

Music Theory Placement Exam

All undergraduate and graduate music majors are required to take a placement examination in music theory. This exam is given during the first week of the Fall term. Please see the *Schedule an Audition* link on the music department webpage for the date and time of the next placement exam.

Results from the theory placement examination will be emailed to each student's official CSULA email account as soon as the exams are graded, and no later than the first day of the quarter. Results will also be available in the Department of Music office after they have been emailed to students.

Graduate music majors who take the music theory placement exam will have one of three results:

- 1) **PASS.** This means that no remedial coursework is necessary, and graduate students may enroll in 530A/530B.
- 2) **Assignment to enroll in MUS 479.** This is the Graduate Theory Review class. This one-quarter class is offered only in the fall quarter each year. It is intended to “brush-up” theory skills and reviews content that entering graduate students should have covered during their undergraduate coursework in music. The prerequisites for MUS 479 include MUS 161C or the equivalent in proficiency of skills and content covered up through MUS 161C.
- 3) **Assignment to enroll in one of the undergraduate theory courses** that is identified as appropriate from the score on the placement exam. A list of the undergraduate theory courses and the content in each follows. There is also a list of study materials at the bottom of this document that entering students may use as study guides for the theory placement exam.

Note: Graduate students who are placed in undergraduate-level theory courses, will also be required to enroll in the level of musicianship (MUS 162ABC) that corresponds with the level of theory in which they are enrolled.

When the graduate student has successfully completed the identified theory deficiencies coursework with a grade of B minus or better, he or she must enroll in the one-quarter review course (MUS 479) or take the placement exam again and try to pass out of the review.

Undergraduate music majors will either be assigned to one of the courses below that is appropriate to their prior theory attainment, or may be asked to take a introduction to theory course, if more preliminary work is needed.

Undergraduate Theory Course Sequence:

Concurrent enrollment is required as shown below.

MUS 161A/162A: Key signatures, major and minor keys, intervals, triads, seventh chords, basic voice-leading and part-writing, simple and compound meters. Basic sight-singing with “moveable do” solfege; simple, diatonic melodic and harmonic dictation; singing and identification of fundamentals such as intervals, triads, and seventh chords.

MUS 161B/162B: Continuation of the skills listed for 161A/162A, with the introduction of non-chord tones and basic chromatic alterations.

MUS 161C/162C: Introduction of chromatic harmony, particularly focusing on secondary dominants and secondary leading-tone chords and modulations to closely-related keys. Neapolitan chords and augmented 6th chords are introduced in this class as well.

MUS 261A/262A: Continuation of chromatic harmony, focusing on augmented 6th chords, modulations to distantly-related keys, and formal construction of periods and small binary and ternary forms.

MUS 261B/262B: Continuation of chromatic harmony, through non-functional harmony and including analysis of late-Romantic music.

MUS 261C/262C: Introduction to music of Impressionist, 20th-century, and contemporary techniques in theory and composition. Musicianship skills will include polyrhythm, non-tonal harmony and melody, and modal and synthetic scales.

Recommended textbooks to assist students who wish to review prior to taking the theory placement examination:

Kostka and Payne, *Tonal Harmony*, 4th ed., McGraw-Hill.

Kostka, *Materials and Techniques of 20th Century Music*, Prentice Hall.

Burkhart, *Anthology for Musical Analysis*, 5th ed., Harcourt Brace.

Berkowitz, *A New Approach to Sight Singing*. 4th ed., W. W. Norton.