

Study Guide for the Graduate Placement Exam in Music Theory

This exam is designed to evaluate your skills and knowledge of music theory in several areas. All candidates must complete the first three (3) parts of the Written Theory Exam:

Part I Harmonization

Part II: Small-Scale Formal & Harmonic Analysis

Part III: Large-Scale Formal & Harmonic Analysis

In addition, only the incoming composition and music theory candidates must complete the following section:

Part IV: Orchestration.

Breakdown of Each Section

Part I: Harmonization (about 1 hour)

Part I of the exam is a writing exercise in four-part harmonization. There are different given parts in the exercise. These given parts include:

1. A diatonic figured bass
2. A chromatic figured bass
3. An unfigured bass
4. A soprano melody
5. An inner voice

In order to successfully complete this exercise, you will need a firm background in traditional voice-leading skills and an understanding of chromatic harmony, which include the functions of mode mixture, the Neapolitan sixth chord, the various augmented sixth chords, and the ability to successfully modulate to a remote key.

Preparation for this part of the exam is best accomplished by studying *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 3rd ed., by Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, or *The Complete Musician*, 3rd ed., by Steven Laitz. The *workbooks* for both of these textbooks include many helpful exercises.

Part II: Small-Scale Formal & Harmonic Analysis (about 1 hour)

Part II of the exam consists of an analysis of a small-scale formal design such as a one-part form, a type of binary form (e.g., simple continuous binary, sectional rounded-binary, etc.) or a small ternary form. You will be asked to provide a roman numeral/figured bass analysis, an analysis of harmonic function, and to identify cadences, important phrase structures (such as a period or sentence), sequences, and the voice-leading implications of important passages within the composition. Lastly, you may be asked to devise a concise diagram of the formal design that highlights the salient features of the composition (see Part III below for review texts).

Part III: Large-Scale Formal & Harmonic Analysis (about 2 hours)

Part III of the exam consists of an analysis of a large-scale formal design such as a compound ternary form, a large ternary form, a sonata form, a rondo form, or a cyclic form. Questions may include the identification and description of the overall formal plan and tonal structure of the movement, the identification of larger sections and keys within the movement, the description of the harmonic motion of phrases, and comments on phrase structure, organic unity, and other interesting analytical questions specific to the movement.

A good text to review is *The Analysis of Musical Form* by James Mathes and *Classical Form* by William E. Caplin. You will also be asked to do a detailed harmonic analysis of a short segment of this work, for which you will need a solid understanding of chromatic harmony. A good text to review for this is *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 3rd ed., by Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, and *The Complete Musician* by Steven Laitz.

For Composition and Theory candidates, only:

Part IV: Orchestration (about 30 minutes)

Part IV of the exam tests composition and music theory candidates' knowledge of the characteristics, ranges, and transpositions of musical instruments. Some common-practice stylistic scoring is also included, as well as basic full-score layout issues.

A good text to review for this portion is *The Study of Orchestration*, by Samuel Adler.