

London College of Music Examinations

Qualifications are awarded
and certificated by
Thames Valley University

Bass Guitar

Examination Grades

Information Booklet

valid from 2008 until further notice



Examinations devised by

Registry
RGT
Registry of Guitar Tutors

RGT board of Patrons: Sir Paul McCartney,
Neil Murray, John Illsley, Suzi Quatro,
David Gilmour, Ronnie Wood, Hank Marvin,
Mick Green, Carlos Bonell, Gordon Giltrap,
John Etheridge, Glenn Tilbrook, Dave Kelly



“RGT offers quality exams you can have confidence in”.

RGT bass guitar grade 1 to 8 exams are accredited by:



Introduction To Bass Guitar Examinations

Internationally Recognised Qualifications

These examinations offer a formal recognition of the specific talents of bass guitar players. The examinations have been developed by the Registry of Guitar Tutors, in association with London College of Music Examinations (one of the world's most established and respected music examination boards – established in 1887), and are awarded and certificated by Thames Valley University. The examinations are accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), and have been placed on the National Qualifications Framework, so establishing a formal and recognised standard by which the skills and abilities of bass guitarists can be assessed. From Grade 6 onwards, these examinations attract UCAS points, which can be used towards university entrance. The examinations are endorsed by a range of eminent bass guitarists from the fields of rock, jazz, pop and blues, including Sir Paul McCartney.

What happens during an examination?

The examiner will begin by asking you to play a selection of scales and arpeggios. After this the examiner will ask you which bass pattern you have selected; he will then show you a chord chart and ask you to play through the chord progression using that bass pattern (with variations after the first sequence). Next the examiner will show you another chord chart – but this time he will play through it once on guitar whilst you listen, then you should improvise a bass line over further playings. After this, the examiner will ask you a few spoken questions to test your musical knowledge and knowledge of the instrument. The exam will conclude with the examiner testing your 'ear for music' by giving you a selection of aural assessments. At Grades 6-8 you will be asked to perform your chosen specialism.



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Examination Content

This booklet only provides an outline of the exam requirements.

Candidates are advised to consult the relevant grade exam handbook, which provides detailed information, advice and examples for all sections of the exam.

Section 1 – Scales and arpeggios

The examiner will request a selection from the lists below. **All should be played ascending and descending and from memory.**

Preliminary Grade

- a). One octave scales: G Major; A Natural Minor; E Natural minor.
- b). One octave arpeggios: A Major; E Major; G Major; A Minor; E Minor.

Grade 1

- a). One octave scales: Major and Natural Minor – in the keys of G A B C D E
- b). One octave arpeggios: Major and Minor – G A B C D E

Grade 2

- a). One octave scales: Major; Natural Minor ; Pentatonic Minor – in the keys of G A B C D E
- b). One octave arpeggios:
G A B C D E : Major 7th; Minor 7th; Dominant 7th.
In ALL keys: Minor; Major.

Grade 3

- a). One octave scales:
Major; Natural Minor; Pentatonic Minor; Blues – in the keys of G A B C D E
- b). One octave arpeggios:
Major; Minor; Major 7th; Minor 7th; Dominant 7th – in ALL keys.

Grade 4

- a). ALL scales and arpeggios listed in previous grades.
- b). One octave scales in TWO different fingerboard positions:
Major; Natural Minor; Pentatonic Minor; Blues – in the keys of A to F# inclusive.
- c). One octave arpeggios in TWO different fingerboard positions:
Major; Minor; Major 7th; Minor 7th; Dominant 7th – with root notes of A to F# inclusive.

Grade 5

- a). ALL scales and arpeggios listed in previous grades.
- b). One octave scales in THREE different fingerboard positions:
Major; Natural Minor; Pentatonic Minor; Blues – in the keys of B to F# inclusive.
- c). One octave arpeggios in TWO different fingerboard positions: Sus 4th; Major 6th; Minor 6th;
Major 7th; Minor 7th; Dominant 7th – with root notes of A to F# inclusive.

Grade 6

- a). ALL scales and arpeggios listed in previous grades.
- b). One octave scales: Harmonic Minor; Dorian Modal Scale; Mixolydian Modal Scale; Chromatic Scale – in ALL keys.
- c). Two octave Major and Natural Minor scales in the keys of F \sharp to D inclusive.
- d). One octave Major Scale in 8ths – in the keys of F to D inclusive.
- e). One octave arpeggios in TWO different fingerboard positions: Augmented 5th; Diminished 7th; Major 9th; Minor 9th; Dominant 9th – with root notes of A to F \sharp inclusive.
- f). One octave arpeggios in Root, 1st and 2nd inversion: Major; Minor – in ALL keys.

Grade 7

- a). ALL scales and arpeggios listed in previous grades.
- b). One octave scales: Lydian Modal Scale; Whole-tone Scale – in ALL keys.
- c). One octave Major Scale in 10ths – in the keys of F to A inclusive.
- d). One octave arpeggios in THREE different fingerboard positions: Major; Minor; Sus 4th; Major 6th; Minor 6th; Major 7th; Minor 7th; Dominant 7th – with root notes of B to F \sharp inclusive.
- e). One octave Minor 7th and Dominant 7th arpeggios including \sharp or \flat 5ths and/or \sharp or \flat 9ths – with root notes of A to F \sharp inclusive.
- f). Two octave Major and Minor arpeggios with root notes of F \sharp to D inclusive.

Grade 8

- a). ALL scales and arpeggios listed in previous grades.
- b). Two octave scales: Blues; Pentatonic Major; Pentatonic Minor – in the keys of F \sharp to D inclusive.
- c). One octave Natural Minor Scale in 8ths – in the keys of F to D inclusive.
- d). One octave Dominant 11th and Dominant 13th arpeggios – with root notes of F \sharp to D inclusive.
- e). One octave arpeggios in root, 1st, 2nd and 3rd inversions: Major 7th; Minor 7th; Dominant 7th – in ALL keys.
- f). One octave arpeggios in TWO different fingerboard positions: Minor 7th and Dominant 7th arpeggios including \sharp or \flat 5ths and/or \sharp or \flat 9ths, – with root notes of A to F \sharp inclusive.

Section 2 – Bass Patterns

ALL Grades

- a). The candidate should select a bass pattern from the range shown in Section 2 of the relevant grade Examination Handbook. The candidate will then be shown a chord chart (NOT one taken from the handbook) and will be asked to play through the chord progression using the selected bass pattern. During the first playing, the bass pattern should be played exactly as written. During further playings, whilst still following the chord progression and keeping within the musical style, the candidate should add variations to the bass pattern. The range and complexity of such variations will be expected to increase as the grades progress.
- b). Normally only one bass pattern will be required, however at the examiner's discretion a further performance with an alternative bass pattern and chord chart may be requested.

A very helpful series of audio recordings featuring all the bass patterns required for each grade, at both performance and practice speeds, is available from the RGT.

Further details can be found on the rear cover of this booklet.

Section 3 – Performance

All Grades

- a). The examiner will play a chord progression on guitar (or on a recording) containing some of the chords listed below for each grade. The candidate will be shown the chord progression and allowed to hear it played once. The candidate will then be asked to improvise an appropriate bass line over further playings of the progression.
- b). Normally only one performance will be required, however at the examiner's discretion candidates may be given an additional chord progression to play over.

The chords that may appear in the chord progression for each grade are listed below:

Preliminary Grade. Major and minor chords – G ; A ; B; C; D; E.

The candidate is not expected to play more than the root, and possibly the fifth, of each chord. The chord progression will be played a total of three times.

Grade One. Major and minor chords – G ; A ; B; C; D; E.

The candidate is expected to be fluent in playing the root and fifth of each chord and should demonstrate some ability in incorporating minor or major thirds *when musically appropriate*. The chord progression will be played a total of three times.

Grade Two. Major 7th, Minor 7th, Dominant 7th chords – G A B C D E. Minor and Major chords with any root note.

The candidate is expected to be able to incorporate minor, major and dominant sevenths *when musically appropriate*. The chord progression will be played a total of three times.

Grade Three. Major, Minor, Major 7th, Minor 7th, Dominant 7th chords with any root note.

The candidate should demonstrate ability in incorporating minor, major and dominant sevenths *when musically appropriate*. The chord progression will be played a total of four times.

Grade Four. The chords of all arpeggios listed in Section 1 for this grade.

The candidate is expected to be fluent in playing the root, third, fifth and seventh of each chord *when musically appropriate*. The chord progression will be played a total of four times.

Grade Five. The chords of all arpeggios listed in Section 1 for this grade.

The candidate is expected to be fluent in playing the root, third, fifth and seventh of each chord *when musically appropriate*. The chord progression will be played a total of four times.

Grade Six. The chords of all arpeggios listed in Section 1 for this grade.

The candidate is expected to demonstrate some ability in incorporating chromaticism when musically appropriate. The chord progression will be played a total of five times.

Grade Seven. The chords of all arpeggios listed in Section 1 for this grade.

The candidate is expected to demonstrate ability in incorporating chromaticism when musically appropriate. The chord progression will be played a total of five times.

Grade Eight. The chords of all arpeggios listed in Section 1 for this grade.

The candidate is expected to be fluent in incorporating chromaticism when musically appropriate. The chord progression will be played a total of five times.

The RGT's book/CD series 'Improvising Bass Guitar' has been especially produced to help candidates develop the improvisation skills needed for this section of the examination.

Further details can be found on the rear cover of this booklet.

Section 4 – Musicianship

All Grades

Candidates will be asked questions relating to any of the topics listed below.

- Musical knowledge;
- Playing the bass guitar;
- Knowledge of the instrument.

Knowledge of notes on the fingerboard (taken from the scales and arpeggios listed in the relevant grade of Section 1) is a core requirement – particularly at earlier grades.

The range and complexity of questions will increase as the grades progress.

Section 5 – Aural Assessment

All Grades

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

- Repetition of rhythms.
- Repetition of phrases.
- Beating of time and (from grade 4 onwards) recognition of time signatures.
- Harmony tests, including (from grade 7 onwards) recognition of cadences.
- Pitch tests, including (from grade 1 onwards) recognition of intervals.

Section 6 – Specialism (only for Grades 6 to 8)

Candidates should select and demonstrate skill in one of the following topics.

- Sight-reading from standard bass clef notation.
- Solo bass style of either: Fretless bass; Slap bass; Plectrum or fingerstyle.

Marking structure

The following table shows the maximum marks that can be awarded in each section of the examination.

Section 1 – Scales & arpeggios	All Grades: 15.
Section 2 – Bass patterns	Preliminary to Grade 5: 24. Grades 6 to 8: 25.
Section 3 – Performance	Preliminary to Grade 5: 36. Grades 6 to 8: 30.
Section 4 – Musicianship	All Grades: 10.
Section 5 – Aural assessment	Preliminary to Grade 5: 15. Grades 6 to 8: 10.
Section 6 – Specialism (Grades 6 to 8 only)	Grades 6 to 8: 10

0-54.5 = BELOW PASS, LOWER LEVEL 55-64.5 = BELOW PASS, UPPER LEVEL
65 or above = PASS 75 or above = MERIT 85 or above = DISTINCTION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How Do I Enter For An Examination?

You should contact the RGT office or website to obtain a current examination fee list, then you should use the official entry form included at the back of the relevant grade handbook. Photocopies of the entry form will NOT be accepted. If you have lessons, your tutor may be able to administer your exam entry on your behalf.

How Do I Obtain An Entry Form

Examination entries for bass guitar are accepted only on official RGT entry forms – standard LCM entry forms are NOT valid for bass guitar. A specially stamped examination entry form for each appropriate grade is supplied with each Examination Handbook. 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 of obtaining an individual examination entry form. Handbooks can be obtained from the RGT or any good music/book store.

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

Do I Have To Bring An Amplifier To The Examination?

No. The examiner will provide a small amplifier, however if you wish to bring your own amplifier (particularly at higher grades) this may be possible providing you can set it up promptly and unaided.

Can I Enter Straight For Grade 8?

Yes. Candidates may enter for any examination without having taken any preceding examination. In other words, you *don't* need to have taken Grade 1 to enter for Grade 2. However, it is recommended that you work through all the handbooks to ensure that you develop your playing in a structured and comprehensive way.

Can I Enter More Than One Examination At The Same Session?

Yes. For example, you could take Grade 2 followed by Grade 3 on the same day.

Do I Need To have Lessons With An RGT Tutor Before I Can Enter An Examination?

No, you can enter whether you have a tutor or not – however tuition from an experienced tutor would undoubtedly prove helpful in preparing for an examination.

Do I Have To Use The Fingering Given In The Examination Handbooks?

No. The Handbooks give fingering for general guidance only. Alternative systematic and effective fingerings will also be acceptable.

What Do I Get When I Pass?

If you obtain the 65% pass mark you will be awarded an official Thames Valley University / London College of Music Examinations Certificate for the relevant grade. This holds the same validity, as those issued for classical music examinations. If you achieve 75% you will be awarded a Merit certificate. If you obtain 85% you will be awarded a Distinction certificate.

When Do Examinations Take Place?

In the UK examinations are held 3 times a year. The entry deadlines are: 1st February for the March/April exams; 1st May for the June/July exams; 1st October for the November/December exams.

Do I Have To Live In The UK?

No. Examinations take place in many countries across the world. Special arrangements apply to overseas examinations, and candidates should contact the LCM Exams head office (or the local representative) prior to submitting an examination entry.

Where Are Examinations Held?

Examinations are held in a wide variety of venues. These may include rooms in schools, colleges, teachers' houses, examiners' houses, rehearsal studios, guitar centres, arts centres and community halls.

Will I Have To Travel Far?

Not normally. There are several hundred examination centres spread widely across the UK. You will be assigned to the centre operating nearest to your home address, usually within one hour travelling distance. Whether a centre is operating in a particular session depends entirely upon the numbers of entrants from that area.

When The Exam Is Finished Will The Examiner Tell Me If I've Passed?

No. After the examination the examiner will write a full examination report for you. The report will highlight your strengths and weaknesses, and list the marks awarded for each section. This will normally be sent to you within 8 weeks. If you have passed, the certificate will follow within 16 weeks. If you have been entered by your tutor, or if you have given the name of your tutor on your entry form, then all documentation will be sent direct to your tutor.

It is recommended that candidates read the full Examination Syllabus. This can be obtained free of charge by contacting London College of Music Examinations on 020 8231 2364, or it can be downloaded from www.RGT.org.

Bass Guitar Examination Handbooks

"These books form a series that is widely recognised as the most well-structured and fully comprehensive method of studying the bass guitar."

GET QUALIFIED

The series provides an unrivalled source of theoretical knowledge and practical insight into bass guitar playing.

You can also use these books to study for an internationally recognised qualification: each book covers all the material needed for three bass guitar examination grades, and includes essential advice about preparing for an examination.

IMPROVE YOUR PLAYING

Even if you do not intend to take an examination, each book will help you to:

- develop *all aspects* of your bass playing
- increase your *knowledge* of bass guitar techniques
- understand the *music theory* that relates to bass guitar playing
- achieve your *full potential* as a bass guitarist



Improvising Bass Guitar

Create your own bass lines

Jamming along with a band is the ultimate way of learning how to create, or improve, your own bass lines. Each 12 track full band backing CD, and accompanying book, enables you to do just that! On each CD you'll hear a full band line-up but without the bass – YOU will be the bass player.

Experience the thrill of creating your own bass lines and playing along with your own band.

The CDs and accompanying books are ideal as study aids for the Performance sections of the RGT bass examinations as they have been specifically designed to reflect the exact requirements of the grade exams.



Bass Patterns Vols 1, 2 & 3

"Simply the most unique and practical way of learning to play bass guitar lines."

Learn the most popular bass patterns of all time in a wide range of styles inc: rock, blues, r'n'b, soul, dance, country, rock'n'roll. All patterns are performed at slow practice speed and full performance tempos. Rhythm backing tracks are provided at both tempos to enable practice in a range of keys.

These recordings are ideally suited to help you study for the 'Bass Patterns' section of the RGT examination syllabus – with all the patterns specifically designed to reflect the exact requirements of the grade exams.

To order any of these books/CDs or for a list of stockists call 01424 222222
You can buy on-line at www.BooksForGuitar.com