



Graduate Placement Examinations and Assessments Fall 2017

Placement exams and assessments are only given during the orientation period of each semester.

Graduate Music Theory

Required for all incoming graduate students.

The Graduate Music Theory placement exam determines whether or not you will need to take a one-semester refresher course in the basics of music theory (Theory Review MMT 604).

If you have very little prior experience with music theory, it is possible that the department will strongly recommend that you take an undergraduate music fundamentals course prior to taking the one-semester graduate refresher course.

The exam covers both harmony and formal analysis. To demonstrate skill in harmony, you will be asked to write four-voice settings from either bass lines or melodies, as well as provide harmonic analysis of examples. The examples are progressive in difficulty, beginning with simple diatonic progressions and proceeding through more advanced chromatic practices. The exam does not cover twentieth-century or non-Western harmonic practices, nor does it cover counterpoint.

You will be asked to perform a formal analysis of a musical composition, which will be in a larger homophonic form-i.e., a compound form such as Minuet & Trio, a rondo form, sonata-allegro form, or something similar. You will also be asked to provide some terminology and to answer a number of questions related to the formal analysis of a particular musical composition.

[Study guide and more info](#)

For further questions or information, email Scott Foglesong (scott.foglesong@sfc.edu).

Dictation, Sightsinging and Musicianship

Required for all incoming graduate students. Individual appointments will be posted on the website at a later date.

The Graduate Eartraining and Dictation exam determines whether or not you need to take a one-semester refresher course in dictation and solfège skills (Musicianship Review MMT 602).

The exam is in two parts: dictation, and singing. If you have very little prior experience with eartraining or solfège, it is possible that the department will strongly recommend that you take an undergraduate music fundamentals course prior to taking the one-semester graduate refresher course.

Dictation: this is a progressive exam beginning from extremely simple dictation challenges (simple rhythms and melodies), and progressing through increasingly difficult examples, including intervals, chords, advanced melodic dictation, harmonic dictation, and chorale dictation. At the most advanced level, you are asked to take down a Bach-style chorale with harmonic analysis on four hearings. You are encouraged to continue only as far with the exam as you are comfortable, to take down only what you hear, and to avoid guesswork.

Singing: you are asked to sight-sing a number of musical compositions, both melodies and single-voice rhythms, ranging in difficulty from very simple to extremely complex. The musical selections may be in any of four clefs (treble, bass, tenor, and alto), major and minor modes as well as the standard Church modes, and at the more difficult level may be selected from the 12-tone or atonal literature. The instructor administering the examination will determine which selections to ask you to sing, depending upon your prior experience with solfège. You may sing the examples in any solfège system with which you are familiar, including using a neutral syllable. You are also asked to conduct during your performances, if at all possible.

[Study guide and more info](#)

Graduate Music History

The Music History Placement exam will determine whether you are placed into the graduate review courses MHL 602 and/or MHL 603, or whether you may pass directly into upper-level seminars.

The exam lasts two and a half hours, and includes three sections:

- I. General questions about the history of music from 1700 to 1900, and from 1900 to the present
- II. Score identifications covering repertoire from 1700 to the present
- III. Critical thinking skills: reading comprehension, analytical writing, and information literacy (or research skills)

Because the exam is designed to test material learned at the undergraduate level, no advance preparation is necessary. As a courtesy, however, we do offer some study tips, and make some materials (see below) available in advance.

Section I: General Knowledge about the History of Music

This section includes forty questions (fill in the blank, multiple choice, and short answer) that test your general knowledge of music history of the 18th-19th and 20th-21st centuries (twenty questions for each era).

Section II: Score Identification

In this section, you will be asked to identify sixteen musical excerpts, eight from the 18th and 19th centuries and eight from the 20th and 21st. For each excerpt, you will be asked to name the composer, genre, and date (within 25 years). We will provide lists of composers and genres for you to choose from. All excerpts will be taken from repertoire published in the Norton Anthologies of Western Music, Volumes 2 and 3, plus the following composers from Volume 1: J. S. Bach, Buxtehude, Corelli, Handel, and Vivaldi. During the actual exam, we will give you

scores for all sixteen excerpts, and we will play recordings for half of these as well. That is, you will hear recordings for eight of the excerpts, but you will have to identify eight of them from scores alone.

Section III: Critical Thinking Skills

This section is divided into three parts:

- A. Part A tests the research skills you would need to efficiently locate and evaluate sources for a paper. Questions are multiple choice.
- B. Part B tests reading comprehension by asking you to read two selections, then answer related multiple choice and fill in the blank questions. It is not necessary to do the readings in advance; however, as a courtesy to students who would like extra time to prepare, you can find them [in this study packet](#).
- C. Part C tests writing skills by asking you to compose a short essay about a piece of 18th or 19th century music. You may select one of the six scores listed below, or you may write about an 18th or 19th century work of your choosing. If you do choose your own piece, you must bring an unmarked copy of the score to the exam, and turn it in to the exam proctor (this copy will not be returned to you). Should you decide to write about a piece of your choosing, we recommend a single movement, aria, or other short work (such as those listed below). Writing about, for example, an entire symphony or opera, will result in an essay that is too general for us to adequately assess your skills.

The scores we will make available to you on exam day are listed below and are linked [in this study packet](#). As with the score ID section, we will use scores published in the Norton

Anthologies:

1. J. S. Bach, Fugue for organ, BWV 543
2. G. F. Handel, "V'adoro pupille," from *Giulio Cesare*
3. Joseph Haydn, Symphony 92, third movement: menuet and trio
4. Robert Schumann, "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai," from *Dichterliebe* (Op. 48, no. 1)
5. Frédéric Chopin, Nocturne in D-flat Major, Op. 27, No. 2
6. Richard Strauss: Don Quixote Variation II

International Student English Assessment

Required for non-native English speakers only.

This assessment will determine placement into or exemption from HMS 210/211 (speaking), HMS 212/213 (writing), and MHL 607 (graduate-level writing). All non-native English speakers must take this exam unless they attended high school or college in the United States. If you are unsure if you have to take the exam please contact Jonas Wright (jwright@sfc.edu).

Basic Phonetics

Required for all incoming voice graduate students.

The Basic Phonetics placement exam (open book, no electronic devices) determines whether or not you will need to take the required course Basic Phonetics for Singers (APP 210).

- The International Phonetic Alphabet - You will be asked to transcribe English words (real or invented) into IPA upon hearing them pronounced, and to identify simple English words written in IPA.
- Basic Articulatory Phonetics - You will be asked to answer multiple choice questions regarding the physical formation of vowels and consonants.
- English Lyric Diction - You will be asked to choose between various possible IPA transcriptions of simple English words, based specifically on suggestions contained in *The Singer's Guide to Languages* by Marcie Stapp. Copies available in the Conservatory Library.

Lyric Diction

Available only to Voice Students who have successfully completed the Basic Phonetics exam.

Graduate students seeking to pass out of any of the individual Lyric Diction classes (APP 211, 212, 213) may try to do so by taking a private exams. This option is not available to undergraduate students. Exams will be given only during the week of orientation and first week of classes.

This is an oral exam consisting of two parts:

- 1) You must read a prepared text **of no less than 100 words** (bring several texts if necessary). You may use any type of aids you wish, including IPA transcriptions. However, if there are mistakes in the material you are using, these will count against you. If the pronunciation is accurate, you can move to the second part. If there are any problems you may be asked to explain your choices.
- 2) You will be given an unknown text along with an IPA transcription and asked to read that.

For Part 1, it's imperative that you read with 100% accuracy. This demonstrates whether or not you have the ability to prepare texts on your own. In Part 2, the focus is on using the IPA to assist you if you can't actually read the language. This demonstrates whether or not you are able to use existing IPA transcriptions to pronounce language.

Exams are scheduled for 20 minutes, and there is no written exam. You will be told of the result immediately. Please do not ask for an exam unless you feel relatively confident that you can pass it.

NEW INCOMING STUDENTS: Before you can schedule any of the Lyric Diction exams you must take the placement test for Basic Phonetics. Professor Stapp will meet immediately after the exam to discuss the possibility of taking these exams.

RETURNING STUDENTS: Please call professor Stapp **after** the first day of Orientation at (415)681-7625.

Optional Placement Exams

Foreign Languages

Open to all students.

Students who may be proficient in French, Italian, and/or German may take the placement exam of those languages to receive advanced placement unless this is your native language. Credits earned will count towards elective credits.

Please contact the instructor to schedule a placement exam at a mutually agreed upon time during Orientation:

- Mirjam Jooss, German Instructor, mjooss@sfc.edu
- Cathy Halter, French Instructor, chalter@sfc.edu
- Lidia Mazza, Italian Instructor, lmazza@sfc.edu

Vocal Physiology and Vocal Pedagogy

Open to voice students only.

The Vocal Pedagogy placement exam (open book) covers both the theory of vocal pedagogy and its practical application. The exam is open to graduate students who have significant previous experience teaching voice or whose transcripts demonstrate significant coursework in vocal pedagogy at the undergraduate level. It determines whether those students may opt out of the Vocal Pedagogy course at SFCM.