

Admissions Process

Practical Audition & Theory Guidance

Theory

If you don't already hold a Grade 5 Certificate in Music Theory, you will need to demonstrate a Grade 5 equivalent understanding of music theory either by sitting our theory paper or – if you are unable to make it to one of our Open Days – by being asked theory questions as part of your Skype interview.

Our theory paper contains questions on topics such as reading notation, harmony, and audio theory. You can find a sample theory entry paper on our website to get a sense of the kind of questions you will be asked.

If you would like any further guidance as to how to prepare for this paper, please get in touch.

Practical

As part of your application process and to meet the entry requirements for our courses, you will need to demonstrate a Grade 6 (or equivalent) practical ability in your chosen pathway.

We do not require students to have a Grade 6 certificate already – you only need to demonstrate that you are at a Grade 6 standard on your chosen pathway.

To help you figure out what kind of pieces might demonstrate a Grade 6 level, we have put together a guide for each instrument pathway. These guides are based on the Trinity Rockschooll free choice piece criteria.

Your audition pieces are something you should invest care and time in preparing to best demonstrate your musical ability.

Bass Practical Audition Guidance

Section A: Overview

- You should play two contrasting pieces (or excerpts of pieces) lasting a minimum of 2 minutes each.
- At least one of the pieces should be performed to backing track (i.e. the bass is not present) but preferably both.
- At least one of the pieces should demonstrate some improvisational playing ability (approx. 16 bars).

Section B: Musical Elements

Few musical pieces will likely contain all of the following but you should aim to find a piece that covers as many of the following as possible.

However, it should be noted that the tutor will mainly be looking for demonstration of a proficient and secure level of playing ability to ensure you will be able to cope with the demands of the course. This is also something that can be demonstrated in the interview section.

Playing Techniques

- Highly developed left and right hand co-ordination.
- Highly developed damping techniques.
- Developed slap style using fretted notes with pulls and muted notes.
- Accurate use of two, three or four fingers of picking hand as required.
- Effective string jumping.
- Double stops (3rds, 5ths, 6ths, 8ves and 10ths).
- Hammer ons and pull offs, slides, cross-string hammers, thumb pops and index and middle finger slaps (at least half of these).
- Use of harmonics.

Expressive Techniques

- Secure control of legato/staccato.
- Phrasing and dynamics.
- Slurs and trills by hammer ons and pull offs using open strings.
- Tone manipulation using picking hand.
- Accented notes.

Theory Knowledge

- Inversions and Intervals (both recognising and playing).
- Basic Harmonisation.
- 2 Octave Scales and Arpeggios.
- Competent reading ability.

Drums Practical Audition Guidance

Section A: Essential Elements

- You should play two contrasting pieces (or excerpts of pieces) lasting at least 2 minutes each.
- The pieces should be performed to a backing track
- At least one of the pieces should demonstrate some improvisational playing (eg. A short solo section)

Section B: Performance Elements

Few musical pieces will likely contain all of the following but you should aim to find a piece that covers as many of the following as possible.

However, it should be noted that the tutor will mainly be looking for demonstration of a proficient and secure level of playing ability to ensure you will be able to cope with the demands of the course. This is also something that can be demonstrated in the interview section.

Physical Techniques

- Independent hand and foot co-ordination

Expressive Techniques

- Fills
- Use of accented notes
- Wide dynamic range: very soft to very loud
- Flams
- Rimshots
- Ghost notes
- Grace notes
- Extended use of rudiments in fills

Rhythm Skills

Although the pieces do not have to contain all of these elements, they should contain a mixture of:

- Quarter, 8th and 16th notes
- Dotted 8th notes

- 8th and 16th note combinations
- 16th note triplets on hi hat
- Triplet 8th and 16th notes
- Associated rests
- Swing times
- 2/4 and 3/4 time signatures
- Other time signature variations

Fills

- 16th note fills
- Extended groove development
- Ad lib section(s)

Guitar Practical Audition Guidance

Section A: Overview

- You should play two contrasting pieces (or excerpts of pieces) lasting about 2 minutes each.
- At least one of the pieces should be performed to a backing track (this should be a mix without the guitar part that you will be playing)
- At least one of the pieces should demonstrate some lead playing ability (approx 16 bars)

Section B: Musical elements

Few musical pieces will likely contain all of the following but you should aim to find a piece that covers as many of the following as possible.

However, it should be noted that the tutor will mainly be looking for demonstration of a proficient and secure level of playing ability to ensure you will be able to cope with the demands of the course. This is also something that can be demonstrated in the interview section.

Technique

- Use of pick and fingers of the picking hand
- Picking hand damping techniques
- Fretting hand damping techniques
- Alternate picking
- Ability to move between chords and single notes
- Use of double stops
- Use of syncopated 16th note rhythms
- Blues/pentatonic scale in solo section
- Triplet rhythms
- Basic time signature variations (i.e 5/4, 6/8, 7/8 and 12/8)
- Use of different positions on the neck (incl. past the 12th position)

Expression

- Fretting hand legato
- Slides
- Accents

- Muted and percussive notes
- Hammer-ons and Pull-offs
- Dynamic variation
- String bends
- Harmonics (AH, PH, NH)

Piano & Keyboards Practical Audition Guidance

Section A: Overview

- You should play two contrasting pieces (or excerpts of pieces) lasting about 2 minutes each. At least one piece should be performed using a piano sound.
- At least one of the pieces should be performed from memory
- At least one of the pieces should demonstrate a level of harmonic or melodic improvisation (approx 8 bars)

Section B: Musical elements

Few musical pieces will likely contain all of the following but you should aim to find a piece that covers as many of the following as possible.

However, it should be noted that the tutor will mainly be looking for demonstration of a proficient and secure level of playing ability to ensure you will be able to cope with the demands of the course. This is also something that can be demonstrated in the interview section.

Technique

- Demonstrate rhythmic independence between hands.
- Ability to play unison passages accurately
- Use of arpeggios or broken chords
- Ability to move between chordal and melodic passages
- Use of syncopated 16th note rhythms
- Blues/pentatonic scales in solo section
- Triplet/swung rhythms
- Basic time signature variations (i.e 5/4, 6/8, 7/8 and 12/8)
- Confident movement around the full range of the keyboard

Expression

- You should aim to include approximately half of any of the following:
- Ability to control and be aware of a wide range of dynamics (pp to ff)
- Use of legato and staccato
- Ability to accent some notes within phrases
- Crescendo's and Diminuendo's
- Trills/Cadenza's (3rds and 6ths) and /or glissando

- Effective use of grace notes
- Effective use of pedalling (soft and sustain)

Vocals Practical Audition Guidance

Section A: Overview

- You should sing two contrasting songs lasting no more than 4 minutes each.
- At least one of the songs should be performed to a backing track (this should be a mix without the vocal that you will be singing)
- At least one of the pieces should demonstrate some basic improvisation

Section B: Musical elements

The tutor will mainly be looking for demonstration of a proficient and secure level of vocal ability to ensure you will be able to cope with the demands of the course. This is also something that can be demonstrated in the interview section.

Technique

- All songs to be sung with a microphone
- Songs to be well prepared and memorised
- Basic microphone technique used throughout
- Pitching of notes to be accurate
- Use of registers is expected
- Demonstrate understanding through the use of correct posture
- Demonstrate an ability to control breathing

Expression

- Suitable tone, delivery and rhythm used to demonstrate stylistic awareness
- Demonstrate a degree of improvisation (this can be within a song - singing extra lines / parts that add to the track)
- Meaning of the song expressed through dynamic changes and emphasis of lyrical content

Live Sound Practical Audition Guidance

The live sound audition will be conducted at your interview. You will be asked questions about your practical understanding relating to all areas of live sound and also your past experience of working in these areas.