

Parameters for Session skills – Playback Initial-Grade 8 for all instruments

- ✔ If you choose Playback, you will be asked to perform some music you have not seen or heard before.
- ✔ You will be given a song chart and have 30 seconds to study it or to try out any sections. The examiner will then play the recorded backing track. You should listen to the audio, copying what you hear; you can also read the music from the song chart.
- ✔ You will hear a series of short melodic phrases or drum grooves and fills and are required to repeat each of them straight back in turn. A count-in will be given at the beginning of the recording, and a backing rhythm will be played throughout.
- ✔ In the exam you will have two chances to play along with the track:
 - first time – for practice
 - second time – for assessment.
- ✔ No variation or improvisation is required – what is printed on the song chart/heard on the track should be copied as accurately as possible, including any details of phrasing, articulation and dynamics at higher grades.

Tests follow the parameters below; all requirements are cumulative:

| Grade | Total bars | Time signatures | Note and rest values | Dynamics and articulation | Instrument-specific parameters |
|---------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Initial | 8 bars total; 2 bar repeated sections | $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ | semibreves; minims; crotchets; quavers; crotchet rests | no dynamics or phrasing | Bass: keys of A minor and E minor; first position including open strings Drums: SD, BD, HT, LT, crash cymbal; single line only Guitar: keys of D major and E minor; within first position, no chords Keyboards: keys of C major and A minor; RH only; 5 finger hand position Vocals: keys of C major and A minor; stepwise movement only; overall melodic range of a 4th |
| 1 | | | minim rests | <i>p</i> and <i>f</i> | Bass: keys of C major and G major Drums: mid tom tom; some 2-way co-ordination Guitar: keys of G major and A minor Keyboards: keys of G major and E minor; mostly RH with simple LH in 2 bars; 5 finger hand position Vocals: keys of G major and E minor; intervals to maj/min 3rd; overall melodic range of a 5th |
| 2 | | $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ | dotted minims; simple ties | accents | Bass: keys of F major and D minor Drums: HH and RC; mostly 2-way co-ordination Guitar: keys of C major and D minor Keyboards: keys of F major and D minor; both hands throughout; small shifts of hand position. Vocals: keys of F major and D minor; intervals to perfect 4th; overall melodic range of an 6th |
| 3 | 8 to 12 bars total; 2 to 4 bar repeated sections | swung quavers | semiquavers; dotted crotchets; quaver rests; semibreve rests | <i>mp</i> and <i>mf</i> ; <i>staccato</i> and <i>legato</i> | Bass: keys of D major and B minor; blues scale; second position; H-O and P-O Drums: HH with foot; off-beat BD rhythms; 3-way co-ordination Guitar: keys of F major and B minor; blues scale; 2 note chords; second position; H-O and P-O Keyboards: keys of D major and B minor; blues scale; 2 note chords in RH; more LH movement Vocals: keys of D major and B minor; blues scale; intervals to perfect fifth; overall melodic range of an octave |

Tests follow the parameters below; all requirements are cumulative:

| Grade | Total bars | Time signatures | Note and rest values | Dynamics and articulation | Instrument-specific parameters |
|-------|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| 4 | | 6 8 ; syncopation | triplets | <i>crescendo</i> and <i>diminuendo</i> | Bass: keys of A major and C minor; slides; Drums: whole kit with open/closed HH; rim-clicks; rolls; flams, drags and ruffs Guitar: keys of A major and C minor; 3 note chords; slides, palm muting; double stopped melodic playing Keyboards: keys of A major and C minor; 3 note chords in RH; more independent LH movement Vocals: keys of A major and C minor; intervals to maj/min 6th; overall melodic range of 9th |
| 5 | 12 to 16 bars total; chord symbols included in the song chart | 12 8 | dotted quaver notes and rests; sextuplets; chromatic melodic notes | <i>pp</i> , <i>ff</i> and <i>sfz</i> | Bass: keys of E major and G minor; up to 5th position Drums: extended independence Guitar: keys of E major and G minor; vibrato, bends; up to 5th position Keyboards: keys of E major and G minor; use of sustain pedal Vocals: keys of E major and G minor; intervals up to maj/min 7th; overall melodic range of 10th |
| 6 | 16 to 20 bars total; 4 to 8 bar repeated sections | 2 3 9 2; 8; 8 | dotted semiquaver notes and rests; demisemi-quavers | | Bass: key of B major plus any major or minor key up to four sharps or flats; vibrato; slaps and pulls; up to 7th position, double stopping Drums: ghost notes Guitar: key of B major plus any major or minor key up to four sharps or flats; up to 7th position; harmonics Keyboards: any major or minor key up to four sharps or flats; simple ornamentation e.g. grace notes; glissandi; octaves in RH and/or LH Vocals: any major or minor key up to 5 sharps or flats; intervals of an 8ve; range extended |
| 7 | | 5 5 7 7 4; 8; 4; 8 | duplets; crotchet triplets | any common terms and signs | Bass: any major or minor key up to five sharps or flats; full fretboard range; bends Drums: full use of the kit Guitar: any major or minor key up to five sharps or flats; full fretboard range Keyboards: any major or minor key up to five sharps or flats; RH tremolo Vocals: any major or minor key; intervals of a major/minor 9th and 10th |
| 8 | 20 to 24 bars total | changing time signatures | any notation including double sharps and flats | | Bass: any key; harmonics Drums: full use of the kit and any rudiments Guitar: any key; any expressive technique Keyboards: any key; any expressive technique Vocals: any key; key changes within the song |