

Trinity's approach to rock and pop music

Our guide to the value of offering
the Trinity Rock & Pop syllabus

ROCK
& **POP**



Why choose Rock & Pop?

Trinity's Rock & Pop exams are designed to engage learners with contemporary music through real songs.



Trinity's ethos is that music qualifications should be both academically rigorous, and enjoyable for learners. We want to nurture the next generation of musicians by offering engaging Initial-Grade 8 exams in electric guitar, bass, keyboard, drums and vocals.

Created with input from a huge team of music professionals including teachers, industry experts, producers and musicians – people who have an educational as well as performance background – the Rock & Pop syllabuses are robust and creative.

The repertoire for our exams has been carefully selected to be accessible to a wide audience. We treat Rock & Pop with the same principles as our classical and jazz qualifications, applying high expectations of performance, style and technique.

Not only does this offer a highly academic experience which prepares learners for further education and beyond, but they get a qualification playing music they genuinely

enjoy. Rock & Pop offers the opportunity to explore new genres, learning about their social and historical relevance, which makes for a comprehensive, relevant and authentic learning experience.

Everything that students learn on their musical journey through Rock & Pop helps in preparing them to pursue a musical specialism at college or university level, should they wish. The syllabus also promotes practical skills used in the real world, and creates pathways into the music industry.

Through Rock & Pop, we want learners to see contemporary music as an important, and enduring part of their future lives.

What makes Rock & Pop different?

The Trinity offer works differently to other exam boards in a number of unique ways:



Performance & creativity

Performance and creativity skills are at the heart of every Trinity syllabus, and Rock & Pop is no exception. 'Communication & style' is one of the marking criteria - students need to be able to play with flair and with an understanding of genre and storytelling.

The syllabus provides teachers and learners with supporting materials to put music in a social, historical, practical and industry context, helping build an understanding of a variety of styles and genres, and nurturing learners into well-rounded musicians.

We want to take learners through a creative musical journey. Rock & Pop is designed to build learners' confidence to experiment and form musical opinions and expressions of their own.

Musical careers

Successful musicians must familiarise themselves with a range of genres and styles to sustain a career in the industry. The Rock & Pop syllabus helps to do this, from the repertoire the learner studies to the supporting tests within the exam. Being able to read on cue and improvise with other musicians are skills every musician needs.

With other graded exam boards, time is spent learning songs that students may never play again. But with Rock & Pop - even in the earliest graded exams - students learn repertoire that will serve them as professionals: songs that will help their career path into the music industry.

From day one, learners build an 'internal setlist' required by any gigging musician. This also offers them an exciting variety of ways to engage with music beyond their chosen instrument.

We assess sight reading, playback and improvisation - real session skills that are required in music-industry employment.

Authenticity

We believe in the importance of authenticity in the repertoire students learn, as it enables them to recognise and engage with music. The Rock & Pop syllabus uses real songs by real artists. These arrangements are so true to the originals that they are instantly recognisable.

While being true to musical styles - introducing students to reggae, R&B, blues, soul, disco, and beyond - songs are also adapted to grade boundaries.

Technical elements - such as scales, arpeggios and rudiments - are assessed within the context of songs, rather than in their own dedicated way, such as in other syllabuses. Learners still have to illustrate these skills in Rock & Pop exams, but they're contextualised.

Academic rigour

Trinity College London is an international exam board, regulated by Ofqual. Rock & Pop sits parallel to any comparable classical or jazz points table or framework.

For example, if a learner does an ABRSM Grade 8 violin exam and they get a distinction, they receive 30 UCAS points. If a learner does a Rock & Pop Grade 8 electric guitar exam and they get a distinction, they also get 30 UCAS points.

The rise of further education institutions like BIMM and ACM shows the academic demand for contemporary musical skills and instruments. Degrees in drumming or electric guitar now exist, so Rock & Pop is the kind of qualification these institutions are looking for from applicants.

Musical development

Candidates must select one technical-focus song as part of their set list. This is intended to specifically assess technique, control and stylistic awareness in their instrument. By displaying specific skills within a song, students can feel less vulnerable, enabling them to focus on delivery.

The choice and range in Rock & Pop is extensive. There are also plenty of opportunities for learners to perform their own compositions as part of the exam, and get feedback from an examiner. There are areas in certain songs where learners might be asked to develop a few bars - helping with composition and improvisation skills.

Through Rock & Pop, we want students to develop their own musical personality, preferences and ideas, not just replicate existing songs.



Our approach to contemporary music

So why has Trinity College London approached contemporary music in this way? We know that competing boards are popular choices for many centres, but Trinity's Rock & Pop offer presents an appealing alternative, rooted in academic thinking, real-world experience and expert insights.



An appealing repertoire to engage learners

Legendary bands that rarely allow their music to be licensed, have done so for our syllabuses. Likewise, session musicians from some of the UK's most revered music acts have supported us in shaping the Rock & Pop offer.

Trinity College London has placed real songs and real skills at the core of the Rock & Pop syllabuses and has found the input of top industry performers - like David Bowie's drummer Mark Giurlana - invaluable in engaging learners with the techniques that sit behind the songs.

From Blondie's 1980s reggae-style cover of 'The Tide Is High' in the Grade 1 Vocals song book, to the gentle rolling groove of Alicia Keys' 'Fallin' in the Grade 2 Drums song book; the repertoire represents the full spectrum of contemporary music, across all rock and pop instruments.



A thorough yet accessible syllabus

We want to introduce a brand-new generation of learners to theory and technique through musical styles they already know; learners that may not have taken graded exams before, or might never have even picked up an instrument.

Even for a young or inexperienced student, the mark scheme is clear and achievable. It is communicated in a way that is transparent for teachers and students of all ages, so they know exactly what they're going to be assessed on.

Professional musicians have helped produce a range of innovative digital support materials to develop real music industry skills to support teachers and learners.

Nurturing musicians of the future

With the evolving musical context in mind, we have created a robust syllabus that truly prepares musicians for a shifting landscape. In the past decade, there has been a growth in international education providers and exam boards offering teaching, learning and assessment in rock and pop music – this is our forward-focused response.

While other exams boards have delivered contemporary music the same way for many years, Trinity offers a fresh, relevant syllabus with both innovation and the weight of Trinity's history and reputation behind it. We re-visit our syllabuses regularly, refining them according to what our teachers and students tell us.

Your exam. Your choice.

Trinity Rock & Pop exams can now also be taken digitally. Responsive to a changing world, these exams enable candidates to record their songs at a place and time of their choice and then submit the video recording via our online platform to be assessed by our expert examiners.

Preparation for further education and beyond

As well as being an enjoyable pursuit and offering students additional skills to academic exams, Rock & Pop offers possibilities in life beyond school and college.

Preparation for further education: music courses

- Degree courses such as artist development, songwriting and music business now exist. Students need to show relevant existing qualifications – and Rock & Pop exams are an ideal grounding.
- The academic rigour of Rock & Pop prepares students for the hard work ahead of them on these competitive courses.
- Further music education is shifting to an approach that blends technical skills with an understanding of how creative industries work; Rock & Pop's structure introduces learners to a range of these skills as a foundation for these courses.

Preparation for music industry careers

- A rounded music education that includes learning rock and pop music styles offers practical, transferable skills for the wider music industry.
- Improvisation, composition, playback and sightreading are nurtured in Initial-Grade 8 Rock & Pop exams: essential skills for a contemporary music career.
- The shift in the musical landscape – to include contemporary styles as well as more traditional ones – means that contemporary music qualifications are leading to creative careers in the future.

Preparation for other degrees and careers

- From medicine to fashion design, contemporary music qualifications help learners forge careers that require concentration, dedication and dexterity.
- When applying to competitive university courses, evidence of a range of interests and passions – such as Rock & Pop qualifications – could be the difference between one candidate and another being accepted.
- Pursuing contemporary music to a high level allows learners to join bands, orchestras and choirs, continuing their love of contemporary music into their future lives. These skills can really help learners' long-term wellbeing.

Find out more

The Rock & Pop team is here to offer any further information you need to help you decide whether these music qualifications are right for your students.

Whether you want to start with just one instrument or syllabus and build from there, or you want to continue your existing qualifications but add Rock & Pop as an alternative, our team will help you map out your offer.



Email our Rock & Pop team at: <https://www.trinityrock.com/contact-us>

Or call on: 020 7820 6100

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