



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Department of Music

Hello!

This Guide presents information for music majors who have completed at least two semesters of music theory and ear training classes at the college/university level.

The MSU Music Theory Upper Division Theory Proficiency Examination corresponds to the three final tests administered in the Fall Semester's Music Theory III and Ear Training III classes. Corresponding versions of those tests are given in May and August. Students who are in their third semesters of music theory and ear training, or have already completed at least three semesters of college/university music theory and ear training classes, are eligible to take the Music Theory UDPE. All MSU music degrees require a fully-passed Music Theory UDPE. Interested students should check the Department of Music's website for more information in the weeks and months before the Music Theory UDPE administrations.

The Music Theory UDPE consists of two halves formed by three component tests. There is a 100-point written music theory test, a 50-point aural dictation test, and a 50-point musicianship skills test. To fully satisfy the MSU Music Theory UDPE requirement, the 100-point written theory test must be passed with a minimum score of 70. In addition, the aural dictation and musicianship skills tests must be passed with a minimum summed score of 70. These three tests constitute the two halves of the Music Theory UDPE.

Eligible transfer students are welcome to attempt the Music Theory UDPE tests in May. They are especially encouraged to attempt them in August. Transfer students who do not earn a minimum score of 70 on the written theory test in May or August may be encouraged to remediate in Music Theory III during the Fall semester before attempting it again in December. Those who do not earn a minimum combined score of 70 on the aural dictation and musicianship skills tests may be encouraged to remediate in Ear Training III during the Fall semester before attempting them again. For transfer students, preparation is essential.

The written music theory test begins with items that address fundamentals, including key signatures, specific pitches on different clefs, scales, modes, and intervals. It also includes a modulating figured bass to be realized according to conventional tonal voice-leading practice and analyzed using standard Roman numerals and inversion symbols. In addition, there are chords to notate, which are indicated by Roman numerals and other symbols in specified keys, and which may include diatonic harmonies, secondary dominants, secondary sevenths, and augmented-sixth chords in various inversions. Finally, there will be musical analysis involving a given excerpt, with selected chords that require traditional "Roman numeral" harmonic analysis symbols, including inversions, plus items on the score to identify by name, as well as statements about the music to complete with the best possible term.

So... how to prepare for the written music theory test? Re-study your music theory book, especially the parts dealing with music fundamentals, figured bass, Roman numeral harmonic analysis, modulation, and musical terminology. You might review the homework assignments you did, correcting any parts that could be improved. If there are any exercises in your book or workbook that your professor didn't assign, you could do them and check to make sure that there are no parallel P5s or P8s, that leading tones resolve up at cadences while harmonic sevenths resolve down, that chords are spelled right, and that the lines move well.

The aural dictation test of the Music Theory UDPE involves identifying and notating melodic and harmonic intervals up to the octave, identifying triads and sevenths by quality and inversion, a short, two-voice duet, a short rhythmic dictation, plus a short melodic dictation.

So... how to prepare for the aural dictation test? MSU ear training classes require student use of an online ear training application called Artusi that enables individuated practice of the essential skills. Duet dictation

involves transcribing two melodies, so extra practice with Artusi's melodic dictation exercises helps. Artusi also can help with the essential skills of the written music theory UDPE test. You can see Artusi's website here: <https://www.artusimusic.com> .

For the musicianship skills test of the Music Theory UDPE, Ear Training III students and all others taking this test in December will obtain a copy of the corresponding rubric from their Ear Training III professor or from the Music Theory Area Coordinator. Transfer students and others taking the test in May or August must obtain a current copy of the MSU Music Theory Musicianship Skills Materials directly from the Music Theory Area Coordinator, Dr. Sobaskie, via email (jsobaskie@colled.msstate.edu) about a month before the test's administration. This corresponds to normal practice in Ear Training III, and personal advance preparation is required – only a very small amount involves sight-singing.

For the musicianship skills test of the Music Theory UDPE, test-takers will perform examiner's choice of: 1) an ascending and a descending simple interval sung on "la"; 2) a major or a minor scale sung using solfège; 3) either the Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, or Mixolydian mode, sung using solfège; 4) a prepared given arpeggiated harmonic progression using solfège (for instance, the partial progression I – IV – ii6 – V is to be sung like this: do, mi, sol, mi, do – fa, la, do, la, fa – fa, la, re, la, fa – sol, ti, re, ti, sol); 5) a brief unfamiliar melody sung using solfège; 6) a prepared, given, single-line rhythm counted and conducted; 7) a prepared two-part rhythm tapped with two hands; 8) a melody prepared from those given; and 9) a prepared, given "Sing & Play" that involves singing a melody using solfège while playing the corresponding piano accompaniment. All of these items appear on the final skills test of Ear Training III at MSU, and when students have properly practiced the preparatory materials, they take about fifteen minutes to demonstrate.

So, how to prepare for the musicianship skills test? You might start by keeping your solfège fluent by singing intervals, scales, and modes, as well as melodies from the book used in your ear training classes. Most importantly, you should begin practicing the musicianship skills materials as soon as they are available – you'll already know 90% of what's on the test when you arrive to take it! The melodies plus the Sing & Plays carry the most points, so they deserve plenty of practice. Remember – start preparing the musicianship skills materials a month before the test's administration!

Hope this helps – if you have questions, just ask.

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