

Grades Three to Eight: 10

General Information

Examination entries: Entries for **Popular Music Theory** are accepted only on original 'Examination Registry' entry forms – standard London College of Music Examinations entry forms are NOT valid for Popular Music Theory examinations. An examination entry form is supplied with each official Examination handbook – one of which is published for each examination level. Each handbook contains all the information required for the grade. *In order to ensure that, before entering the examination, all candidates are fully conversant with the exact requirements of these examinations the acquisition of an Examination Handbook is the only method for an individual to obtain a valid examination entry form.* Handbooks can be obtained from the Examinations Registry at the address given at the front of this booklet, or online at www.PopularMusicTheory.org

A special group entry form is available for UK registered *schools and colleges only*.

Entry dates: Written grade examinations are held twice a year (normally in June and November). Exact examination dates are printed on the examination fee list each year. These dates are fixed worldwide and written examinations are only held on these exact dates, consequently no alternative examination dates can be offered under any circumstances.

Completed entry forms, together with full fees must be submitted to the *Examinations Registry* on or before the following dates:

For Summer examinations: 1st May For Winter examinations: 1st October

Late entries may be accepted up to seven days after the last date of entry. Each entry must be accompanied by the current late fee for each candidate. No entry will be accepted if it is received at a later date.

Examination Centres: Examinations are held at London College of Music Examinations centres across the UK and overseas. In addition, examinations may be held at schools, colleges and private teaching studios by prior arrangement.

Entry fees: A list of current examination fees is printed by the Examinations Registry each year – this can be downloaded from www.PopularMusicTheory.org

Examination Appointments: An Attendance Notice detailing the date, time and venue will be issued to each candidate or their teacher (if the teacher's name is given on the entry form). This should be retained until handed in on the day.

Examination Results: The minimum pass mark for each examination is 65%. All candidates reaching this level will receive a Pass Certificate. Any candidate awarded 75% or above will receive a Merit Certificate. Candidates awarded 85% or above will receive a Distinction Certificate. A written report will be compiled for each examination. Certificates for successful candidates are issued by London College of Music Examinations. These are accredited and awarded by the University of West London.

Examination Syllabus: The information above is intended only to give some general guidance regarding some of the most commonly asked questions. *It is the candidate's responsibility to have knowledge of, and comply with, the current syllabus requirements. Where candidates are entered for examinations by teachers, the teacher must take responsibility that candidates are entered in accordance with the current syllabus requirements.*

*A copy of the full Examination Syllabus can be downloaded from
www.PopularMusicTheory.org*

Popular Music Theory Grade Books

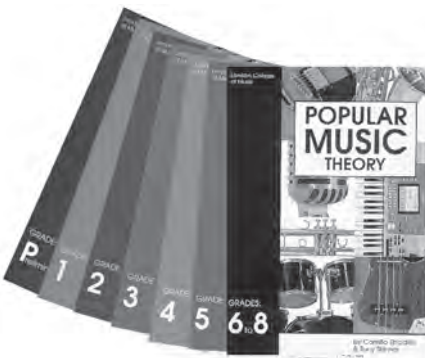
*This series of
specially designed books
covers all grades of the
Popular Music Theory exams.*

Improve Your Musicianship and Gain A Qualification

As well as helping you pass the exams in popular music theory, the series will help you improve your musicianship (whether or not you intend to take an examination).

Making Theory Relevant And Practical

All topics are covered in a way that is directly relevant to the music you play, with the focus very much upon how to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical music-making context.



The books are available from good music shops and book stores, or you can order direct from:

Registry Publications
01424 22 22 22

Order on-line at:
www.PopularMusicTheory.org

Popular Music Theory Exams

INFORMATION BOOKLET

These examinations are compiled and administered by the Examinations Registry in association with London College of Music Examinations.

Any enquiries regarding these examinations should be addressed to:

The Examinations Registry
Registry Mews
11 to 13 Wilton Road
Bexhill
Sussex
TN40 1HY

Tel: 01424 22 22 22

Fax: 01424 21 32 21

E mail: info@ExamRegistry.com

Examinations Registry

Regardless of which instrument you play, if you have any interest in learning about the musical foundations of popular music – then these exams are for you!

The emphasis is on the musical knowledge and information that you need in order to improve your playing, in all styles of popular music.

- The examinations offer a comprehensive and structured approach to studying the theory behind playing popular music.
- Students of popular music can gain internationally recognised qualifications that are equivalent in stature to those available in the classical music education field.
- The examinations are accredited by the University of West London and are regulated by Ofqual, and (from Grade 6 onwards) attract UCAS points towards university entrance.

For more information about popular music theory exams, including past papers and worksheets, visit:

www.PopularMusicTheory.org