

University of Kentucky School of Music
Graduate Entrance Exam
Description of Exam Format

The graduate entrance exam is given at assigned times in the Spring semester coinciding with audition weekends. See the director of graduate studies or office of student affairs (859-257-8181) for more information on the schedule for these exams. The exam period will be 3 hours in length, which is divided generally into one hour each for: 1) music history, 2) written music theory fundamentals and musical analysis, and 3) aural skills and directed listening. The overall music theory exam score is weighted at 50% for aural skills and 50% for written music theory skills.

Below is a list of skills and topics that may appear on the graduate entrance exam in music theory at the University of Kentucky. The exam covers three broad topics: (1) theory and fundamentals of harmony, (2) form and analysis, and (3) aural skills and directed listening.

- I. Theory and Fundamentals of Harmony
 - This section counts for approximately 60% of written music theory exam score and consists of approximately 30 questions presented in a multiple-choice format, containing questions about the following:
 - A) **Voice-leading.** Examinees are presented with a short musical example in four voices (SATB) containing a number of typical part-writing errors, with each individual chord clearly labeled. Examinees determine which chord/pair of chords contain/s the error. (For instance, a question might ask “which of the above chords contains an instance of an improperly doubled leading-tone?” for which the examinee should choose the chord that matches this description.)
 - B) **Intervals and Chords.** For intervals, examinees determine which note lies at a specific interval above or below a given note. (For instance, a question might ask “which note lies a major second above A-flat?” for which the examinee should choose “B-flat” from a list of pitches presented in multiple-choice format.) For chords, examinees are presented with a number of chords of varying quality (major, minor, etc.) and are asked to identify the chord that matches a requested chord quality. (For instance, a question might ask “which of the following is a fully-diminished seventh chord?” for which the examinee should choose the chord that matches this quality from those presented.)
 - C) **Scales and Collections.** Examinees are presented with an example containing a number of scales and are asked to identify the specific scale-type or collection. (For instance, a question might ask “which of the above is a harmonic minor scale?” for which the examinee should choose the scale that best matches this description.) Possible scales include the major scale, the three typical forms of the minor scale, the church modes, the whole-tone and Octatonic collections, etc.
 - D) **Rhythm and Meter.** Examinees are presented with a number of questions about rhythm and meter, such as (a) a measure of music that is incomplete, and are asked to identify the type of rest that best completes the measure, (b) a measure of music and are asked to identify the meter (time signature) that best matches the notated music, or (c) a measure of music and are asked to identify the *beat and meter type* (such as “simple duple,” “compound duple,” “simple triple,” or “compound triple”).
 - E) **Non-harmonic tones.** Examinees are presented with a short musical example in four voices (SATB) that contains a number of typical non-chord tones clearly labeled. Examinees determine the appropriate non-chord tone type corresponding to specific pitches. (For instance, a question might ask “what type of non-chord tone occurs at #1?” for which the examinee should choose the correct type of non-chord tone from a list of possibilities presented in multiple-choice format.)

II. Form and Analysis

- This section accounts for approximately 40% of written music theory exam score and consists of approximately 15-20 questions presented in fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice formats, containing questions about the following:
 - F) **Key areas.** Examinees are presented with a short passage from a piece of music and are asked to identify the local tonic key. (Note: the excerpt will be taken from the middle of a piece, and the key may not match the notated key signature.)
 - G) **Cadences.** Examinees are presented with a short passage from a piece of music and are asked to identify the cadence-type from a list of possibilities. Possible cadence-types include the perfect authentic cadence, imperfect authentic cadence, half cadence, Phrygian half cadence, plagal cadence, and deceptive cadence.
 - H) **Harmonic analysis.** Examinees are presented with a short passage from a piece of music and are asked to identify specific harmonies (clearly labeled/identified on the score) using Roman numerals and figured bass symbols as appropriate. Possible harmonies include diatonic triads or seventh chords, secondary dominant/applied chords, borrowed chords/modal mixture, Neapolitan sixth or augmented sixth chords (specify It^{+6} , Fr^{+6} , or Ger^{+6}), etc.
 - I) **Atonal analysis / set theory.** Examinees are presented with a short passage from a piece of music with a number of sets/atonal cells clearly labeled on the score. Examinees are asked a variety of questions pertaining to atonal analysis and set theory, including identifying a set's normal order, prime form, interval vector, etc. Other questions might involve identifying the relationship between two sets, such as transposition, inversion, etc.
 - J) **Form and score analysis.** Examinees are presented with a longer excerpt and are asked to identify various structural phenomena, including local key areas, cadence points, motivic relationships, typical formal functions (transitional section, etc.).

III. Aural Skills and Directed Listening

- This section consists of approximately 25-30 questions presented in fill-in-the-blank and multi-choice format, containing questions about the following:
 - A) **Interval ID.** Listen to and identify the interval between two pitches.
 - B) **Scale ID.** Listen to and identify the scale-type that is played.
 - C) **Sonority ID.** Listen to and identify the chord quality that is played.
 - D) **Melodic ID.** A set of melodies will be presented in multiple-choice format. Choose which one is played.
 - E) **Harmonic progression ID.** A set of chord progressions will be presented in multiple-choice format. Choose which one is played.
 - F) **Contextual listening.** A short musical excerpt will be played, with questions pertaining to formal design, meter, mode (major or minor), etc.

How to Prepare:

- See the attached file for a practice version of the written music theory exam, which shows the types of questions that may be asked and the format for the exam. This practice exam includes an answer key with explanation of answers.
- Examine the types of questions that may occur and topics that are addressed in the exam, and the format of questions given in the practice exam. Review these in your music theory textbooks or class notes from your undergraduate training.
- There are a number of websites available for review of theory and harmony fundamentals, and many of these include an aural component. There are also several websites that deal specifically with aural skills review, such as identifying of intervals, chord types, chord progressions, etc.