GRADUATE PLACEMENT EXAM INFORMATION

The Placement Exam is designed to assist the student and advisor in choosing those courses that will best strengthen the student’s musical knowledge and training in his/her Master’s program.

The exam is offered at the beginning of Fall, and the end of Spring terms. The student is required to sign up for the exam in the Music Office well before the exam date stipulated in the departmental acceptance letter. On the day of the Exam, meet outside the Music Office (LH 231) at 8:45 am. The exam finishes at 1:00 pm.

EXAM TOPICS

AURAL SKILLS

Testing of Melodic, Harmonic, and Rhythmic Dictation Ability 25 minutes

Preparation: 1) Practice writing sixteen-measure patriotic songs, seasonal carols, or American folk tunes from memory, without a piano. 2) Practice taking four-part SATB harmonic dictation in both major and minor keys. 3) Practice notating rhythms without pitch. There are many music theory web sites that have practice materials that you might find useful.

Ten general music history listening samples 30 minutes

Preparation: Be prepared to write about period/style of a composition, genre, instrumentation, formal structure, possible composer, and other details that give the work its character.

MUSIC THEORY

A diagnostic examination is administered to assess each student’s ability in two areas. The first area is voice leading in a four-part texture, given figured bass symbols. The second area is harmonic analysis.

Figured Bass 20 minutes
Given a soprano line and figured bass symbols, write the alto, tenor, and bass voices according to common practice, showing pivot chords if a modulation occurs.

Harmonic Analysis 30 minutes
Given brief excerpts from the common practice period, identify the key and harmonic function of each chord using roman numerals. Include inversions, non-harmonic tones, and pivot chords if a modulation occurs.

Preparation: Review analytical concepts and voice leading, using a current text such as Tonal Harmony by Kostka & Payne. Solve part-writing examples in the text. Analyze Bach chorales and Romantic piano literature (Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, etc.). Practice speed and accuracy.

Students who do not demonstrate proficiency will be required to take the Graduate Theory Review course (MUS 512).

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MUSIC HISTORY

The Graduate Entrance Examination in History is a diagnostic test designed to assess entering graduate students’ knowledge of music history as presented in traditional undergraduate history sequences. Students are expected to have a basic knowledge of genres, composers, compositions, and musical styles from the Middle Ages through the Twentieth Century. The examination will be divided by historical era and will include questions and recording and score excerpts from all musical periods.

Students may prepare for the examination by reviewing Grout’s *History of Western Music*. All recording and score excerpts will be similar to or taken from the companions to Grout’s text, the *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, and the *Norton Recorded Anthology of Western Music*. Although most questions may be subjective, the information for the questions will be taken from the *Instructor’s Manual for a History of Western Music*.

Students who do not pass the history portion of the exam will be required to take Graduate History Review (MUS 529) before being allowed to register for advanced graduate history courses.

SCORE RECOGNITION

The ultimate test of both theoretical and historical understanding of music is score recognition. There will be five examples in various styles, periods, and genre to identify. Keep in mind the following general guidelines while preparing for this part of the Exam.

1. Identify the composer, work and date if possible.
2. If you do not know the work make an educated guess by considering and discussing the following factors:
   - Harmonic vocabulary and its historical implications
   - Texture, instrumentation
   - Rhythmic components as related to possible era or composer
   - Melodic structure
   - Form
   - Genre (symphony, band, chamber ensemble, opera, oratorio, chorus?)
   - Write about the obvious. Do not take any basic characteristics of a score for granted and omit them.
3. IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT TO WRITE ABOUT AS MANY ASPECTS OF THE WORK AS YOU CAN, EVEN IF YOU RECOGNIZE THE WORK AND COMPOSER!
4. Practice looking at numerous scores and addressing these topics IN WRITING. Review by studying anthologies such as Norton and Burkhardt.
5. When practicing, limit your examination and writing time to ten minutes per score.
6. During the exam, you may write either directly on the scores, or on a separate piece of paper.