



Victoria College Examinations
vcmexams.com

Theory of
CONTEMPORARY
Music



Victoria College of Music and Drama, London

Founded 1890

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Theory of Contemporary Music



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ABOUT THE VCM

Victoria College of Music and Drama, London Ltd. is an independent body providing examinations in Music, Speech, and Drama subjects. It has held examination sessions throughout the British Isles and certain overseas countries since it was founded in 1890. It no longer operates a full-time teaching institution. The VCM is a corporate member of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, Worshipful Company of Musicians, the Music Education Council, the Association of Teachers of Singing, the European Piano Teachers Association, the European Recorder Teachers Association, the Society of Recorder Players, the European String Teachers Association the Society of Teachers of Speech & Drama, the National Association of Music Educators, the Association of British Choral Directors, the Schools Music Association of Great Britain and is an institutional member of the College of Teachers and abides by its code of practice.

Further details about Victoria College can be found on our website:

[www. Vcmexams.com](http://www.Vcmexams.com)

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER EXAMINATION BODIES

The Grades I to VIII in this syllabus are intended to compare in general terms on a level for level basis with Grades 1 to 8 of most other examination bodies. VCM Theory examinations contain some more searching questions than those of some other boards.

REGULATIONS

All entries are accepted on the conditions laid down in the General Regulations, a copy of which is available on the College Website at www.vcmexams.com . Hard copies are available free of charge on request.

PASS MARKS

The pass mark for Grades I-VIII is 65%. To pass with Merit, 80%; with Distinction, 90%. Merit is shown as Honours in Ireland.

The pass mark for Medal examinations is 75%. The result of medal examinations is either "Award" or "No award". The pass mark for Diploma examinations is 75%. To pass with Honours, 85%.

VCM Contemporary Theory Exams

The VCM Contemporary Theory Exam for Jazz, Pop and Folk Musicians is a new exam based on the way that many contemporary musicians understand and communicate the music they play and compose. Many students learn to play in these genres without using much conventional staff notation but will benefit from knowledge of the structures underpinning their music.

The exam will test useful and practical abilities including:

Knowing the positions of notes on a keyboard

Being able to analyse musical scales, intervals and identifying patterns within melodic lines.

Understanding chords and their relationships in a chord sequence or chart.

Transposing and working in all keys.

Grades 1-4 will include a section for the candidate to show knowledge of their own voice or musical instrument/s and music they have learned.

Grades 5-8 will include a section on musical genres reflecting the kinds of music played by those most likely to take this exam. These will be one per grade and include

Jazz, Rock & Pop, Folk, & World Music.

Candidates will also be expected to be able to know and use several different contemporary musical styles. From Grade 5 Notation will also be included in the form of Top Line /Lead Sheets arrangements.

At all Grades there will be a section on groups of instruments and the following ones will be examined, but only one per grade:

Guitars, Keyboards, Folk Instruments, Brass Instruments, Percussion, Jazz Instruments, Woodwind Instruments, Electronica, Stringed instruments of the World

In the Contemporary Theory Exam you will need to know about

Key Signatures, Time Signatures, Names of Notes

Symbols used to indicate Rhythms & Rests

Major Scales, Minor Scales (Natural, Harmonic and Melodic), Modes

Degrees of the scales

Major, Minor, Dominant, Diminished, Augmented & Altered Chords

Simple Harmonising, Constructing Bass Lines, Melodic Sequences

Chord Numbers, Chord Sequences & Chord Symbols

Cadences, Transposing, Substitutions

Details of your own instrument/voice

Performers, Composers and Instruments from Jazz, Rock/Pop, Folk & World Music

Rhythmic Styles.

But you will not need to know about

Staff Notation (until Grade V); Latin, German or French terms; SATB arranging; Descants;

Classical Forms, such as Sonata and Symphony; Classical Composers.

Although being able to read music will not be examined until Grade 5, it of course will not be a handicap in any way to those candidates who wish to take the exam because of its contemporary content. Understanding and using Chord Diagrams and Tablature will also be included as optional questions.

VCM have prepared a set of 8 Study Guides which include the essential material and an example Exam, with answers, for each Grade.