

Music Theory Placement Exams: Study Guide

Music Theory (Music 11 and Music 5A-C)

Students entering UCSB as music majors are expected to have a basic understanding of music fundamentals including:

- scales
- key signatures
- intervals
- qualities of triads and seventh chords
- time signatures and proper rhythmic notation

Insufficient proficiency in these areas can be rectified by taking Music 11 before continuing with the Music 5 series.

- Ideally entering students will also be familiar with phrase and cadence types, dissonances including passing and neighboring tones, roman numeral analysis, and basic voice leading.

The Music Theory Sequence (5A-C) covers the following topics in analysis and part writing:

Analysis:

- roman numeral analyses of diatonic passages (5A/B)
- identifying cadence types and basic phrase structures (5A/B)
- differentiating between cadential and prolongational harmonic progressions (5A/B)
- identifying dissonances and non-chord tones including passing, neighboring, suspensions, anticipations, double neighbors, escape tones, appoggiaturas, nota cambiata, etc. (5A/B)
- analyzing types of chromaticism including secondary dominants, modal mixture, and altered predominant chords (5B/C)
- identifying and differentiating tonicizations and modulations (5B/C)

Part Writing:

- Writing correct two-voice species counterpoint in first through fourth species (5A)
- Realizing figured bass by adding the three upper voices (5A/B)
- Realizing a four-part texture from roman numerals (5A/B)
- Writing both diatonic and chromatic progressions including proper use and resolution of secondary dominants and altered predominant chords. (5B/C)
- Writing modulating progressions to the dominant, relative major, and other closely related keys. (5C)
- Writing chromatic modulations (5C)

Additional topics covered in upper division music theory courses (160A, B, C) include

- Understanding traditional forms of common practice music (binary and ternary, song forms, variations, sonata forms, concerto, rondo forms, etc.)
- Understanding the organization of post-tonal music (pitch-class sets, normal order and prime form, twelve-tone operations, invariance, and combinatoriality)
- Certain advanced topics in tonal analysis which may include the principles of Schenkerian analysis, parsimonious voice leading and neo-Riemannian transformations, and extended tonal practice of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

First-Year Musicianship (Music 4A-C)

Dictation

- Identify and notate all major and minor scales
- Identify and notate all intervals, melodic and harmonic
- Identify and notate triads and seventh chords of all types in all inversions
- Identify and notate rhythmic patterns in simple and compound meters including triplets, triplets, and syncopations.
- Dictate melodies one or two phrases in length, beginning on any member of the tonic triad, containing skips within tonic, subdominant, and dominant seventh chords, and which may contain anacruses or syncopations
- Dictate diatonic harmonic progressions (outer voices and roman numerals) up to a phrase in length

Sight Reading

- Sing at sight simple 8-12 measure melodies, containing skips within the tonic, subdominant, and dominant seventh chords and which may include some diatonic and chromatic passing and neighboring tones.
- Recite rhythms in simple and compound meters, including anacruses, triplets or other triplets, hemiolas, and simple syncopations.

Second-Year Musicianship (Music 4D-F)

Dictation

- Dictate melodies one or two phrases in length, tonal or modal, with chromatic neighbor and passing tones, tonicizations and modulations to closely-related and remote keys
- Dictate contrapuntal exercises in two or three voices
- Dictate harmonic progressions, diatonic and chromatic, one or two phrases in length, which may use secondary dominants and leading tone chords, modal mixture, augmented sixth chords, Neapolitans, extended tertian, and common-tone harmonies.
- Harmonic and melodic dictation from the musical literature in a range of textures and styles

Sight Reading

- Sing 10-20 measure melodies containing skips larger than an octave, skips to non-chord tones or chromatic tones, chromatic neighbors and passing tones, secondary dominant harmonies, tonicizations, modulations, syncopations, and modal passages.
- Transcribe and perform rhythms that include changing meters (simple and compound) in one and two parts and including cross rhythms (two against three, five against seven, etc.)

The placement exam in musicianship focuses on written work and has generally consisted of three sections:

- 1) Aural identification of intervals, scales, and chords (including inversions)
- 2) Dictation of two melodies: one diatonic, simple meter, with skips in the primary triads; another potentially in compound meter, with larger leaps, and chromaticism and/or modulation.
- 3) Two phrase-long harmonic progressions: one diatonic, and one chromatic, potentially including mode mixture, augmented 6th or Neapolitan chords, secondary chords, and/or modulations.