

School of Music  
College of Creative Arts  
West Virginia University  
Graduate Theory Entrance Exam  
Purpose, Description, Administration, Policies

Purpose of the Graduate Theory Entrance Exam (GTEE)

- to evaluate the incoming graduate student's preparation and skills in basic musicianship and analysis necessary to professional growth and performance.
- to determine the student's readiness for advanced work as measured by the level of skills and knowledge expected in MUSC 262 (Written Theory 3), MUSC 263 (Aural Theory 4), and MUSC 264 (Written Theory 4) in the School of Music, West Virginia University.

Who Should Take this Exam?

All newly admitted graduate students, including graduates of West Virginia University, are required to take the GTEE. Students at West Virginia University continuing from a master's into a doctoral program who have already taken the GTEE as a master's student are not required to take the GTEE.

Preparation

The Area of Music Theory/Composition strongly recommends that all incoming graduate students review prior to the exam their skills and understanding of the material and topics listed below. A poor performance in any of these areas will constitute evidence of one or more deficiencies that must be addressed before the student will be permitted to enroll in advanced analysis courses in music theory.

Currently, the freshman-sophomore sequence of written theory at WVU uses locally generated materials. This curriculum is drawn from Allen Forte, *Tonal Harmony in Concept and Practice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., and Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter, *Counterpoint in Composition*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. The freshman aural theory sequence uses Gary S. Karpinski, *Manual for Ear Training and Sight Singing*; Gary S. Karpinski and Richard Kram, *Anthology for Sight Singing*; Gary S. Karpinski, *Manual for Ear Training and Sight Singing Student Recordings* (CD-ROM); and James O. Froseth and Albert Blaser, MLR Verbal Association Skills CD. The sophomore sequence uses Robert Ottman and Nancy Rogers, *Music for Sight Singing*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Both written and aural sequences also use MacGamut Software.

Selection of text and/or curriculum is subject to change. Substantial changes which affect the content of the GTEE will be posted on the Division of Music's web site.

Students with particular questions regarding either their previous training and/or the content of any of the questions on the GTEE should contact the Director of Graduate Studies by letter, phone, or email. Questions will be directed to the proper faculty for prompt response and study suggestions.

Description of Content and Skills

## Aural (Ear Training)

**Melodic Dictation.** Correct notation of pitch and rhythm in treble or bass clef of a tonal melody no more than 25 beats in length. This might include modulation to a closely related key.

**Harmonic Dictation.** Correct notation of the outer voices (soprano and bass), figured bass numbers, and roman numeral chord functions of a tonal choral composition 7–9 chords in length. Chord vocabulary can consist of diatonic and chromatic harmonies, including secondary (applied) dominants and leading tone chords, borrowed chords, Neapolitan sixths, augmented sixths, and modulation to closely related keys.

**Rhythmic Dictation.** Correct notation of rhythms in simple, compound, and asymmetrical meters.

**Sight Singing.** Students should be able to sing a moderately chromatic and/or modulatory melody at sight, demonstrating expertise in some system of verbal-association (movable do, fixed do, numbers, etc.). Students should be able to produce a notated rhythm using a neutral syllable such as “ta” while conducting the meter.

## Written (Composition)

Students should be able to spell and resolve dissonant and/or chromatic chords in a four-voice choral texture, following generally accepted rules of spacing, doubling, and voice leading. Students should be able to realize in a four-voice choral texture a tonal figured bass, following generally accepted rules of spacing, doubling, and voice leading. Chord vocabulary can consist of diatonic and chromatic harmonies, including secondary (applied) dominants and leading tone chords, Neapolitan sixths, augmented sixths, and various diatonic and chromatic modulation techniques. Conventional non-chord tone patterns (e. g., passing tone, neighbor tone, suspension, etc.) are included. In addition, the student should be able to give a plausible interpretation of the chord functions, using Roman numeral harmonic theory.

## Pop Chords

Students should be able to demonstrate an acquaintance with a system of pop chord symbols by identifying and labeling the harmonies in a 4–5 measure segment from an excerpt realized in five voices taken from the repertoire of the America Popular Ballad (c. 1920–1964).

## Analysis

Students should be able to identify and discuss in clear and coherent English the compositional processes contributing to the creation of form in representative styles of Western art music between 1700 and c. 1911. These styles include: High Baroque, Classical, Romantic, early Modern. Students may choose whatever analytic tools or techniques they wish. Responses will be evaluated according to the appropriateness of the chosen technique and the extent to which the analysis is consistent with the content of the piece as represented in the score.

## Special Area Exams for Graduate Students in Theory and Composition

Exams in more specialized areas of sixteenth- and eighteenth-century counterpoint, orchestration, and electronic music are available for students wishing to demonstrate proficiency in subject areas which are undergraduate prerequisites for graduate study in Theory and Composition. These must be arranged in advance.

## Procedures and Policies

The GTEE is given during registration week on the Thursday afternoon prior to the Monday beginning classes, the day the University reserves for diagnostic testing prior to advising. (Other testing times can be made with prior arrangement through the office of the Director of Graduate Studies in Music.) The standard exam (ear training, written, analysis, pop chords) will be two and a half (2 ½) hours in duration. The sight-singing portion will consist of a one-on-one five-minute session outside the regular exam room with an evaluator during the regular exam period. The special area exams will be 30 minutes in duration and will be given immediately following the standard exam.

All newly admitted graduate students are required to take the GTEE the first semester they enter the University. Failure to do so could jeopardize the student's progress through the degree.

The GTEE results, scored in percentage correct and broken down by category (ear training, written, analysis, sight singing, pop chords), will be available to the Director of Graduate Studies the following Friday morning at 9 a.m. The Director will then distribute these results to other area advisors, where appropriate. Students may see their graded exam in the graduate director's office but in no case will be permitted to copy this document or remove it from the office.

A score of 70 or better on any portion of the GTEE demonstrates proficiency. A score of 69 or below will constitute a deficiency for that portion of the exam.

A deficiency can be addressed in the following ways:

- 1) A deficiency in any of the specialized subjects will be fulfilled either by taking the course in that area or retaking the relevant specialized proficiency exam at the next regularly scheduled exam period. A specialized proficiency exam may only be taken two times; failure to pass the second time will trigger a review of a student's progress toward completion of the degree and will thereby contribute to possible dismissal from the graduate program in music.
- 2) The student may retake the entire exam at the next regularly scheduled time.
- 3) MUSC 561, Graduate Theory Review, is designed to remediate any and all deficiencies.
- 4) If a student demonstrates proficiency in all other areas of written theory, as well as demonstrating proficiency in the aural theory portion of the exam, a deficiency in analysis alone may also be remediated by enrollment in and successful completion of MUSC 264. If a student demonstrates outstanding proficiency in all other areas of written theory as demonstrated by a score of 90 or above, as well as demonstrating proficiency in aural theory, a deficiency in analysis alone may alternatively be remediated by enrollment in and successful completion of either MUSC 463 or MUSC 464. Note that MUSC 463 and 464 can count for graduate theory credit.
- 5) A deficiency in aural theory alone may also be remediated by enrollment in and successful completion of MUSC 263.
- 6) A deficiency in pop chord analysis may also be addressed through a unit of study arranged through the theory area coordinator in consultation with a member of the theory faculty. This non-credit unit is equivalent to the material currently included in a two-week sequence of MUSC 262. This option, if chosen, must be completed during a student's first semester of enrollment.

Since the identification of a deficiency represents a current lack of readiness for more advanced work, students with one or more deficiencies will not be permitted to enroll in any upper level analysis course (MUSC 463 or 464, with the exception noted above) or any 700-level analysis or theory pedagogy course until all deficiencies are addressed. Simultaneous enrollment in a different course addressing a deficiency and in any of the advanced courses in analysis (MUSC 463, 464, 761, 762, 763, 764) is not permitted. Simultaneous enrollment in a course addressing a deficiency and in MUSC 461, 462, 465, 466, or 468 is possible only with permission of the instructor.

Failure to demonstrate proficiency in all areas after two attempts of the GTEE will trigger a review of a student's progress toward completion of the degree and will thereby contribute to possible dismissal from the graduate program in music. A review will similarly be triggered by failure to pass the required course(s) addressing the student's deficiencies with a grade of C or above, or by repeated withdrawal from the course(s) addressing the student's deficiencies.

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