

# RSL CLASSICAL

## Piano Syllabus

Free Choice Piece Guidance

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For general information about Free Choice Pieces please see:

<https://www.rslawards.com/free-choice-pieces/>

The following guidelines outline features that would normally be found within a free choice selection for piano to meet the grade level.

These features are indicative and would not all necessarily occur to the same degree within any particular piece. Standards can be measured by making a balanced judgement regarding various musical elements based on these guidelines. If in any doubt, please consult the pieces in the grade book for a guide.

It is not a prerequisite for free choice pieces to be approved by RSL Head Office, as the examiner will make a judgement about the suitability of the piece in the exam. However, if you are unsure about the eligibility of your piece(s) you can seek approval which incurs a fee of £10 per piece. Please email [\*\*info@rslawards.com\*\*](mailto:info@rslawards.com) with details of the proposed piece(s) (including a copy of the sheet music) and the grade / instrument you intend to enter for. A full reply will be given no later than 4 weeks after payment of the approval fee, which will be facilitated via an online link that we will e-mail to you.

## Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Debut

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Duration</b>                    | 40 secs – 1 min 20 secs   |
| <b>Key</b>                         | C major / A minor   |
| <b>Tempo</b>                       | 60-130 bpm  |
| <b>Time signatures</b>             | 4/4, 3/4  |
| <b>Rhythmic values</b>             | 8th notes and rests, occasional dotted quarter notes                                  |
| <b>Dynamics</b>                    | Very simple/sparse  |
| <b>Articulation &amp; phrasing</b> | Very simple/sparse  |
| <b>Melodic features</b>            | Mainly stepwise movement or small intervallic transitions                             |
| <b>Harmonic features</b>           | Occasional two-note chords in one hand (three-note chords will be between both hands) |
| <b>Rhythmic features</b>           | Non-complex rhythmic groupings  |

## Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 1

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Duration</b>                    | 50 secs – 1 min 30 secs   |
| <b>Key</b>                         | One sharp or one flat, or no sharps or flats but accidentals may occur within the piece   |
| <b>Tempo</b>                       | 60-140 bpm  |
| <b>Time signatures</b>             | 4/4, 3/4, 6/8   |
| <b>Rhythmic values</b>             | 8th notes and rests, dotted 8th notes and syncopations, occasional 16th notes, occasional non-complex triplet groupings                 |
| <b>Dynamics</b>                    | Simple dynamics   |
| <b>Articulation &amp; phrasing</b> | Simple changes in articulation and phrasing, occasional slurs and simple occasional use of staccato and accented articulation may occur |
| <b>Melodic features</b>            | Mainly stepwise movement or small intervallic transitions   |
| <b>Harmonic features</b>           | Two-note chords in one hand, occasional three-note chords, four-note chords will generally be spread across both hands                  |
| <b>Rhythmic features</b>           | Rhythms will be simple; simultaneously differing patterns will be limited   |

## Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 2

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Duration</b>                    | 1 min 10 secs – 1 min 45 secs  |
| <b>Key</b>                         | Two sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece)   |
| <b>Tempo</b>                       | 60-140 bpm   |
| <b>Time signatures</b>             | 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8  |
| <b>Rhythmic values</b>             | 16th notes and rests, dotted 8th notes and syncopations, occasional 16th note syncopation, non-complex triplet groupings. Simpler rhythms may appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work) |
| <b>Dynamics</b>                    | Simple dynamics [P, F, MP, MF], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)   |
| <b>Articulation &amp; phrasing</b> | Frequent changes in articulation and phrasing, slurs and simple use of staccato/accented articulation may occur  |
| <b>Melodic features</b>            | Greater intervallic transitions and more frequent accidentals may occur  |
| <b>Harmonic features</b>           | Two-note chords in one hand, occasional three-note chords, four-note chords will generally be spread across both hands   |
| <b>Rhythmic features</b>           | Rhythmic groupings may differ more frequently between hands  |

## Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 3

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Duration</b>                    | 1 min 30 secs –2 mins  |
| <b>Key</b>                         | Three sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece)   |
| <b>Tempo</b>                       | 60-150 bpm   |
| <b>Time signatures</b>             | 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8  |
| <b>Rhythmic values</b>             | 16th notes and rests, syncopation, triplet groupings. Simpler rhythms may appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work) |
| <b>Dynamics</b>                    | [P, F, MP, MF], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)   |
| <b>Articulation &amp; phrasing</b> | Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points  |
| <b>Melodic features</b>            | Greater intervallic transitions may appear spanning over an octave, and more frequent accidentals may occur  |
| <b>Harmonic features</b>           | Three note chords may appear in either hand, occasional four note chords in either hand may be present   |
| <b>Rhythmic features</b>           | Rhythmic groupings may differ more frequently between hands or occur simultaneously  |
| <b>Other features</b>              | Melody and accompaniment voicings may appear in one hand; musical passages may spread between both hands   |

## Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 4

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Duration</b>                    | 1 min 45 secs – 2 min 15 secs  |
| <b>Key</b>                         | Four sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece) There may be very occasional, simple key changes   |
| <b>Tempo</b>                       | 60-150 bpm   |
| <b>Time signatures</b>             | 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8. There may be very infrequent, simple time signature changes   |
| <b>Rhythmic values</b>             | 16th notes and rests in more complex groupings, occasional 32nd notes, syncopation. Simpler rhythms appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work) |
| <b>Dynamics</b>                    | [P, F, MP, MF], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)   |
| <b>Articulation &amp; phrasing</b> | Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points  |
| <b>Melodic features</b>            | Intervallic transitions may span over an octave and frequent accidentals may occur   |
| <b>Harmonic features</b>           | Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements   |
| <b>Rhythmic features</b>           | Rhythmic groupings may differ more frequently between hands or occur simultaneously  |
| <b>Other features</b>              | Variety in voicings and accompaniment styles within sections   |

## Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 5

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Duration</b>                    | 2 mins – 2 mins 45 secs  |
| <b>Key</b>                         | Five sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece) There may be occasional key centre changes   |
| <b>Tempo</b>                       | 60-160 bpm   |
| <b>Time signatures</b>             | 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8. There may be occasional time signature changes, or odd time signatures depending on the complexity of the music   |
| <b>Rhythmic values</b>             | 16th notes and rests in more complex groupings, occasional 32nd notes, 16th note syncopation. Simpler rhythms appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work) |
| <b>Dynamics</b>                    | [P, F, MP, MF], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)   |
| <b>Articulation &amp; phrasing</b> | Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points. More subtlety of control between legato and staccato will likely be required              |
| <b>Melodic features</b>            | Intervallic transitions over an octave may be regular, and frequent accidentals may occur  |
| <b>Harmonic features</b>           | Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements. Chordal cluster voicings may be more advanced or more frequent                       |
| <b>Rhythmic features</b>           | Rhythmic groupings may differ frequently between hands and occur simultaneously; faster note values may be more repetitive/continuous  |
| <b>Other features</b>              | Variety in voicings and accompaniment styles within sections   |



## Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 6

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Duration</b>                    | 2 min 15 secs – 3 mins   |
| <b>Key</b>                         | Six sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece) There may be key centre changes   |
| <b>Tempo</b>                       | 50-200 bpm   |
| <b>Time signatures</b>             | 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8. There may be more regular time signature changes, or occasional irregular time signatures   |
| <b>Rhythmic values</b>             | 16th notes and rests in more complex groupings, 16th note triplets, 32nd notes and frequent syncopation may occur. Simpler rhythms will appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work) |
| <b>Dynamics</b>                    | [P, F, MP, MF], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)   |
| <b>Articulation &amp; phrasing</b> | Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points  |
| <b>Melodic features</b>            | Intervallic transitions over an octave may be regular, and frequent accidentals may occur  |
| <b>Harmonic features</b>           | Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements. Chordal cluster voicings may be more advanced, denser and/or more frequent                                     |
| <b>Rhythmic features</b>           | Rhythmic groupings may differ frequently between hands and occur simultaneously; faster note values may be more repetitive/continuous  |
| <b>Other features</b>              | Variety in voicings and accompaniment styles within sections   |

## Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 7

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Duration</b>                    | 2 mins 30 secs – 3 mins 30 secs  |
| <b>Key</b>                         | Seven sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece) There may be more frequent key centre changes   |
| <b>Tempo</b>                       | 50-200 bpm   |
| <b>Time signatures</b>             | Any, with changes  |
| <b>Rhythmic values</b>             | Any, up to 32nd notes. Complex combinations beyond 16th note triplets will not be frequent, but variations may occur regularly. Simpler rhythms will appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work, faster tempos or more complex time signatures) |
| <b>Dynamics</b>                    | Any, with changes, and including strong contrasts  |
| <b>Articulation &amp; phrasing</b> | Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points. Subtlety of control between legato and staccato will be required  |
| <b>Melodic features</b>            | Intervallic transitions over an octave may be regular, and frequent accidentals may occur  |
| <b>Harmonic features</b>           | Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements. Chordal cluster voicings may be more advanced, denser and/or more frequent   |
| <b>Rhythmic features</b>           | Rhythmic groupings may differ frequently between hands and occur simultaneously; faster note values will be more repetitive/continuous and combine in both hands   |
| <b>Other features</b>              | Voicings and accompaniment styles within sections will show depth and variety of technique<br><br>Cadenzas may feature   |

## Free Choice Piece Guidelines | Grade 8

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Duration</b>                    | 2 mins 30 secs – 3 mins 45 secs  |
| <b>Key</b>                         | Any, with changes  |
| <b>Tempo</b>                       | 50-200 bpm   |
| <b>Time signatures</b>             | Any, with changes  |
| <b>Rhythmic values</b>             | Any. Complex combinations beyond 16th note triplets may be frequent and variations may occur regularly. Simpler rhythms will appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work, faster tempos or more complex time signatures) |
| <b>Dynamics</b>                    | Any, with changes, and including strong contrasts  |
| <b>Articulation &amp; phrasing</b> | Articulation and phrasing will have wide variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points throughout. Subtlety of control between legato and staccato will be required  |
| <b>Melodic features</b>            | Intervallic transitions over an octave may be regular, and frequent accidentals may occur  |
| <b>Harmonic features</b>           | Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements. Chordal voicings may be more advanced, denser and/or more frequent, and differ regularly   |
| <b>Rhythmic features</b>           | Rhythmic groupings may differ frequently between hands and occur simultaneously; faster note values will be more repetitive/continuous and combine in both hands   |
| <b>Other features</b>              | Voicings and accompaniment styles within sections will show advanced depth and variety of technique<br><br>Cadenzas may feature  |