

## Your Personalised Guide to **taking RSL Graded Acting Exams via Recorded Video Submission**

Video has become a much easier tool to access over the past few years and even modest smart phones, tablets and cameras are capable of producing a good image and sound if you take a little bit of time to understand the hardware and follow a few simple guidelines.

RSL Awards is excited about the possibilities video submission of exams presents, but we do still need to make sure that the exams are fit for purpose and adhere to a reasonable set of principles, to ensure we can still provide the excellent level of fairness and consistency you would expect from the RSL Awards exam process.

RSL Awards can accept and mark Graded Acting exams via video submission at all grades.

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

1. The performance needs to be captured as a single, continuous shot in real time - you must not stop or pause the camera in between scenes.
2. Candidates should introduce themselves by stating their full name and the exam grade they are taking, as well as introducing each scene (title, author, character(s)). Grade 1-8 candidates should also include a brief outline of the context, as required by the syllabus.
3. You must not use video editing software to cut out takes or reduce the time between scenes, or between the final scene and the Knowledge and Understanding - the video should represent an exam taken in person as closely as possible, so do not worry about taking a little time to reset between scenes.
4. After the performance, with the camera still rolling, present your responses to the chosen questions as required for the Knowledge and Understanding component.
5. Your whole face and body must be visible in the video - please refer to the framing guide for further details.
6. For Grades 6-8, candidates should clearly display valid photographic identification (such as Passport, Driving Licence, Student Union Card, ID Card) for at least ten seconds at the start of the video recording, in line with our policy.
7. Another person is permitted to be present in the room in order to operate the camera. However, the other person is not permitted to interact with the candidate or intervene in the exam.
8. Check the video recording of your exam carefully before submission, making sure that each scene is introduced to camera, the picture and sound are of a reasonable quality and that all scenes have been captured in full.
9. Upload the unedited video of the performance of your scene(s), followed by your presentation of prepared responses to chosen questions (for the Knowledge and Understanding component).

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 on top of the usual marksheet feedback.

## How to register for an Exam

To register please use the relevant online form, found [here](#):

**Please note:** there are two different forms. The form in the first tab is exclusively for schools, organisations, venues or exam centres. The form in the second tab is for independent candidates. Schools/venues are able to book face-to-face exams, live video exams and recorded video exams. Independent candidates are able to book recorded video exams only.

Should you have any queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at [paa@rslawards.com](mailto:paa@rslawards.com)

After uploading the recording of the exam, the candidate can relax and we will send a notification when the result is available. We also provide access to a short video of the examiner providing feedback.

We will then produce the official qualification certificate which confirms the award of the qualification. A minimum of 'Pass' is required to receive the certificate.

## Video Exam Checklist

- Submit copies of your performance pieces at the point of booking your exam, or as soon after as possible.
- Record the performance of the scene(s), followed by the Knowledge and Understanding, in one take. Ensure you:
  - introduce yourself and each scene (title, author, character)
  - (grades 1-8 only) include a brief outline of the context as required by the syllabus
  - (grades 6-8 only) display valid photographic identification as required (see point 6, above)
- Only the candidate(s) in the room and someone to film the recording
- Upload the unedited video:
  - Premiere candidates submit the video of the performance of their scene
  - Grade Debut-8 candidates submit the video of their scene(s) followed by the Knowledge and Understanding

## 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 letter 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 RSL exam successfully.

### **What frame size should I set my equipment to use?**

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 and 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, RSL is asking for a minimum of 720HD videos and currently setting a maximum of 1080HD, to ensure your picture quality is good whilst keeping the file sizes manageable. Please note that the current file size limit is 2GB.

### **What does the 'i' and/or 'P' after the numbers mean?**

The 'i' stands for 'interlaced', meaning that the video file captured refreshes every other line of pixels every frame, so the video file actually contains half the amount of data. It refreshes very quickly, so you can't see the inter-lacing 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:

### **What frame rate should I use?**

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 manufacturers are currently increasing the frame rates that their devices can capture, largely so extreme slow-motion video can be produced. Whilst this is impressive, Rockschoool don't need this - and the more frames your video contains, the bigger the file sizes get again.

So, it's for this reason RSL is 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.

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.



### What video format should I use?

Mobile phones and consumer cameras largely gather video and process them 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 both quite small and open across lots of devices, but .mov files and .avi files are also pretty well supported. If you are at all confused or concerned, it may be worth contacting RSL to check that your submitted video files will open.

#### 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. In order 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. Please see the syllabus guide for exam durations.

### Framing Guide for Video

- We need to have a good view of the performance - you should capture your face and whole

body clearly in the video frame.

- The room you choose should have easily enough space for any movement required in your scene(s), and free of furniture that may get in the way when you are performing. You may consider marking the boundaries.
- You could record yourself moving around the space, and watch the recording back, carefully checking that you will be in shot throughout your performance(s)
- The shot needs to be well lit:  
Please try and avoid shooting in very 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. Ensure you are lit from the front, and don't have a window behind you. Please avoid coloured or moving lights in your videos too - we need to see you clearly.
- 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

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 background noise. Whilst you can record reasonable audio using a mobile phone in most instances, there are a number of devices you may wish to consider if you want to ensure your audio is of a good quality. Please see below for a list of devices and apps that RSL recommends that can help you improve audio quality when creating your video exam.

Recommended audio / video devices and apps

Microphone for use with mobile phones (check for handset compatibility):

Zoom iQ7 Shure MV88 RØDE iXY  
RØDE VideoMic

Mobile phone video apps that allow manual control of audio:

- FV-5 (supported Android devices)
- Filmic Pro (IOS devices and some supported Android devices)

Dedicated video cameras for recording high quality audio:

- Zoom Q4
- Zoom Q2n

We hope this set of guidelines has helped you understand the RSL graded syllabus video exam process and provided a clear set of guidelines for capturing and submitting exam material. Should you require any further advice, please contact us on: [info@rslawards.com](mailto:info@rslawards.com)