

The Music Theory Placement Exam

The Music Theory Placement Exam (MTPE) is a diagnostic tool used to place music students in an appropriate level within the theory sequence. Students having basic experience in fundamental materials of theory (such as identifying key signatures) through classes or simple independent study will likely place into Music Theory I or higher. Those requiring training in these materials will begin their work with Music Theory Rudiments.

Sample topics covered on the exam

- Finding pitch on treble- and bass-clef staves
- Major and minor key signatures
- Identifying time signatures
- Spelling major and minor chords
- Spelling intervals between notes

Those students wishing to place into classes more advanced than Theory I should also study: Realizing a four-voice chorale from a given figured bass and Music/form analysis

Rudiments on your own

The Music Department recommends that incoming students unfamiliar with basic notation should study music fundamentals on their own. Many websites and textbooks are available to help in this process. A recommended text and website are below.

Earl Henry, *Fundamentals of Music*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1999).
www.musictheory.net, which offers online drilling in many fundamental disciplines.

Self-study will assist an incoming student to pass the placement exam and begin Music Theory I in their first year at ECSU. Students are placed in Rudiments of Theory if they fail the placement exam.

Core Disciplines for all Music Students

Music Theory

All music majors complete four to six semesters of training in music theory. This discipline aids the musician in the understanding of harmony, counterpoint and structure of music.

There are eight levels of study available to music students. A general outline of what these levels represent is as follows:

- **Music Theory Rudiments**

An overview of fundamentals of music notation, including key signatures, triads, meter and intervals.

- **Theory I: Introduction to Functional Harmony**

An introduction to triads built on the tonic, dominant and subdominant (scale degrees 1, 4 and 5). The course is designed as a foundation for the study of part-writing and analysis, and to develop an understanding of the role that these primary chords play in harmony. The course, as all

following music theory courses, culminates in the public performance of an original composition.

- **Theory II: Diatonic Harmony**

This course covers both chords built on all remaining degrees of major and minor scales and an overview of species counterpoint including the writing of canons. Counterpoint is used here primarily as a tool to improving voice leading in choral writing.

- **Theory III: Chromatic Harmony**

The study of non-diatonic harmony: rich and colorful chords using chromatically altered notes or “borrowed” from other keys. Topics include modulation, secondary dominants, Neapolitan and augmented sixth chords.

- **Theory IV: Post-Tonal Harmony**

Analysis and composition of chromatic and atonal music of the 20th and 21st centuries, including such techniques as Modal music and borrowed chords; Tertian harmony (ninth, eleventh and thirteenth chords); Quartal, Quintal and Secondal chords; and Serialism.

- **Counterpoint**

After a review of species counterpoint studied in Music Theory I-III, students engage in the analysis of Baroque era music, especially that of J.S. Bach. Guidelines established in this music lead to composition of original two-voice inventions and three-voice fugues.

- **Form and Analysis**

As a culmination of the study of harmonic and melodic structure in Music Theory, students learn to analyze movements of works and to make rapid assessments as to harmonic motion, melodic devices, and formal procedures. We write music using a predefined structure as the central pre-compositional tool.

- **Composition 1-2**

An extension of the composition engaged in during the Theory sequence, students learn more about writing music by focusing on single elements. Concentrations may include monophonic music for solo instrument, rhythmic work for percussion ensemble and harmonically focused chorales for brass.

Ear Training

All music majors in each degree program complete a four-semester sequence in the study of Aural Skills. This training, focused on melodic dictation and sight singing is essential to any written communication of music. Work begins with conjunct, diatonic melodies in simple meter and leads up to chromatic, irregularly metered works.