Graduate Placement Test Study Guide
George Mason University School of Music

Part I: Listening/Score Analysis
You will be given three pairs of score excerpts, and you will hear each excerpt once. Within each pair, place the pieces in chronological order and give an approximate date for each work. Discuss the aspects of the pieces that lead you to date them as you do.

Part II: Music History
You will be given several groups of composers and asked to discuss in detail the musical style, compositions, and importance of one composer from each group chosen.

Part III: Written Theory
The written theory test is graded pass/fail. It has two parts: Tonal harmony and form, and 20th-century music theory.

The following topics are covered:

Part I: Tonal Harmony and Form
- Diatonic harmony
- Chromatic harmony such as secondary dominants (applied chords), mixture chords (borrowed chords), augmented sixth chords, Neapolitan chords, etc.
- Traditional 4-part writing in chorale style
- Roman numeral analysis
- Understanding of figured bass notation
- Cadence identification (perfect authentic, imperfect authentic, half, plagal)
- Formal analysis of a short piece

Part II: 20th-Century Music Theory
- Pitch class numbers
- Interval classes
- Transposition by index number
- Inversion by index number
- Normal form
- Prime form
- Serial row forms
Part IV: Aural Skills

The Aural Skills test also has two parts: a dictation test and a singing test. The exam is graded pass/fail. The following topics are covered:

- Rhythmic dictation with syncopation, four measures long
- Identification of five intervals, both size and quality
- Melodic dictation, mainly diatonic with some chromatic embellishing tones, six to twelve measures long
- Identification of five chord qualities (triads or seventh chords)
- Harmonic dictation, notating the soprano and bass voice, and giving a Roman numeral analysis. Harmonies will include chromatic chords such as secondary dominants (applied chords), mixture chords (borrowed chords), augmented sixth chords, Neapolitan chords, etc.
- Reading a melody at sight in either treble or bass clef. Melodies are diatonic and incorporate leaps and syncopation.

Practice Resources
Students who wish to review tonal music theory concepts are encouraged to consult one of the following textbooks:
- Steven Laitz and Christopher Bartlette, Graduate Review of Tonal Theory
- Poundie Burstein and Joseph N. Straus, A Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony
- Jane Clendinning and Elizabeth West Marvin, The Musician’s Guide to Theory and Analysis

Students who wish to review 20th-century music theory concepts are encouraged to consult Joseph Straus, Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory.

Part V: Keyboard Skills

Prepared Skills: The following skills/repertoire should be practiced in advance of the testing and must be well-prepared to be acceptable:
1. Scales (2 Octaves), Arpeggios (2 Octaves), and standard chord progression (e.g. I, IV, V7, I), in any major or minor key.
2. One prepared piece on the difficulty level of JS Bach’s Anna Magdalena’s Bach Book or more difficult level.
5. Play from standard lead sheet
6. Play a simple accompaniment from a vocal or instrumental piece.