Graduate Entrance Examinations in Music Theory and Aural Skills
School of Music
University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana

(updated Summer 2016)

The Graduate Entrance Exam in Music Theory and Aural Skills is required of all entering graduate students, with the exception of those in music education. It is offered at the beginning of every semester. Students may take the theory portion of the exam twice (except for score reading, which may be taken as many semesters as necessary). After the second attempt, any deficiencies in Part 1 or Part 2 must be remedied by coursework. Music 502A (Graduate Review of Common Practice Music) will be offered in Fall 2016 and Music 502B (Graduate Review of 20th-Century Music) will be offered in Spring 2017; however, you must test out of or take 502A before enrolling in 502B. The three-hour theory exam consists of the three parts outlined below. Some suggested study materials for each part are also provided.

You must pass the aural skills exam and all three parts of the theory exam before you can graduate. If you do not pass the first time, you are responsible for retaking the test when it is offered as regularly scheduled at the beginning of every semester. We do not administer make-up or individual exams.

Part I: Common Practice Music (Writing and Analysis)

You will be asked to harmonize a melody or figured bass involving basic rules of four-part chorale writing, chromatic harmonies (including applied or secondary chords, borrowed chords or modal mixture, the Neapolitan, and augmented sixth chords), and modulation to closely related keys.

You will also be asked to analyze a short piece from the 19th century (e.g., by a composer such as Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Brahms, etc.) or given excerpts from several such pieces. Questions may involve phrase structure, chromatic harmony, modulation techniques, and form.

You should also be familiar with the typical forms of common practice music, including binary and ternary forms, rondo, and sonata.

Students who do not pass this section of the exam will need to take MUS 502A.

Recommended study materials:
Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne, Tonal Harmony
Steven G. Laitz, The Complete Musician
Steven G. Laitz, Graduate Review of Tonal Theory

Any one of these is a good source to use in preparation for the exam.
Part II: Twentieth-Century Music (Writing and Analysis)

You will be asked several short questions about common pitch materials in early 20th-century music (e.g., modes, pentatonic scales, octatonic scales, etc., and performing basic set theory and serial operations).

You will also be asked to analyze two short excerpts from pieces from the first half of the twentieth century. One will involve basic techniques of set theory or serialism (e.g., Schönberg, Webern, Berg, etc.) The other will involve early 20th-century approaches to tonality (e.g., Debussy, Stravinsky, Bartók, etc.) Questions may also involve early 20th-century approaches to rhythm and texture.

Students who do not pass this section of the exam will need to take MUS 502B (passing part 1 of this test or taking MUS 501A is a prerequisite for MUS 502B).

Recommended study materials:
Stefan Kostka, Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music
Joel Lester, Analytic Approaches to Twentieth-Century Music
Miguel Roig-Francoli, Understanding Post-Tonal Music
Any one of these is a good source to use in preparation for the exam.

Part III: Score Reading

You will be asked to transcribe short excerpts from alto and tenor clef to treble or bass clef and to transcribe short excerpts from the written pitch of standard orchestral transposing instruments (e.g., clarinet in Bb, Horn in F, etc.) to the sounding pitch.
The **Graduate Entrance Exam in Aural Skills** is also required of all entering graduate students, with the exception of those in music education. It is offered at the beginning of every semester, and we do not administer make-up or individual exams. Students may take the aural skills exam as many times as necessary. Deficiencies in aural skills may also be remedied by successfully completing Music 108G, which will be offered in both Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. The one-hour aural skills exam consists of:

1) Recognizing and writing intervals.
2) Recognizing and writing chord qualities (triads and seventh chords, including inversions).
3) A short two-part melodic dictation.
4) A short harmonic dictation, requiring outer voices and Roman numerals and using diatonic harmonies and applied (or secondary) chords.
5) A short rhythmic dictation.

Recommended study materials:
Auralia 4 software
Either of these is a good source to use in preparation for the exam.