



Recorded Digital Exams Guide

Your personalized guide to taking the Drum Channel & RSL performance exams via video submission.

Drum Channel and RSL Awards are excited to offer students the ability to submit video performances for exams. To ensure a fair and equitable process, we want to make sure that the exams are fit for purpose and adhere to a reasonable set of principles. This will allow us to provide the excellent level of fairness and consistency you would expect from a Drum Channel and RSL Awards certification process.

It is important for candidates to remember a few things to ensure their exam does not break any rules:

1. The recording needs to be continuous with no editing permitted, including setting up, tone and equipment adjustments, re-tuning, and any similar activity, and all dialogue either to the camera or with another person present.
2. If you make a mistake in a piece, you can restart if you are not more than 1/3 of the way through. You can restart up to two songs.
3. Candidates will be marked by an official RSL Awards examiner in exactly the same way that they would be in a face-to-face exam. Additionally, the examiner will record a short video message to candidates that delivers feedback on the exam performance.

Procedure Guide for Drum Channel and RSL Awards Exams:

For the video exams to be valid, there are a number of rules you must adhere to:

1. The exam needs to be captured as a single, continuous shot in real time - you must not stop or pause the camera in between pieces.
2. You must not use video editing software to cut out takes or reduce the time between pieces - the video should represent an exam taken in person as closely as possible, so do not worry about taking a little time setting up between pieces.

3. Your face must be visible in the video, so we can identify the person taking the exam - please refer to the framing guide for further details.
4. Candidates should introduce themselves by their full name, the exam (course) they are taking, as well as introducing each piece.
5. Candidates should clearly display for at least ten seconds valid photographic identification (such as Passport, Driving License, Student Union Card, ID Card) at the start of the video recording in line with our policy.
6. Another person is permitted to be present in the room to operate the camera. However, the other person is not permitted to interact with the candidate or intervene in the exam, with the following exceptions:
 - a. to introduce the candidate
 - b. to introduce each piece
7. Page turns must be facilitated by the candidate as in a face-to-face exam.
8. Students supplying recorded video exams recorded by mobile phone or camera where it has not been possible to create a successful balance between drums and backing track only need to supply video of their drum performance while listening to the backing track on headphones or in-ear monitoring – but as well as introducing each piece should audibly mark the final bar of the count-in before the performance begins, by clicking their sticks together. This will allow the examiner to sync the video to the backing track for assessment. Failure to indicate the count-in could make the synchronization between video and audio impossible and may affect the marks awarded or result in the exam being deemed inadmissible for assessment. Please also note that where there is evidence from the video that the candidate is not listening to a backing track while performing, this may affect the marks awarded, as performing to a backing track (where one is provided) is a requirement of the exam.
9. Check the video recording of your exam carefully before submission, making sure that each piece is introduced to camera, the picture and sound are of a reasonable quality and that the full exam has been captured.

Understanding Digital Video:

We understand that it can get very confusing just trying to understand all of the words and codes used by companies to try and sell us their latest gadgets. You are likely to have come across terms like 720P, 1080HD or 4k - but may not know what any of the numbers or letters stand for. This part of the guide should help you navigate through the jargon and make the process easier. With this in mind, please read the guidance below in full to help

you have the best chance of submitting a video that we can accept for submission and allow you complete your Drum Channel and RSL exam successfully.

Q: What frame size should I set my equipment to use?

A: As a very rough rule, the larger the number stated, the more detail is captured within each video frame you record - but there is a downside. More detail often means bigger digital files - which require more storage and take longer to upload to the internet. 4k video can, and often does, look fantastic - but the file sizes are big and can cause some compatibility issues too. At the other end of the spectrum, if the frame size is too small, the images can look blurry or pixelated when you try to view them on computer monitors or tablets, so it is best to go for a happy medium - striking a balance between detail and file size. Full HD (often referred to by the names 1080i or 1080P) is a very good happy medium. However, 720HD video can still look very good (720i or 720P) and will produce noticeable smaller file sizes. As a result, Drum Channel and RSL are asking for a minimum of 720HD videos and currently setting a maximum of 1080HD, to ensure your picture quality is good while keeping the file sizes manageable. Please note* The current file size limit is 2GB.

Q: What does the 'i' and/or 'P' after the numbers mean?

A: The 'i' stands for 'interlaced', meaning that the video file captured refreshes every other line of pixels every frame, so the video file contains half the amount of data. It refreshes very quickly, so you can't see the interlacing in a perfectly set up system. However, most mobile phones and cameras now only give you the option to record in a progressive format - meaning every line is captured. It's probably best to avoid interlaced formats if you can. If your settings don't mention it and your equipment is relatively modern, it's more than likely to be a progressive video format. But what do those numbers actually mean? Look at the chart below to see how each frame size relates to each other. This should also explain why 4k is so detailed, but why the file sizes are so big.

Q: What frame rate should I use?

A: This figure refers to how many frames your camera captures every second. A camera that captures 30 frames per second (30fps) is essentially capturing 30 images which, when played at the correct speed, gives a good impression of natural movement. Frame rate has an impact on the perceived quality of video to an extent - a very low frame rate will result in jerky video. However, you don't need a huge number of frames per second before things start to look pretty smooth. Feature films, for instance, typically use 24 frames per second. This is important, because mobile phone and camera manufactures are currently increasing the frame rates that their devices can capture, largely so extreme slow-motion video can be produced. While this is impressive, we don't need this - and the more frames your video contains, the bigger the file sizes get. So, it's for this reason Drum Channel and RSL are asking you to set your frame rate to somewhere between 24 fps (frames per second) and 30fps. Typically, this will be a choice between 25fps and 30fps, depending on the hardware. This will generate video that is smooth but should keep your video file size manageable.

Q: What video format should I use?

A: Mobile phones and consumer cameras largely gather video, process, and store them in a file, which makes it easier to share using the internet. The results vary, but a well-designed video format can do an excellent job of retaining a good sound and image while squeezing it into a small package. The most common formats are .MP4 files which are a good choice, as they are quite small and open across lots of devices. Additionally, .mov files and .avi files are also well supported.

TIP: You should ensure that there is enough battery charge and storage on the device for the full length of the exam. With many devices such as mobile phones it is useful to have a memory card installed if the device offers this as a feature to extend storage. The app used for making the recording would typically have its settings adjusted to set the card as the destination for recordings. To gauge the amount of storage required, a short 1-minute test recording could be made and then inspected for its size. This size would need to be multiplied with the number of minutes taken up by the exam.

Framing Guide:

To be confident your submitted video will be accepted for assessment, refer to the following guidance below:

1. We need to see you and your instrument clearly. Drums: Snare, bass drum, all toms, cymbals, pedals, and the player in the seated position, in full view throughout, with the kit presented side-on showing hands and feet. Getting a single camera shot of a drummer can be challenging, so try and find an angle that allows the examiner to see performer and equipment clearly: a slightly elevated position with the camera pointing slightly down can work well. *Note that some video angles can make recording audio difficult, with the volume of cymbals and snare drum resulting in distortion: striking a balance between video framing and audio may take some experimentation, but a compromise can be found. The camera shots are intended to replicate the same view as examiners would have in a face-to-face exam. If the available assessment vantage is not as per these guidelines, a resubmission may be required.
2. The shot needs to be reasonably well lit. Try to avoid shooting in dark environments, as this significantly affects the video quality. If you can record your performance in a space with good natural light or have access to good quality photographic or stage lighting, the end result will be better. Please avoid colored or moving lights in your videos too - we need to see you clearly.
3. Keep your footage as steady as possible. If you can use a tripod or some other kind of camera mount, that would be ideal. If you do need someone to hold a camera or

phone, please ensure you keep the video as stable as possible and avoid zooming in or out during the exam.

Audio Guide for Video:

Following these simple guidelines should help you create videos with reasonable audio:

1. Don't set your volume too loudly if using amplifiers or PA speakers. Mobile phones and video cameras record sound well most of the time, but struggle with high volume sound sources.
2. Spend some time getting a good balance between your performance and the backing track. RSL needs to clearly hear your performance when examining, but equally we want your performance to feel connected to the accompanying backing track. It is worth experimenting and producing some test recordings to ensure the balance is good.
3. Avoid very noisy or reverberant spaces. Your examiner wants to give your performance their full attention, so avoid recording your exam in a space where there is likely to be significant background noise. Also, while it may sound creatively pleasing, please avoid capturing your videos in very reverberant places. We want to hear as much of your signal as possible.
4. Don't 'over produce' your audio. Overall audio should replicate as closely as possible the effect of live studio performance as an examiner would normally hear it in a face-to-face exam, i.e ... the sound of the instrument, either acoustic or amplified through a speaker, balanced against the backing track played over a PA. Candidates should not mix or produce the audio post-recording, or add any further effects or processing, as this could obscure the examiner's ability to make a valid assessment of the performance, which may in turn impact negatively on the marking.

Recording drums for Drum Channel and RSL exams:

The acoustic drum kit provides some challenges when trying to capture clear audio, especially when filming with a mobile phone. While it is possible to record usable audio with a mobile phone with care, we highly recommend that drummers use a video device where they can have full control over the microphone's sensitivity and volume. Mobile phones do not allow you this control by default, so it is worth installing an app that gives that control, or using a microphone designed for use with a mobile phone that allows you to control the volume of the incoming signal.

Alternatively, you may wish to consider performing your exam to video using an electronic kit, where you will have greater control over your volume balance. Many electronic drum

modules provide the facility to plug in an audio device directly and allow the user to blend a backing track with the drum kit. However, we recognize that many drummers will prefer to play acoustic drum kits during assessment, so this approach is entirely optional.

Grading Criteria:

Drum Channel Method Grading Structure			
Element	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Song #1	12 - 14 out of 20 possible points	15 - 17 out of 20 possible points	18+ out of 20 possible points
Song #2	12 - 14 out of 20 possible points	15 - 17 out of 20 possible points	18+ out of 20 possible points
Song #3	12 - 14 out of 20 possible points	15 - 17 out of 20 possible points	18+ out of 20 possible points
Song #4	12 - 14 out of 20 possible points	15 - 17 out of 20 possible points	18+ out of 20 possible points
Song #5	12 - 14 out of 20 possible points	15 - 17 out of 20 possible points	18+ out of 20 possible points
Total Score	60%+	75%+	90%+

Rubric:

Category	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Score Level	18-20	15-17	12-14	6-11	0-5
Command of Instrument	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Sync or Pulse	Performance consistently synchronized to the music and the internal pulse is maintained	Performance mostly synchronized to the music and the internal pulse is maintained	Performance sometimes synchronized to the music and the internal pulse is generally maintained	Performance not synchronized to the music or an internal pulse is maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Rhythmic Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Style & Expression	Consistently convincing projection of the music	Mostly convincing projection of the music	Some convincing projection of the music	Music not projected convincingly	No attempt and/or incomplete performance