# LIVE VIDEO EXAMS: LVE@HOME
# GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES

## OVERVIEW

This provides full guidance on the set-up and preparation of Live Video Exams at Home. Please also see the **Getting Started Guide** which provides a basic overview.  This guidance should be read in full by parents and/or teachers who facilitate the exam.

**Live Video Exams are conducted by video conference between the candidate at their home and the examiner based at another location. Backing tracks, confidential audio and visual materials are presented to the candidate via streams controlled by the examiner.**

While RSL's established Live Video Exams (LVE) format is venue-based, this new variation (LVE@Home) enables candidates to take the exam from home without attending an exam venue. This is not only in the short run a helpful mitigation of lockdown restrictions caused by the pandemic, but is also a way of reaching candidates for whom it is inconvenient or even impossible to reach an exam venue, for example in remote regions, because of lack of mobility / ability to travel, or in countries where we do not examine.

We use standards-based technology which runs on a wide range of devices.
Please follow the "Self Tech Check" which is provided alongside this document, to confirm that the requirements for Live Video Exams are met.

**If the requirements are not met the exam will not go ahead. Please contact info@rslawards.com ahead of the exam day for any queries or if you are unable to meet the requirements.**

## EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

1. **Laptop / Desktop computer + screen**
   - Internet connection, ideally through ethernet cable
   - Webcam
   - We use Zoom – please refer to Desktop client requirements
   - VLC Media Player
   - Web browser (Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox)
   - Audio output connected to speakers (audio will be streamed from the examiner)
   - Microphone: We recommend to use an external, good quality microphone. Options include USB microphones such as RØDE NT-USB mini , or a non-USB microphone connected via the analog microphone input. Alternatively, a built-in microphone can be used.
   - If an external microphone is used, a stand or tabletop stand in conjunction with table is needed.
   - For Grade Exams (not Performance Certificate exams) we recommend to use a second device (for example another laptop or large tablet) to view music notation in exercises. This device requires a screen size large enough to read music from. It needs to be connected to the internet with Google Chrome or Firefox installed. The device does not need a webcam but must be connected to the internet with Google Chrome or Firefox installed
   - For Drums and Piano Grade Exams, the second device is <u>required</u> due to the specific camera angle.

**2. Speakers**
- Speakers connected to the computer which have sufficient sound level to balance with the instrument
- Depending on the volume of the instrument, options include: Larger Bluetooth speaker, monitor speakers, small PA speakers, HiFi speakers
- Speakers should be positioned to face the microphone (external or built-in).

**3. Internet connection:**
- Minimum (as specified by Internet Service Provider): 5Mbps download / 1 Mbps upload
- We will ask you to run a customised speed test prior to the exam
- We strongly recommend to connect by Ethernet cable if possible, to avoid variabilities and complexities of Wifi
- During the exam the internet connection should not be used for other video streaming or substantial downloading / uploading.

## ENVIRONMENT

- Quiet, private location in a walled room
- Bright lighting (day light or artificial light), ideally illuminating the candidate and instrument from their front
- The room should not be highly reverberant

## SET-UP (OVERVIEW)
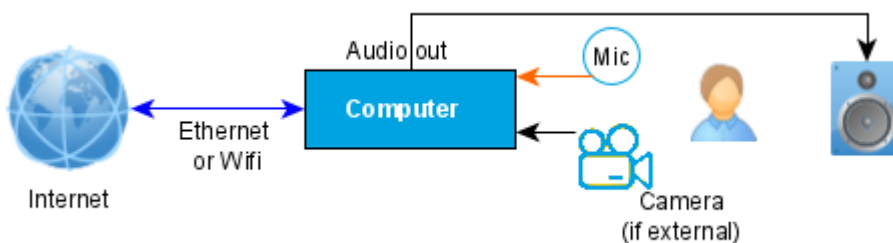


## SET-UP AND TESTING

- Ensure internet connectivity, run speed test at http://rslawards.speedtestcustom.com/
- Ensure audio output is playing back on speakers at sufficient levels, avoiding distortion (NB: ensure that computer system volume is up)
- If an external microphone is used, connect the Microphone and ensure it's working
- The device needs to be easily visible and close to the candidate in order to read sheet music and to see the examiner.
- The camera will need to provide a clear view of the candidates and instruments being examined. For Drums and Piano exams, the view needs to be from the side, and the examiner needs to see the candidate in full (hands, instrument and feet). For these exams a second device, connected to the internet with Google Chrome or Firefox installed, is to be set up in a position that is convenient for the candidate to read music from.
- Download Zoom Client app: https://zoom.us/download#client_4meeting

- We recommend conducting a generic test with Zoom via https://zoom.us/test
- At the bottom of the screen, click on the small upwards arrow next to the microphone symbol, select "Audio Settings …"
- Select the correct microphone, checking that it shows Input Level
- **Under the heading "Music and Professional Audio", tick the box** *Show meeting option to "Turn On Original Sound"*
    i. In older versions of Zoom the setting is found under "Advanced"
- **Tick the boxes** *High fidelity music mode* **and** *Echo Cancellation*
    i. In older versions of Zoom these setting do not exist and are implied when activating "Original Sound"
- Close settings
- **On the video screen, at the top click on button "Turn On Original Sound" to activate** *Original Sound* (i.e. bypassing audio processing)**. For the duration of the exam the** *Original Sound* **needs to remain turned on. When** *Original Sound* **is activated the text on the button changes to "Turn Off Original Sound"**. *Please note that this setting is very important to ensure that audio from the full performance space including PA is captured and relayed clearly to the examiner*
- Install VLC (https://www.videolan.org/vlc/).
- The web browser needs to play back audio (for metronome). This can be tested with http://stream.rslawards.com/clicktest.html : Please click the "Start click" button and the browser will play a metronome.  To stop the metronome, close the tab.
- Please disable power saving / security locking which could lock the screen during the exam
- The device should be connected to the charger

## BEFORE THE EXAM SESSION

1. **Administrative**
- Any sheet music for free choice pieces must be sent to RSL at least three days in advance of the exam
- Candidates taking exams at Grades 6-8 are required to show the examiner their photo ID

2. **Information from RSL:**
- We will provide a link for the exam Zoom video conference and a time when to connect
- We will also provide an address to be used in VLC for the streams to be received – the Steward will guide you through setting this up on the exam day
- We will also provide a link to be opened in the browser (Chrome or Firefox). This will display any musical score streamed by the examiner and will also play back the metronome click controlled by the examiner
- A link  to a chat window to ensure messages can be conveyed to you from the examiner or steward.

## STARTING THE EXAM

Please have everything set up as per the section "BEFORE THE EXAM SESSION" and prepare the instrument. At the time provided by RSL please connect with the Zoom link. Please also open the chat link where the Steward or Examiner can contact you, independent from Zoom.

You will be greeted by the RSL Virtual Steward who will perform checks to ensure the setup is working. The checks the Steward will perform are as follows:

- Video from candidate webcam
- Sound from candidate microphone
- Original Sound setting
- Sound from Steward microphone audible on candidate's speakers
- Guiding through setting up VLC
- Steward will play a track for soundcheck (played by stream on VLC)
- Soundcheck track should be audible on candidate's speakers
- Steward will display a test image which should be visible in browser. Ensure the image is clear and can be viewed in full without any part being cut off (especially in terms of height). Agree the best size selector (S/M/L) to use based on the candidate's screen. (Note that the initial default size is S, but you may need to select M or L followed by S in order to see the correct scaling. Also, the use of 'Full Screen' and/or adjusting browser view/zoom may be helpful/necessary)
- Steward will play a metronome which should be audible on candidate's speakers.
- Balance between backing track and instrument

If everything is working you will be passed on to the Examiner or – if the Examiner is not available yet – be asked to wait. This is done using Zoom's Breakout Room functionality. Please see https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005769646-Participating-in-breakout-rooms for guidance on breakout rooms for participants.

If any of the technology elements are not working the Steward may ask you to wait in a separate breakout room or – depending on the matter – the exam may have to be rescheduled.

## DURING THE EXAM

- If the candidate is a child, a parent / guardian or other nominated adult needs to assist with setting up for the exam and needs to be available outside of the room for the duration of the exam. The adult's role is to assist with any technical issues during the exam and to ensure the environment remains undisturbed during the exam.
- The exam should proceed in the same way as a live exam, as if the examiner was present in the room with the candidate.
- The examiner will stream backing audio for performance pieces, technical exercises, sight reading / quick study pieces and ear tests.
- Backing tracks for Free Choice Pieces need to be played back in the exam room. Candidates who are confident in operating playback equipment for backing tracks are encouraged to do so themselves. This will enable them to set an appropriate sound level/balance. Where this is not possible (for example where the candidate is too young and/or lacks the confidence to do this), the parent/guardian or nominated adult may be present to perform this function *for this part of the exam only.* The adult should leave the exam room after Free Choice Pieces have been played
- Count-ins will be given using a standard count-in of 2 bars, or 8 clicks in 4/4 time (or 6 clicks in 3/4 time), for technical exercises and unseen tests. (Please note this is different from Face-to-face procedure for unseen tests where we provide only 4 clicks)
- For Vocals, the Technical Exercises groups A, B and C will be run with the metronome ON (ie. not optional for groups A and C as for Face-to-Face exams)

- For General Musicianship Questions, the examiner will ask the candidate to place the music in front of the camera (eg. by placing a music stand in front of the camera, and/or moving the position of the camera) so they can point to the music, and will refer to bar numbers etc. when answering questions
- At the end of the exam the examiner will thank the candidate and indicate the exam has finished in the normal way. The candidate ends the Zoom call and closes all windows related to the exam.
- Please note that in certain circumstances another examiner may join the conference call for training and moderation purposes

# PROBLEMS WITH CONNECTIVITY / TECHNOLOGY DURING THE EXAM

- In the event of a problem with the audio due to streaming / buffering issues, the candidate's performance / response may be affected, but the examiner will see and hear what happens via the video conference
- There may also be a problem with the video conference which affects communication between the candidate and the examiner
- Additionally, technical issues may arise which are not related to streaming or videoconferencing, eg. with the candidate's audio or speaker set-up
- **Candidates need note these risks and be prepared to follow procedures as outlined.**
- In the event of a restart of any exam component being necessary due to technical issues, the restart will be assessed and not the original attempt
- In the event of small or intermittent video/sound quality issues, the exam will proceed as normal wherever possible, without a restart / repeat. Examiners will take into account any impact on the candidate's performance when making the assessment
- Where the examiner is not able to make a valid assessment, or the candidate feels their performance has been adversely affected and is not comfortable to move on, exercises / tracks may be restarted or repeated **up to a maximum of three times**. After the fourth attempt the exam **will** proceed. If this is not possible, it may be necessary to pause or terminate the exam session, as the connectivity issues would seem to be sufficiently serious to prevent the exams from proceeding (see below)
- Examiners will not go back to repeat earlier sections at the end of the exam, nor will candidates normally be permitted to come back to complete exams later. Where a meaningful response / assessment has not been possible for one or more components, this will be referred by the examiner to Head Office
- In the event that connectivity issues are too severe for the exam to proceed, exams will be suspended until the issues are resolved. The procedure for managing this will vary according to circumstances. If it is still possible to communicate through the videoconference, the examiner will inform the candidate that the exam cannot continue. In such a case RSL will reschedule the exam.
- This contingency should only need to invoked rarely, if at all, but is accounted for here in order to affirm that it is a possibility and that there's no need to 'panic' if this point is reached, but instead due process as described above should be followed. Examiners will suspend exams if they feel that is warranted. The same thing would in fact apply with Face-to-Face exams, eg. if there's a fire, bomb scare, or any other event which makes it impossible to continue

*These guidelines will be updated regularly.*