Shepherd University
Department of Music

Piano Proficiency Exam Packet

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The Piano Proficiency Exam

All music majors must pass the Piano Proficiency Exam by the end of their sophomore year. In addition, music education majors must pass the Piano Proficiency Exam prior to applying for Juncture 2.

1. Exam Content: A PDF file of the exam content, requirements, and sample repertoire may be found at: http://www.shepherd.edu/music/current-music-students

2. Course Options: Students are encouraged to register for the class piano sequence to help prepare for successful completion of the Piano Proficiency Exam. Depending on prior experience, students wishing to take a class piano course will be placed in one of the following course levels:

   - MUSC 138 Basic Keyboarding Skills
   - MUSC 140 Class Piano I
   - MUSC 141 Class Piano II

For all sections of class piano, students must receive a grade of C or above in order to be qualified to take the exam.

3. Freshman Year Evaluation: At the end of their freshman year, all music majors are required to take the Piano Proficiency Exam. Any student who is unable to successfully pass the exam will be required to register in the Class Piano II course for each semester thereafter until they are able to successfully pass the exam.

4. Exam Scheduling: Exams will be scheduled during the midterm and final exam weeks of each semester. Students will sign up for individual exam sessions with the Coordinator of Keyboard Studies. Students must pass ALL components of the exam. If a student does not pass one of the components, he/she may retake that portion of the exam at a later time.

PPE as part of The Music Competency Exam (MCE)

The Music Competency Exam (MCE) has been developed to assess the acquisition of a threshold of knowledge in aural skills, written theory, basic music vocabulary, music history and literature, and piano proficiency by the end of your sophomore year. The MCE consists of written exams and the completion of all portions of the Piano Proficiency Exam.

Who must take the Music Competency Exam?

- All sophomore music majors must take the MCE.
- The test is administered at the end of Week 11 of the spring semester.
- Transfer students must take the exam the first spring semester they are enrolled in the department or during the semester they are enrolled in MUSC 205, as determined by the music history and music theory coordinators.
- Students that have not begun the PPE yet, will take the entire PPE at the time of their Music Competency Exam.

Students must receive a passing score on the MCE exam and pass all portions of the PPE in order to progress through or remain in their program.

For BA, BME and BM:

Scales-Prepare two octave scales in select major and minor (harmonic form) keys, with the correct standard fingerings, observing good hand position and maintaining a tempo of $\frac{\text{f}}{\text{quarter note}} = 120$. Keys: All Major scales; any white-key minor. Students will perform 1 Major and 1 minor key during the exam, as selected by the examiner.

Primary Chords (Cadences)- Prepare the chord progression of I, IV 6/4, I, V 6/5, I in all major and minor keys, playing the same notes in both hands. Correct voice leading and a steady pulse must be observed (quartet note=approximately 50). Students will perform 1 Major and 1 minor key during the exam, as selected by the examiner.

Harmonization-Prepare a harmonization example from the exam using primary chords. Please add a plagal (IV-I) cadence at the end of each selection. Students will also be asked to harmonize a melody at sight.
Transposition—Transpose the melody and chordal accompaniment of the sightreading harmonization in a different key. The examiner will select a key up to a minor third lower or higher than the original key.

Sight reading—Two examples: Read a short piece in a key signature of up to two accidentals; harmonization of a melody at sight (see above).

Score reading—Prepare a choral or instrumental score as appropriate to your discipline. Instrumental majors will choose the orchestral score, choral and keyboard majors will choose from the choral-score selections.

Prepared Repertoire—Students will prepare two pieces for the exam:
1. A sonatina movement from the selections in the packet. **Two pieces for BM.**
2. A patriotic selection (The Star Spangled Banner, America the Beautiful, America). **Only for BA and BME.**
A. Demonstrate specific technical skills: Select major and minor scales with close-position cadence. Students will perform 1 major and 1 minor key to be selected by the adjudicator. (Minimum: eighth note=120 for scales; quarter note =50 for cadences).
   _____ Used traditional fingerings.
   _____ Scales and cadences were performed with no restarts or hesitations.
   _____ Scales and cadences were performed with correct notes.
   _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
   _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task.

   Keys selected: __________     __________

B. Prepare harmonization of a melody. Name of Melody: _______________________
   _____ Melody was accurately prepared.
   _____ Appropriate harmonic accompaniment in the left hand.
   _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
   _____ Harmonization was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
   _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

C. Harmonize a melody at sight. Name of Melody: _______________________
   _____ Melody was accurately performed.
   _____ Appropriate harmonic accompaniment in the left hand.
   _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
   _____ Harmonization was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
   _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

D. Transpose a melody with accompaniment at sight. Name of Melody: _________________
   _____ Melody was transposed correctly.
   _____ Appropriate harmonic accompaniment in the left hand.
   _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
   _____ Harmonization was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
   _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.
E. Sightread a short composition of two-parts at sight.
   _____ Melody was accurately performed.
   _____ Traditional and accurate fingering was used.
   _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
   _____ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
   _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

F. Students will demonstrate mastery of reading open scores appropriate to their area of concentration.
   _____ Rhythms were performed accurately.
   _____ Transpositions were performed accurately.
   _____ Tempo was appropriate and consistent.
   _____ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
   _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task.

G. Perform a prepared Patriotic Selection. Name: ______________________________. (BA and BME only)
   _____ Selection was performed at a singable tempo.
   _____ Traditional and accurate fingering was used.
   _____ Harmonies were performed accurately.
   _____ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
   _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

H. Demonstrate mastery of a Sonatina movement.
   Selection: ______________________________
   _____ Tempo was consistent and appropriate.
   _____ Traditional and accurate fingering was used.
   _____ Harmonies were performed accurately.
   _____ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
   _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

Demonstrate mastery of a Sonatina movement. (BM only)
   Selection: ______________________________
   _____ Tempo was consistent and appropriate.
   _____ Traditional and accurate fingering was used.
   _____ Harmonies were performed accurately.
   _____ Exercise was performed with minimal interruption/restarts.
   _____ Demonstrated mastery of the task in a musical manner.

TOTAL __________

* Requirement for passing the exam: no less than three points in any one section
You must be able to execute your major and minor scales a minimum of two octaves with the correct fingering. Be sure to study the spelling of the scale, the geography (layout/pattern of black & white keys), fingering and landmarks before playing the scales at a slow tempo.

GROUP ONE
The following scales all have the same fingering:
C, D, E, G, A Major and minor = 10 scales

RH  1231234/12312345  5432132/4321321
LH  5432132/4321321  1231234/2312345

LANDMARKS: Third fingers play simultaneously in each hand; thumbs meet at the tonic after one octave; LH crosses to 4 after one octave ascending; RH crosses to 4 after one octave descending.

GROUP TWO
*The following major and minor scales are based on the concept of using 23 on a group of two black keys and 234 on a group of three black keys:  D-flat (C-sharp) and G-flat (F-sharp) Major = 2 scales

D-flat Major
RH  23/234/23/234/12  2/1/432/32/1/432/32
LH  32/1/432/32/1/432/23  2/1/234/23/234/23

LANDMARKS: The aforementioned grouping of two and three black keys; the thumbs come together on the white notes F and C.

G-flat Major
RH  234/23/234/23/12  2/1/32/1/432/32/1432
LH  32/1/32/1/432/32/12  2/1/23/234/23/1234

LANDMARKS: The aforementioned grouping of two and three black keys; the thumbs come together on the white notes F and Cb.

*note this fingering rule also works for b-flat and e-flat minor.
GROUP THREE
The following scales have one hand that uses the same fingering as C Major (Group One), while the other hand uses group of four (no pinkies!): F Major and minor; B Major and minor = 4 scales

F Major and minor
RH  1234/23/23/23/23  432/432/3214321

LANDMARKS:  The thumbs play simultaneously on the fifth note of the scale (C) and after one octave on the tonic (F). Also note the RH has finger number four on Bb. Be careful not to always cross to 4 in this scale, you must sometime cross with 3 in both hands.

B Major and minor
RH  123/23/23/23/23  5432/32/432/321
LH  432/32/32/32/32  123/234/23/23/23

LANDMARKS:  The thumbs play simultaneously on the fourth note of the scale (EC) and after one octave on the tonic (B). Note that in both hands the group of two black keys is played by fingers 2 & 3, while the group of three black keys is played by fingers 2, 3, & 4.

GROUP FOUR
The following scales use the same fingering in the LH, while the RH is grouped together in threes and fours: E-flat, A-flat and B-flat Major.

E-flat Major
RH  31234123123123  321432132143213
LH  321432132143213  312341231234123

LANDMARKS:  Note that the fingerings are mirrored, i.e., the RH fingering ascending is the LH fingering descending, etc. Also note that around the group of three black keys, although you don’t play all three of them as black keys, you still use the fingering 2-3-4 in both hands, ditto for the group of two black keys!
A-flat Major
RH  34123123412312  321321432132143
LH  321432132143213  312341231234123

LANDMARKS: Note that around the group of three black keys, although you don’t play all three of them as black keys, you still use the fingering 2-3-4 in both hands, ditto for the group of two black keys!

B-flat Major
RH  312312341231234  432132143213214
LH  321432132143213  312341231234123

LANDMARKS: Note that around the group of three black keys, although you don’t play all three of them as black keys, you still use the fingering 2-3-4 in both hands, ditto for the group of two black keys.
Although you can learn how to play these patterns in a variety of ways, you will develop fluency more quickly if you go to the heart of why you need to use the piano as a tool, and consider learning the patterns as an exercise in developing the ability to hear and control the voice-leading of a four-voice setting, rather than learning each chord as a separate entry.

Here’s a way to approach the first three chords the basic cadence progression for the key of C major:

a) Place your r.h. on the C major 5/3 triad, fingers 1 - 3 - 5. (l.h. 5 - 3 - 1). Play the chord.

b) Fix your vision on the top two notes E and G

c) See the diatonic notes lying a step above these two notes: F - a 1/2 step above E; A - a whole step above G.

d) Lift your whole hand slightly without moving it horizontally—expand the “palm” of your hand slightly to the right (open up the space between your thumb and 2nd finger) without moving the thumb position, until your 3rd and 5th fingers cover the notes F & A.

e) Play the notes C – F – A with fingers 1 - 3 – 5 for the r. h. and 5-2-1 for the l.h.

f) Lift your hand slightly, contract it to return to the original position and play the tonic triad.

g) This will give you double voice leading motion in parallel thirds in the upper voices and a pedal tone in the bottom voice.

In C minor, just start with the e-flat instead of the e-natural. This time the top voice goes up and down a half step, and the middle voice goes up and down a whole step. If you figure out the voice leading of the two upper voices, you can play the progression in ANY key, just as easily as in C.

Use this method to figure out the voice-leading of the four voices in the rest of the chords, and anticipate hearing them move. Just keep track of the common tones, which voice moves by half-step and which voice moves by whole-step.
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Piano Proficiency Exam
Harmonization/Transposition examples.
Add the appropriate I, IV, V harmonies to these examples. Practice playing a plagal
Cadence (IV-I) at the end when you have finished the example.

Auld Lang Syne

All Through The Night
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Harmonization/Transposition examples.
Add the appropriate I, IV, V harmonies to these examples. Practice playing a plagal cadence (IV-I) at the end when you have finished the example.

Raizele
Traditional Hebrew Song

Home on the Range
Traditional American
Harmonization/Transposition examples.
Add the appropriate I, IV, V harmonies, and practice playing a plagal cadence (IV-I) at the end when you have finished the example.
Harmonization/Transposition examples.
Add the appropriate I, IV, V harmonies to these examples. Practice playing a plagal cadence (IV-I) at the end when you have finished the example.

Summer Is A-Coming In

Modernized Middle English

1
2

Sum-mer is a-com-ing in, loud-ly sing cuck-oo.

3

Grow-eth seed and blow-eth mead, And springs the wood a-new.

Sing, cuck-oo! Ew-e bleat-eth af-ter lamb, Low' th

af-ter calf the cow, Bul-lock start-eth, buck too ver-teth,

Mer-ry sing, cuck-oo! Cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Well sing'est thou, cuck-oo Oh, cease thou nev-er now!
Piano Proficiency Exam

Keyboard & Choral Ed. Majors: Score-reading excerpt from Wachet auf... by J. S. Bach.
BA and BME: Play any 2 parts in combination
BM: Play 3 parts in combination (SAT/ATB)

Open Score example
Piano Proficiency Exam

Keyboard & Choral Ed. Majors: Score-reading excerpt from Wachet auf... by J. S. Bach.

BA and BME: Play any 2 parts in combination

BM: Play 3 parts in combination (SAT/ATB)
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Instrumental Majors: Score Reading excerpt:
- Prepare all “C” and transposing instruments all the way through. You will play one line at a time.
Piano Proficiency Exam
Instrumental Majors: Score Reading excerpt: -Prepare all “C” and transposing instruments all the way through. You will play one line at a time.
Star Spangled Banner

America the Beautiful
Piano Proficiency Exam

Patriotic Selections

BA and BME only

America
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Piano Proficiency Exam
No. 1: Sonatina movements—Climenti Op. 36, No. 1 Mov I
Sonatina movements-Clementi, Op. 36, No. 1, Mov I continued
No. 2: Sonatina movements—Clementi, Op. 36, No. 1, Mov III.
No. 3: Sonatina movements - Sonatina in G, Beethoven
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Solo Sight reading examples (approximate level of difficulty)