

Graduate Placement Exams in Music Theory

All entering graduate students at the Eastman School are required to take a written and aural theory placement examination (total time: 3 hours). There are two different exams, one for MA/MM students and one for DMA/PhD students (students entering the doctoral program with an MM or MA from Eastman must still take the DMA/PhD exam). These examinations serve two purposes. First, for all students, the exams assess students' preparation and, thus, permit appropriate placement in theory courses. Second, for all doctoral students, successful performance on the exam satisfies the basic musical skills degree requirement.

Graduate students (both masters and doctoral) whose theory skills do not meet the minimum level will be placed in the relevant graduate remedial courses (TH 117 and/or 118). Masters-level students must pass each required remedial course at Eastman with a minimal grade of B-. Doctoral-level students must pass each required remedial course with a minimal grade of B+. Passing TH 117 and/or TH 118 with a grade of B+ or better satisfies the doctoral skills degree requirement.

In the rare case that a doctoral student does not pass TH 117 and/or TH 118 with a grade of B+ or better, the student will be required to meet with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies before he or she is allowed to register for additional coursework. The Dean, in consultation with the student's applied teacher, will advise the student on the appropriate next step(s), such as additional remediation in specific areas or discussion of alternative career paths.

The exams contain the following:

Aural:

- I. Melodic dictation. Notation of a four- to eight-measure melody from the literature. Roman numeral analysis required.
- II. Bass-line dictation. Notation of a bass line that completes a four-voice texture from the literature. Roman-numeral analysis required.
- III. Two-voice dictation. Notation of a two-voice example.

Written:

- I. Figured bass realization (SATB format plus roman-numeral analysis). The realization requires knowledge of non-harmonic tones, diatonic harmony, applied chords, mixture, and modulation.
- II. Melody harmonization (adding a bass line only or adding three lower voices in SATB format. Roman-numeral analysis required). Students are required to set a melody in common-practice chorale style using appropriate harmonies and voice leading. Specific compositional devices are also required (for example, non-harmonic tones, six-four chords, applied chords [secondary dominants], modal mixture harmonies, and Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords).

- III. Formal and stylistic analysis. A score, with accompanying questions regarding specific passages will be given. Questions concern harmonies or musical procedures (e.g., canon, invertible counterpoint, etc.), cadences, phrase and period structure, and key relations.
- IV. *DMA/PhD students only*. A bass line, figures, and the opening motive in an upper-voice are given. Based on this material, students will complete a two-voice counterpoint of approximately eight measures in eighteenth-century Baroque-style.

Individual Interview (DMA/PhD students only):

This final step in assessing doctoral students' theory skills is a private interview with a faculty member from the theory department for fifteen-minutes, during which time they will discuss analytical issues in a given piece from the literature. During this process, a student's sight-singing and keyboard skills may also be addressed.

Books Recommended for Placement Exam Study:

Aldwell & Schachter: "Harmony and Voice Leading" (3rd edition)

Clendinning & Marvin: "The Musician's Guide to Theory & Analysis"

Gauldin: "Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music" (2nd edition)

Laitz: "The Complete Musician: An Integrated Approach to Tonal Theory, Analysis, and Listening" (2nd edition)

Laitz and Bartlette: "Graduate Review of Tonal Theory: A Recasting of Common-Practice Harmony, Form, and Counterpoint"