

Music Theory Placement Test Guidelines
Information for Incoming Freshmen, Transfer Students, and Advanced Standing Tests

I. Incoming Freshmen

Studies in music theory begin with **Music Theory I (MUSI 1121)**, taken during the first semester of your freshman year. There is no placement test needed to pass into this class.

If you enroll as a freshman, you may take placement tests to try to pass into Music Theory II, III, IV, or out of the sequence; these tests are not required. Policies under Advanced Standing examinations apply to freshmen. Placement tests are offered twice a year, typically in December (for students beginning in the spring) and August (for those beginning in the fall). For each placement test, you are limited to 30 minutes of time. Stay alert for announcements from the BSOM office.

II. Transfer Students

If you are transferring music theory or aural skills courses to KSU from your previous institution(s) and wish to apply this credit towards your degree, you must take our placement tests to verify your level of competency in the content of those courses. The placement tests will be administered **ONLY** on placement test days. The placement test for a course is carefully matched to its semester exams and final exam. As before, you are limited to 30 minutes per test.

A grade of ‘C’ (70%) or better on a test and on all previous tests is necessary to gain credit for its corresponding course, assuming you have previously taken a course on that level. For instance, if you previously took Theory II at another university and earn a 76 and 74 in our tests to pass out of Theory I and II, you may enroll in our Theory III. If you score below 70% on any exam or an exam earlier in the sequence of courses, you will be required to re-take that course at KSU. Specific content and expectations for theory courses are shown below. More information is available in the KSU course catalog online.

Here are a few self-contained FREE online courses:

[Music Theory Flashcards](#)

[Online Music Theory Reference](#)

<https://www.musictheory.net/>

Here are a few theory textbooks that you may study:

Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony, 2nd edition

<https://wnorton.com/books/9780393417180>

Tonal Harmony, 8th edition

<https://www.mheducation.com/highered/product/tonal-harmony-kostka-payne/M9781259447099.html>

III. Advanced Standing

If you have mastered the content of college courses through high school study, private study, or self-study, you may be awarded credit for theory or aural skills courses through a university-wide procedure known as the Advanced Standing Examination. This procedure allows the student to take a test comparable to the final examination for any university course. Successful completion of the test—80% score or higher for that test and all tests earlier in the sequence of courses delivered on the School of Music Placement Testing Days in August and January—allows a KSU student to be awarded degree credit for that course without taking it. For instance, if you have not taken Theory II, but earn scores of 81 and 85 on tests to pass out of Theory I and II, you may earn credit for Theory II without having taken that course at KSU. Students are limited to 30 minutes per attempted exam. A student may only take a particular advanced standing exam a maximum of two times.

KSU regulations for Advanced Standing Examinations are listed on the Advanced Standing Examination forms available online from the Registrar’s Office:

Kennesaw State University Bailey School of Music
Music Theory Test-out Guidelines:
Knowledge Requirement by Semester
Updated July 2024: Dr. Ben Wadsworth

Course	Minimum Content
MUSI 1121: Music Theory I	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic elements of pitch and rhythm• Construction and analysis of triads and seventh chords• Principles of voice leading• Part writing with root-position and first-inversion triads• Construction and analysis of non-chord tones
MUSI 1122: Music Theory II	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part writing with diatonic chords up to 6/4 chords, predominant and dominant sevenths, and simple secondary dominants (e.g., V7/V)• Construction and analysis of normative harmonic progressions: T–PD–D–T or T–S–D–T• Analysis of Tonic expansions, cadences, and microforms (phrases, sentences, periods, and phrase groups)
MUSI 3121: Music Theory III	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More complex secondary dominants (V/x, V7/x, viio7/x)• Diatonic modulations• Diatonic sequences• Modal mixture• Neapolitan chords• Augmented sixth chords• Binary and ternary forms
MUSI 3122: Music Theory IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part writing of simple common-tone chords and altered dominants• Large forms: rondo, composite ternary, composite binary, sonata-allegro, fugue• 20th-century modernistic techniques such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Diatonic modes (Ionian, Dorian, etc.)○ Collections (diatonic, pentatonic, octatonic, hexatonic)○ Pc sets (integers) and prime forms/set classes ((012), (013), etc.)○ 12-tone serialism: serial operations (T_n, T_nI, R, and their compounds), row labeling, row matrices

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