

# Ukulele Playing

## Graded Exams & Performance Awards

Exam Information Booklet  
Valid from 2014 until further notice



**“RGT offers accredited exams you can have confidence in.”**

RGT exams are operated in partnership with London College of Music Exams, which was founded in 1887 and is one of the world’s most respected music examination boards.

RGT exams are certificated by the University of West London and, from Grade One onwards, are regulated by Ofqual.

As well as ukulele exams, RGT also offers exams in electric guitar, acoustic guitar, bass guitar, rock guitar, classical guitar and popular music theory.

To find a ukulele teacher in your area, or for more information about any RGT exams, visit:  
**[www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)**

## Syllabus Rationale

This syllabus provides a solid foundation of musical education for any ukulele student and is designed to be accessible across different teaching and playing approaches. It is acknowledged that some ukulele players focus on the ukulele wholly in terms of its role as a chordal/rhythm playing instrument, while other ukulele players prefer to also explore the melody playing potential of the instrument. Consequently, the syllabus structure has been designed so that it can be utilised with equal success by candidates who are developing both melody and rhythm playing skills, as well as by those candidates who are focusing solely on chordal/rhythm playing techniques.

This syllabus caters for Soprano (a.k.a ‘standard’), Concert and Tenor ukulele players that use standard G C E A tuning.

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# Exam types & format

Two types of exam are available for individual ukulele candidates: 'Grade Exams' and 'Performance Awards'.

Grade exams contain the following components:

- **Component 1: Rhythm Study**
- **Component 2: Performance**
- **Component 3: Free Choice Specialism**
- **Component 4: Prepared Accompaniment**
- **Component 5: Musicianship**

Performance Awards do not include the Musicianship component, but instead focus on performance by requiring two pieces (rather than one as in the Grade Exam) to be played during the Free Choice Specialism component. The remainder of the requirements for the Performance Awards are exactly the same as those for the Grade Exams. The only exception to this is the Level 5 Performance Award. The requirements for this are different and are outlined in a separate section later in this booklet.

Grade Exams are traditional 'live' exams, where the candidate attends an exam venue at an allotted time and date. For Performance Awards three options are available:

1. **Live Performance Award:** Candidates attend an exam venue and perform their pieces.
2. **Filmed Performance Award:** Candidates send in or upload a video recording of their performances rather than attending an exam venue. A slightly higher standard of performance will be expected than for a Live Performance Award.
3. **Recorded Performance Award:** Candidates send in or upload an audio recording of their performances rather than attending an exam venue. A significantly higher standard of performance will be expected than for a Live Performance Award.

*Filmed and Recorded Performance Awards are particularly useful for those who find it hard to take time off for an exam or to travel to an exam venue, or for those who get overly nervous in an exam situation, as performances can be submitted by disc or uploaded online at any time throughout the year without the need to attend an exam venue.*

## **ENSEMBLE EXAMS**

***In addition to exams for individuals, RGT also offers ensemble exams for ukulele. These are for a minimum of two people playing ukulele together; there is no upper limit to the group size. For more details view the Ukulele Ensemble Syllabus at [www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)***

# Range of exams

Exams are offered for Grade Exams and Performance Awards at the following levels:

| Grades            | Performance Awards |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Initial Stage     | Initial Level      |
| Preliminary Grade | Preliminary Level  |
| Grade 1           | Level 1            |
| Grade 2           | Level 2            |
| Grade 3           | Level 3            |
| Grade 4           | Level 4            |

In addition, a Level 5 Performance Award is also available. The format and content of this differs from the previous Performance Award levels. Further details on this can be found later in this booklet.

*Unless otherwise stated, throughout this booklet, all references to the term 'Grade' also apply to the term 'Level' for Performance Awards up to and including Level 4.*

## Exam handbooks



An exam handbook is published by RGT for each exam Grade up to Grade 4. Each handbook includes a CD containing audio demonstrations.

It is stressed that the information in this small booklet is only intended to provide an outline guide to the contents of the exams, therefore it is essential that candidates study the RGT grade handbooks in order to become aware of all the exam requirements and content prior to entering either the Grade Exams or Performance Awards.

The grade handbooks can be obtained from music/book stores or online from [www.BooksForGuitar.com](http://www.BooksForGuitar.com)

# Exam components

## Component 1: Rhythm Study

The exam handbook for each grade provides a choice of four chord charts with a one-bar notated rhythm pattern. Candidates should choose and play ONE of these charts using the notated rhythm pattern provided. The chord chart should be played through twice without stopping. From Grade One onwards, some rhythmic variation of the notated rhythm pattern of the candidate's own choosing is expected during the second play through.

Each exam handbook contains fretboxes showing the suggested fingering for all the required chords for the grade. The range of chords and time signatures that will occur at each grade is listed below.

### Initial Stage

- C, F, G, Am
- $\frac{4}{4}$  only

### Preliminary Grade

- As previous grade plus Dm, C7, G7
- $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{4}{4}$

### Grade 1

- As previous grades plus A, D, Gm, A7, E7
- $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{4}{4}$

### Grade 2

- As previous grades plus Bb, Em, F#m, D7, Cmaj7, Gm7
- $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{4}{4}$

### Grade 3

- As previous grades plus Bm, Fm, Dmaj7, Gmaj7, B7, Em7, Edim7
- $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{4}$  and  $\frac{6}{8}$

### Grade 4

- At this level full/partial barre chords, higher position chords, chords in a range of voicings and a variety of other chord types are included. Please refer to the Grade 4 handbook for full details and fretboxes.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{4}$  and  $\frac{6}{8}$

## Component 2: Performance

### Candidates should select either Option 1 or Option 2:

**OPTION 1:** The exam handbook for each grade provides four melodies presented in both standard notation and ukulele tablature. Candidates should select ONE of these melodies to perform during the exam. Up to and including Grade 2, the melodies are all single-line melodies; at Grade 3, as well as single-line melodies, some harmonised melodies are also included; at Grade 4 the melodies are all harmonised melodies. The melodies included in each grade handbook are listed below.

#### Initial Stage

When The Saints Go Marching In – C major  
Michael Row The Boat Ashore – C major

On Top Of Old Smokey – C major  
Kumbaya – C major

#### Preliminary Grade

This Old Man – C major  
Worried Man Blues – F major

For He's A Jolly Good Fellow – C major  
Aura Lea – F major

#### Grade 1

The Bear Dance – D minor  
Daisy Bell – G major

The Warriors Return – D minor  
Oh, Susanna – D major

#### Grade 2

Autumn Lament – A minor  
Drunken Sailor – E minor (Dorian)

Home On The Range – F major  
Galway Gallop – G major

#### Grade 3

Lovely As Moonlight – C major  
A Whale Of A Time – A major

Waltzing Matilda – F major  
Atholl Highlanders – D major

#### Grade 4

Auld Lang Syne – F major  
Walking In The Sun – G major

Troubadour – G minor  
Greensleeves – G minor

**OPTION 2:** Candidates who prefer to focus on rhythm playing rather than melody playing, can select another Rhythm Study from Component 1. This chord chart should then be performed either using the notated rhythm pattern or, if preferred, using musically appropriate rhythms of the candidate's own choosing that are of at least a similar technical standard to the notated rhythms. If selecting this option, the chord chart that is performed must be different from that played in Component 1.

## Component 3: Free Choice Specialism

**For Grade Exams only:** Candidates should select and perform ONE piece from any of the options listed below.

**For Performance Awards only:** Candidates should select and perform TWO pieces chosen from any mix of the options listed below, including choosing both pieces from the same option if preferred.

**OPTION 1 – Free Choice Piece:** Candidates can select a piece of their own choice to perform. The piece can be either in the format of a melody, or a solo piece, or a strummed or fingerstyle accompaniment to a song (backing tracks cannot be used). If candidates wish to sing whilst playing that is perfectly acceptable, but only the ukulele playing (not the singing) will be assessed. When selecting a free choice piece, candidates should ensure that the chosen piece is of at least a similar technical standard and duration to the melodies or rhythm studies in the exam handbook. RGT will not advise on the suitability of free choice pieces as part of the assessment process here includes candidates' ability to research and select an appropriate piece to perform.

**OPTION 2 – Another Handbook Melody:** Candidates can select and perform another melody from those provided in the Performance chapter of the exam handbook. If choosing this option, the melody that is performed must be different from that played in the Performance section of the exam.

**OPTION 3 – Another Rhythm Study:** Candidates can select and perform another Rhythm Study from the Rhythm Study chapter of the exam handbook. This chord chart should then be performed either using the notated strum pattern provided with it during the first verse or, if preferred, using a musically appropriate rhythm of the candidate's own choosing, providing that it is of at least a similar technical standard to the notated rhythms. In either case, from Grade One onwards, some rhythmic variation should be used during the repeat section. If selecting this option, the chord chart that is performed must be different from that played in the Rhythm Study and the Performance sections of the exam.

**OPTION 4 – Fingerstyle Study (For Grades One, Two and Three only):** Candidates can perform the Fingerstyle Study notated in the appropriate grade handbook.

## Component 4: Prepared Accompaniment

Each exam handbook contains three tunes with chord charts. The candidate should select ONE of these tunes. The examiner will play this selected tune (live or via recording) and the candidate should play a suitable chordal accompaniment. The style of accompaniment is left to the candidate's discretion.

Up to Grade 3 each tune is 8 bars long, at Grade 4 the tunes are either 8 bars or 12 bars long. The tune will be played three times although only the candidate's last two playings of the chord chart will be assessed. The range of chords matches those in Component 1 (i.e. the Rhythm Studies) up to Grade 3. At Grade 4 some different chords and chord voicings are introduced, fretboxes for all of these are given in the handbook. The number of chords that appear, and the rhythmic complexity of the tunes, increases as the grades progress. The time signatures for each grade are listed below.

**Initial Stage and Preliminary Grade:**  $\frac{4}{4}$  only.

**Grade 1 and 2:**  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{4}{4}$ .

**Grade 3 and 4:**  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{4}$  and  $\frac{6}{8}$ .

## Component 5: Musicianship

*This component is for Grade exams only (i.e. this component is **NOT** included in Performance Awards).*

Candidates will be given a range of tests covering aural awareness, musical knowledge and knowledge of the instrument. For the Initial Stage and Preliminary Grade the tests focus on aural awareness only. The range and difficulty of the tests will increase as the grades progress. Each exam handbook includes example tests to indicate the range of topics that may occur and the style and format of the tests.

### Initial Stage

**Pitch Tests:** Candidates will be given four tests that involve identifying whether the second of two notes was higher or lower in pitch than the first note.

### Preliminary Grade

**Pitch Tests:** Candidates should identify which of two notes was higher or lower in pitch.

**Rhythm & Chord Tests:** Candidates should clap-back a one-bar rhythm pattern and identify chord types as either all major or all minor.



## Grades 1 - 4

**Aural Awareness:** Candidates should clap-back a one-bar rhythm pattern and identify chord types. In addition, for Grade 3 and 4, candidates should identify the time signature of a chord progression..

**Musical Knowledge:** Candidates will be asked questions to assess their knowledge of the pieces performed, identifying the key and time signatures. For Grade 4 only candidates will also be asked questions about the dynamics, tempo, mood and style of the pieces performed.

**Knowledge of the Instrument:** Candidates will be asked questions to assess their knowledge of notes on the ukulele and, up to Grade 3, parts of the ukulele.

### **Mark scheme**

#### **Grade exams:**

- Rhythm Study (20%)
- Performance (20%)
- Free Choice Specialism (20%)
- Prepared Accompaniment (20%)
- Musicianship (20%)

#### **Performance Awards (up to and including Level 4):**

- Rhythm Study (20%)
- Performance (20%)
- Free Choice Specialism Piece 1 (20%)
- Free Choice Specialism Piece 2 (20%)
- Prepared Accompaniment (20%)

#### **Performance Awards (Level 5):**

- Up to 25% for each piece performed.

85 or above = Distinction.

75 – 84.5 = Merit.

65 – 74.5 = Pass.

55 – 64.5 = Below Pass Upper Level.

0 – 54.5 = Below Pass Lower Level.

# Frequently Asked Questions – **Grade Exams Only**

## **How Do I Enter For A Grade Exam?**

View the RGT website ([www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)) or contact the RGT@LCM office (020 8231 2751) to obtain a current exam fee list, then either enter online using the unique entry code supplied in the penultimate page of your grade handbook or use the official entry form included at the back of the 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 A Grade Exam Entry Form**

Entries are accepted only on official RGT entry forms. These are supplied only as part of each grade handbook. In order to ensure that, before entering the exam, all candidates are fully conversant with the exact requirements of these exams the acquisition of a grade handbook is the only method of obtaining an individual exam entry form. Handbooks can be ordered from any good music/book store or purchased online from [www.BooksForGuitar.com](http://www.BooksForGuitar.com). A special group entry form is available for UK registered schools and colleges only.

## **Can I Enter For Any Grade?**

Yes. Candidates may enter for any exam without having taken any preceding exam. However, it is recommended that you work through all the grade handbooks to ensure that you develop your playing in a structured way.

## **Can I Enter More Than One Exam In 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 Exam?**

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 exam.

## **What Do I Get When I Pass?**

If you obtain the 65% pass mark you will be awarded an official University of West London / London College of Music Examinations Certificate for the relevant grade. If you achieve 75% you will be awarded a Merit certificate. If you obtain 85% you will be awarded a Distinction certificate.

## **When Do Exams Take Place?**

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

## **Do I Have To Live In The UK?**

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

## **Where Are Exams Held?**

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

## **Will I Have To Travel Far?**

No. Normally, there are RGT exam centres spread widely across the UK. You will be assigned to the centre operating nearest to your home address, usually within one hour's travelling distance.

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

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

*Candidates are advised to download the full RGT Ukulele Examination Syllabus from [www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org), as this provides very detailed information about the assessment criteria for each section of the exams.*

## Level 5 Performance Award

To enable candidates to focus on developing their solo performance skills, the Level 5 Performance Award requires candidates to perform FOUR pieces; there are no other components for this level of Performance Award.

There is no handbook available, instead a downloadable package of four solo performance pieces specially composed or arranged for the Level 5 Ukulele Performance Award has been produced. This contains the standard notation, ukulele tablature and audio recordings of the following four pieces:

- All My Love
- Bravo
- Smile On
- The Ten Penny Bit

The download package for these pieces is available from the ukulele section at [www.DownloadsForGuitar.com](http://www.DownloadsForGuitar.com)

Candidates can either play all four of these pieces, or can opt to play a MINIMUM OF TWO of these pieces with the remaining pieces (making a total of four) being free choice pieces chosen by the candidate.

If selecting a free choice piece, candidates should ensure that the chosen piece is of at least a similar technical standard and duration to those pieces supplied in the download package. RGT will not advise on the suitability of free choice pieces as part of the assessment process here includes the candidate's ability to research and select an appropriate piece to perform. Note that strummed or fingerstyle accompaniments to a song will NOT be permitted for this Level 5 Performance Award, all the pieces should be solo performance pieces.

## Performance Awards – *additional information*

Entry forms for all Performance Awards can be downloaded from [www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)

Entries for filmed or recorded Performance Awards can be made at any time throughout the year; reports and certificates are normally issued within 8 weeks.

### **Extra Information for *Filmed Performance Awards*:**

The equipment used to film the performance need not be of a professional quality, a standard domestic-quality camcorder or similar will normally suffice, providing it is of sufficient quality that the examiner will be able to see and hear the candidate's performance clearly enough to enable a reliable assessment to be made. The quality of the filming itself, or any visual effects, will not be part of the assessment.

Each piece should be filmed without edits.

Because videoing a performance will allow candidates the opportunity to film several attempts at performing a piece and then submitting their best take, the performance standard expected for a Filmed Performance Award is slightly higher than that expected for a Live Performance Award of the same Level.

A single disc containing all the performances, in a format that will play on a standard DVD player, should be submitted by post, together with the entry form. The candidate name should be clearly written on the disc. A list of the titles of all the pieces, in the order they are performed on the disc, should be attached to the entry form.

The entry form includes a declaration to confirm that the performer on the video is the named candidate; an adult witness needs to countersign the entry form.

If preferred, candidates can submit their entry online and upload a video of their performances via the RGT website – **[www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)**

#### **Extra Information for Recorded Performance Awards:**

The equipment used to record the performances need not be of a 'studio' quality, however it should be of sufficient quality that the examiner will be able to hear the candidate's performance clearly enough to enable a reliable assessment to be made.

The fidelity of the recording itself will not be part of the assessment. Edits, overdubs and drop-ins are all part of the armoury of techniques used by recording musicians and so these are permitted. However, where these are used the results should be seamless; where they are poorly executed and sound obvious, the marking may be adversely affected.

Because recording the performances may allow candidates the opportunity to use edits and overdubs, and to have numerous attempts at performing a piece and then submitting their best take, the performance standard expected for a Recorded Performance Award is significantly higher than that expected for a Live Performance Award of the same Level.

A single CD disc containing all the performances should be submitted by post, together with the entry form. The candidate name should be clearly written on the disc. A list of the titles of all the pieces, in the order they are performed on the disc, should be attached to the entry form.

The entry form includes a declaration that the performer on the disc is the named candidate; an adult witness needs to countersign the entry form to confirm this.

If preferred, candidates can submit their entry online and upload the audio files of their performances via the RGT website – **[www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)**



# RGT Ukulele Exam Handbooks

“This series of books forms an expertly structured and comprehensive method of studying ukulele.”

## **Get Qualified**

Each book covers all the material needed for each RGT ukulele exam, enabling you to study for an internationally-recognised qualification.

## **Improve Your Playing**

Even if you do not intend to take an exam, these books will help you achieve your full potential by developing all aspects of your ukulele playing.

## **Easy To Use**

- All music is written in easy-to-read TAB, as well as traditional notation.
- CD examples are provided so you can 'listen and learn'.

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