

**University of Manitoba
Desautels Faculty of Music**

**Graduate Diagnostic Exam in Music Theory – information
(updated June 2023)**

While graduate music theory courses at the Desautels Faculty of Music cover a range of musical styles, genres, and analytical approaches, it is important for us to assess the breadth and depth of knowledge that students admitted to the M.Mus. and M.A. (Music Research) programs already possess. The Graduate Diagnostic Exam in Music Theory is designed to evaluate your knowledge of theoretical concepts and fluency with analytical techniques that are typically covered in undergraduate core theory courses, so that you may enter and succeed in the graduate proseminar in music theory (MUSC 7200) and other graduate-level theory courses.

You will need to write the diagnostic exam before you register for any theory courses. The exam is **3 hours** (180 minutes) long, and will be written **in person** at the Desautels Faculty of Music. The 2023 exam will be on **September 5 from 9 am to 12 noon**, in a room to be announced later.

The exam contains **three parts**, as follows:

1. Harmonic analysis and melody harmonization, in four-part chorale style

A passage in four-part chorale style will be provided. Much of the passage will be complete (in all four voices), and you will need to provide complete harmonic analysis, including figured bass for inversions, using any standard analytical notation. You will also need to label and identify non-harmonic tones, using any standard notation or terminology. For a portion of the passage, you will need to harmonize the melody by writing your own bass line and harmonic progression, again with complete harmonic analysis. The passage will contain some standard chromatic chords, such as applied (secondary) dominants, diminished sevenths, Neapolitan, borrowed chords / modal mixture, augmented-sixth chords, and common-tone chords.

2. Analysis of an extended movement of 18th or 19th century music

You will be given a complete extended movement from 18th- or 19th-century repertoire. You will be asked some questions about the piece, dealing with the following topics:

- Large-scale formal structure. This may include large forms such as sonata-allegro or rondo, as well as multi-part forms (various types of binary, ternary, etc.)
- Analysis of smaller sections: cadences, division into phrases, periods, etc.
- Discussion of how different sections of the movement relate to each other
- Discussion of the formal function or purpose of a given section within the entire movement
- Analysis of key areas and modulations
- Some detailed harmonic analysis of shorter sections may be required, possibly including the same types of chromatic chords listed under Part One

3. Analysis of 20th-century music

In this section, you will be given a short complete piece (or section from a longer piece) of 20th-century music, and then asked some analytical questions about the piece. Those questions will deal with the following:

- Pitch structure. Depending on the piece, you may want to refer to different pitch collections or scales, or to employ specific analytical techniques (such as pitch-class set theory or 12-tone theory). However, employing specific theories is not strictly necessary. What is important is that you are able to discuss aspects of melody and harmony in detail, in any way that seems useful and appropriate to you.
- Formal structure. You will be asked to describe the form of the piece, in any way that seems useful and appropriate. To help determine the form, you may be asked to discuss how different sections in the piece relate to each other, or contrast with each other.
- Other features of the music, including rhythm, texture, timbre (tone colour), etc.

Please prepare thoroughly for the diagnostic exam! Careful and detailed preparation may ensure that you don't need to complete any theory review. To help you prepare for the exam, we recommend that you study from undergraduate theory textbooks, such as the following:

- Horton, Byrne, and Ritchey, *Harmony Through Melody*
- Kostka and Payne, *Tonal Harmony*
- Clendinning and Marvin, *Theory and Analysis*
- Laitz, *The Complete Musician*
- Burstein and Straus, *Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony*
- Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*
- Roig-Francoli, *Understanding Post-Tonal Music*

In addition, we have attached a **sample diagnostic exam** from a previous year so that you can see the types of questions that have been asked in the past.

You may bring in textbooks and/or notes printed on paper, and refer to them during the exam. However, you will not be able to use a computer, phone or any other electronic devices.

The exam results will be made available to you shortly after the exam. Based on your work on each part of the exam, you may be required to complete the theory review module for that part; for example, you might pass part 1, but be required to complete theory review for parts 2 and 3. All theory review modules will need to be completed during your first term in the master's program; theory review does not count for credit toward the master's degree. If you do sufficiently well on all three parts of the exam, you will not be required to complete any theory review and you may register for graduate courses in music theory.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Graduate Theory Diagnostic Exam, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. David Byrne at David.byrne@umanitoba.ca.