

# TEXAS A&M MUSIC-THEORY COMPETENCIES

## Competencies for MUSC 102 (Fundamentals)

All skills should be memorized for immediate recall & use in future music-theory & musicianship courses at Texas A&M (MUSC 204, 205, 206, 207, and MUSC 208, 210, 212).

### I. Pitch, Clefs, and Scales

- A. Be able to use modern pitch notation (C<sub>4</sub>=middle C).
- B. Be able to read pitches effortlessly from treble and bass clefs.
- C. Be able to name moveable-C clefs (alto, tenor, etc.), and understand how they work (the location of middle C). Facile reading ability at moveable-C clefs is not expected.
- D. Be able to immediately recall and write key signatures for all major & minor keys in treble and bass clefs. These should be memorized.
- E. Be able to immediately identify any standardized major or minor key signature on any clef.
- F. Be able to write any requested major scales and all melodic-, harmonic-, and natural-minor scales, without hesitation, within its home or a foreign key signature.
- G. Be able to identify any requested major scales or any melodic-, harmonic-, and natural-minor scales, without hesitation.
- H. Be able to aurally identify any of the above scale types.

### II. Rhythm and Meter

- A. Be able read the number of beats (duple vs. triple vs. quadruple) and subdivision of beat (simple vs. compound) from any meter signature. E.g., 9/8 is compound triple.
- B. Be able to place any given rhythm in a likely meter signature and beam it appropriately.
- C. Be able to aurally identify the most likely meter signature for a given passage of traditional art music (e.g., 6/8 vs. 3/4, 2/4 vs. 4/4, etc.) by hearing the number of beats, the number of subdivisions of the beat, and the nature accent patterns.

### III. Harmony

- A. Be able to immediately identify any melodic or harmonic intervals by quality and distance (e.g., P<sub>5</sub>), both visually and aurally.
- B. Be able to immediately write out any requested interval in treble or bass clefs from a given pitch, without hesitation.
- C. Be able to visually identify the quality and inversion of any diatonic triad and seventh-chord, including proper notation of seventh chords (e.g., C<sup>MM6/5</sup>). This should be quick.
- D. Be able to aurally identify the quality of all root-position triads and seventh chords.
- E. Be able to spell any requested inversion of a diatonic triad or seventh chord from a given bass note, without hesitation.
- F. Know all common diatonic Roman numerals for each scale step of major and minor keys (e.g., IV<sup>M7</sup>, V<sup>7</sup>, vii<sup>o6/5</sup>, etc.). These should be memorized for immediate use. (Knowledge of harmonic function, however, is not expected.)

## Competencies for MUSC 204 (Music Theory I)

Facility at all music fundamentals (MUSC 102) is expected. The following additional competencies must be demonstrated by the end of the MUSC 204 course; the co-requisite, Musicianship I (MUSC 208), teaches the aural perception of these phenomena. The subjects of this course encompass simple (non-ornate) diatonic music.

### I. Basic Harmonic Progression

- A. Be able to write out a diagram of all orthodox chord progressions, including common exceptions. (Knowledge of more modern styles and popular-music progressions is also encouraged.)
- B. Be able to explain or criticize any diatonic harmonic progression in any major or minor key, including common exceptions to the dominant paradigm.
- C. Be able to quickly analyze any diatonic passage in a simple chorale or piano texture with Roman numerals and figured bass.
  - 1. RN should reflect both the root and the quality (e.g., I, ii, vii<sup>o6</sup>).
  - 2. Figured basses should reflect inversion and any accidentals outside the key signature (e.g., V<sup>#</sup> in a minor key), including all common shorthand notations.
- D. Be able to identify and label standard cadences: PAC, IAC, HC, DC, and PC.
- E. Know the aural effect and definitions of the terms: harmonic progression, harmonic succession, retrogression, harmonic sequence, monotonicity, and harmonic sequence.

### II. Basic Diatonic Part-writing

- A. Know standard doublings for root-, first-, second-inversion triads.
- B. Be able to find and identify standard melodic and part-writing errors in 4v chorales: parallel 8vas/5ths, direct 8vas/5ths in outer voices, unequal fifths in outer voices, crossed & overlapping voices, spacing errors, unorthodox harmonic progressions, bad/unorthodox doublings (esp. of leading tone), misspelled chords, cross relations, no climax, bad leaps, etc.
- C. Be able to handle diminished triads in diatonic passages, esp. handling parallel-sixth chords properly and recognizing their aural effect.
- D. Be able to explain how each 6/4 “chord” type derives from dissonance and how it results in their different metric placements and notations, i.e., the instability of the P4 and relationship to species.
- E. Be able to recognize and use up-to-date labels for all 6/4 types: arpeggiated (e.g., I<sup>5/3 6/3 6/4</sup>), cadential (I-V<sup>6/4-5/3</sup>-I), pedal (I<sup>5/3-6/4-5/3</sup>), neighbor (I-N<sup>6/4</sup>-I), and passing (I-P<sup>6/4</sup>-I<sup>6</sup>).
- F. Be able to visually identify 6/4 structures in musical scores and to aurally hear their prolonging effects, esp. the cadential and passing 6/4.
- G. Be able to identify opportunities to use 6/4 chords with a given bassline or a given outer-voice counterpoint.
- H. Be able to facily harmonize a given melody, bassline, or outer-voice counterpoint with root-position, first-inversion, and second-inversion triads in 4v chorale textures; using orthodox harmonic progressions, avoiding standard errors, and using good cadences.

### III. Fundamental Counterpoint and Simple Melodic Writing

- A. Be able to criticize a melody with strict species rules or more forgiving tonal rules.
- B. Be able to write a strict species melody (“cantus firmus”) and to write a freer but basic tonal melody.
- C. Be able to identify standard errors or stylistic issues in two-part first-species.
- D. Be able to compose an upper or lower first-species counterpoint to a given cantus firmus, and know about the voice exchange. ( “Simple” 1:1 consonant counterpoint)
- E. Be able to identify standard errors or stylistic issues in two-part second-species.
- F. Be able to compose an upper or lower second-species counterpoint to a given cantus firmus. (Passing tone and fourth dissonance)
- G. Be able to identify standard errors or stylistic issues in two-part fourth-species.
- H. Be able to compose an upper or lower fourth-species counterpoint to a given cantus firmus. (Suspension and fourth dissonance)
- I. Know good suspension types for upper and lower counterpoints.
- J. Be able to transform a first- or second-species counterpoint into a 4v chorale.
- K. Be able to reduce a 4v chorale or other simple musical texture into a counterpoint, observing any “Linear Intervallic Patterns” (LIPs).

### IV. Chorale writing and Basic Text Setting

- A. Be able to judge (analyze) a poem for its suitability for group singing (untrained).
- B. Be able to set such a poem (hymn) to music, including proper musical meter, word accentuation, musical form & cadences, melodic design, and inner voices.
- C. Be able to judge (analyze) a musical setting with given criteria and to comment upon basic word-music relationships.

### IV. Miscellaneous topics

- A. Intimate knowledge of alto clef.
- B. Basic Instrumentation.
  - 1. Know keys and ranges of common instruments.
  - 2. Be able to write an instrumental part for the above instrumentals from a concert-C score. (arranging)
  - 3. Be able to write a concert-C score from instrumental parts. (score reduction)
- C. Be able to describe any four-part chords as open or closed position.
- D. Know standard notations of 4v harmony on the grand staff and in choral scores.

## Competencies for MUSC 205 (Music Theory II)

Facility at all music fundamentals (MUSC 102) and diatonic basics (MUSC 204) is expected, and all the following further competencies must be demonstrated; the co-requisite, Musicianship II (MUSC 210), teaches the aural perception of these phenomena. The subjects of this course encompass ornate diatonic music, secondary functions, and modulation.

### I. Counterpoint

- A. Be able to identify standard errors or stylistic issues in two-part third-species.
- B. Be able to compose an upper or lower third-species counterpoint to a given cantus firmus. (Passing and neighbor tones, *nota cambiata*, and double neighbor.)
- C. Be able to identify standard errors or stylistic issues in two-part fifth-species.
- D. Be able to compose an upper or lower fifth-species counterpoint to a given cantus firmus, with good control of pacing, rhythm, variety, and melodic design.
- E. Know and be able to explain the essential rules of all five species. Also be able to distinguish stylistic rules from these essential rules.
- F. Be able to compose a two-voice point of imitation with a given theme.
- G. Be able to compose a round and/or simple canon, knowing good intervals of imitation.

### II. Reduction, Ornamentation, Elaboration

- A. Be able to define all standard non-chord tones (NCTs).
- B. Be able to recognize and label all non-chord tones in homophonic or freer textures, including using figured-bass designations for suspensions, appoggiaturas, and retardations.
- C. Be able to use common non-chord tones to tastefully ornament a given melody or chorale setting. (Also knowing how to avoid creating errors when embellishing.)
- D. Be able to create a chorale partita (variation) from a given homophonic texture.
- E. Be able to reduce a compound melody to its essential voice-leading.
- F. Be able to make chordal reductions of simple piano textures (textures to chorales).
- G. Be able to mark transferred resolutions (sevenths, suspensions, leading tones, etc.).
- H. Be able to complete a passage in a given texture (style-copy composition).
- I. Be able to determine harmonic rhythm in diatonic music in common piano textures.

### III. Diatonic Seventh Chords

- A. Be able to spell any diatonic seventh chord, including inversions.
- B. Be able to prepare and resolve the seventh of any diatonic chord, esp.  $V^7$ -I tripled root.
- C. Be able to identify seventh chords and to mark the resolutions of sevenths in music or identify unresolved/transferred resolutions.
- D. Be able to write successive seventh chords, esp. in circle-of-fifths progressions.
- E. Be able to harmonize a melody, realize a figured bass, and compose an original chorale phrase using seventh chords tastefully.

#### IV. Secondary functions (V/x and vii<sup>o</sup>/x)

- A. Be able to spell secondary dominant and secondary leading-tone chords.
- B. Be able to recognize and label secondary functions in musical excerpts.
- C. Be able to resolve secondary dominants and leading-tone chords correctly.
- D. Be able to use secondary functions musically in a progression.

#### V. Modulation

- A. Be able to quickly locate and identify key areas and any pivot chords (if applicable) prior to any Roman-numeral analysis.
- B. Be able to visually and aurally distinguish between secondary functions and modulations in analysis.
- C. Be able to analyze a musical passage that modulates, with Roman numerals and proper notation of the modulation(s) and pivot chord(s).
- D. Know about and be able to notate other methods of modulation, including phrase (direct) modulation, sequential modulation, common-tone modulation, and by altered chord.
- E. Be able to write an effective modulation between closely related keys.
  - 1. Be able to quickly determine which pivot chord choices are best and to explain why.
  - 2. Be able to discuss different methods of smoothing out rough modulations.
- F. Be able to use intervening keys in order to modulate to distant keys via pivot chords.
- G. Be able to identify modulations in melodies and be able to harmonize them effectively.

#### VI. Song and Chamber-music Composition

- A. Be able to read scores with up to four staves (st. qt.), including common transposing instruments.
- B. Be able to analyze and to select appropriate poems for art songs, including more artistic poems.
- C. Know about common musical forms, including introductions, interludes, and codas.
- D. Be able to compose an art song with a suitable piano accompaniment and ornamented melodic line for a competently trained vocalist. This includes knowing typical pianistic patterns from the literature, including Alberti bass. (The song may be strophic, through-composed, or ternary.)
- E. Be able to analyze more complex text-music relationships.
- F. Be able to artistically judge songs.

## Competencies for MUSC 206 (Music Theory III)

Facility at all music fundamentals (MUSC 102), diatonic basics (MUSC 204), and simple chromaticism and ornamentation (MUSC 205) is expected. All the following further competencies must be demonstrated; the co-requisite, Musicianship III (MUSC 212), teaches the aural perception of these phenomena. The subjects of this course encompass advanced harmony and chromaticism, chamber music, twentieth-century techniques, and music criticism. **As the designated writing-intensive course for the music major, it involves significant amounts of scholarly writing and training at prose writing in the discipline.**

### I. Standard Chromatic Harmony

#### A. Mode Mixture.

1. Be able to identify and correctly label the use of mode mixture in harmonic analysis.
2. Be able to use mode mixture smoothly for expressive purposes by careful handling of accidentals, including stock progressions such as I-v<sup>6</sup>-iv<sup>6</sup>-V and chromatic variants.
3. Be able to identify and label modulations involving mode mixture.
4. Be able to evaluate the emotional and musical effect of smooth and dramatic (abrupt) mode mixture.

#### B. Neapolitan-sixth Chords.

1. Be able to identify the Neapolitan-sixth chord and recognize its musical effect aurally. The proper label is “bII<sup>6</sup>” (not N<sup>6</sup>, which is a neighbor chord at A&M).
2. Be able to spell and part-write the Neapolitan-sixth chord correctly, including cautionary accidentals.

#### C. Augmented-sixth Chords, standard.

1. Be able to identify It<sup>+6</sup>, Fr<sup>+6</sup>, and Gr<sup>+6</sup> visually and recognize their musical effects aurally. Also be familiar with German labeling for these “chords”.
2. Be able to spell and resolve them, including avoiding parallel fifths, how to handle direct resolutions to V<sup>7</sup>, and enharmonic spelling of German in major.
3. Be able to use these chords smoothly in harmonizations (with mode mix).
4. Understand the derivation of these chords as results of chromatic voice-leading (passing) or chromatic harmonic substitutes.

D. Be able to identify and label more unusual augmented-sixth chords, including the so-called “inversions” (Gr<sup>o3</sup>), resolutions to scale degrees (Gr<sup>+6</sup>/I), different “flavors” (+6), and resolution to non-roots ([+6]). Be able also to explain why they occur.

### V. More Advanced Chromaticism

#### A. Enharmonicism.

1. Be able to identify and correctly label enharmonically spelled chords in non-modulating contexts.
2. Be able to use enharmonic spellings of the Gr<sup>+6</sup> and dominant-seventh functions to create smooth, swift, and effective modulations to distant keys.
3. Be able to use enharmonic spellings of the vii<sup>o7</sup> chord to create smooth, swift, and effective modulations to distant keys.

B. Extended Tertian Harmony

1. Be able to identify ninth chords and distinguish them from 9–8 suspensions.
2. Be able to use ninth chords in partwriting.

C. Be able to identify and correctly label augmented chords ( $V^+/x$ ) in analysis.

D. Substitute and Added-sixth chords.

1. Be able to identify substitute-/add-sixth chords, by examining harmonic context.
2. Be able to use them in Romantic- and post-Romantic-style composition.
3. Understand the relationship of stepwise root motions to  $\text{sub}\hat{6}$  in Rameau's and Riemann's theories.

E. Common-tone Diminished Sonorities (N & P chords labeled  $\text{ct}^{07}$ )

1. Be able to identify common-tone diminished-seventh chords.
2. Be able to construct common-tone diminished-seventh chords and to use them in Romantic or barber-shop settings.

F. Be able to identify and label simultaneities and other such coloristic chords.

G. Be able to describe the role of counterpoint underlying exceptional "harmonic" passages.

H. Understand role of context in determining harmonic analysis: Roman numerals represent function not spelling! E.g.,  $(V^+)^7$  vs. an augmented-sixth,  $V^{\text{sub}\hat{6}}$  vs.  $\text{iii}^{\hat{6}}$ , etc.

III. Harmony & Analysis Skills

A. Be able design and compose smooth modulations in four-part chorale texture, between successive hymn verses or different hymn tunes.

B. Be able to write short musical passages in a highly chromatic Romantic style, including Romantic harmonies, melodies, voice-leading, and textures (including  $>4v$ ).

C. Be able to identify standard and unorthodox chord progressions in highly chromatic music, and be able to notate one's perceptions with theoretical symbols, esp. by hearing dominant functions and extended dissonance usage (Wagner & beyond). This involves music with roving keys and ambiguous tonal centers.

D. Be able to identify unusual voice-leading (unresolved sevenths, leading tones, "forbidden" parallelisms, extended dissonances, etc.).

E. Be able to justify unorthodox chord progressions and voice leading by numerous methods (ellipsis, underlying counterpoint, transferred resolutions, prolongation, harmonic substitution, text expression, extramusical narrative, etc.).

F. Be able to analyze and discuss advanced compositional processes in works by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Liszt, Wagner, Wolf, and their contemporaries.

IV. Essay-writing Skills (MUSC 206 is the designated writing-intensive course for the major)

- A. Be able to formulate a significant, provable thesis that fits within a given scope.
- B. Be able to support a thesis with reason, relevant facts, and observations from the musical score (citing specific measure numbers).
- C. Be able to write in a terse, scholarly prose style with correct usage of music terminology and standard music abbreviations. This includes avoiding redundancy and irrelevant sidetracks.
- D. Produce a writing portfolio with self-assessment essay and all essays written during the semester, with a minimum of 4,000 words. At least six small essays and one term paper will be assigned, with all small essays subjected to significant revision and incorporation of instructor feedback.

V. Twentieth-century Terms

- A. Pitch (melody and harmony)
  - Modes & Pentatonic scales
  - Synthetic scales (whole-tone, octatonic, chromatic),
  - Pandiatonicism
  - Quartal/Quintal harmony
  - Bi-/Poly-chords, Bi-/Poly-tonality, Clusters (secundal chords)
  - Pointillism, *Klangfarbenmelodie*
- B. Rhythm
  - Alternating meter, Mixed Meter, Asymmetrical Meter, Polymeter, Metric Modulation, Polyrhythm, Additive rhythm
- C. Texture and Other Structural Parameters (phenomena) from Aural Analysis:
  - Planing (parallelisms)
  - Sound Mass
    - Homophonic, Heterophonic, Polyphonic (contrapuntal), Monophonic
    - ostinato; repetition vs. imitation vs. sequence, canon & rounds, fugue
- D. Twelve-tone row (dodecaphonic) usages, including combinatoriality, invariance, imbrication
- E. Unorthodox notation, aleatory (Cage), proportional notation (Pendereski)

VI. Twentieth-century Techniques and Concepts

- A. Be able to do basic set-theory analysis: Pitch class; Operators; Normal, “Solomon,” and Prime Forms; Forte Labels, Interval Vectors; Sub-/super-set relationships; Invariance
- B. Be able to produce a twelve-tone matrix and explain 12-tone composers’ choices.
- C. Be able to aurally analyze works without scores (e.g., electronic music).
- D. Be able to explain the shape of a piece or section of music.
- E. Be able to account for the creation of cadence in twentieth-century works.

## Competencies for MUSC 207 (Form & Analysis)

Facility at all music fundamentals (MUSC 102), diatonic basics (MUSC 204), simple chromaticism and ornamentation (MUSC 205), advanced harmony & twentieth-century techniques (MUSC 206) is expected. All the following further competencies must be demonstrated; advanced undergraduate aural skills are incorporated in this course. The subjects of this course encompass form & analysis and 18<sup>th</sup>-c counterpoint. **Oral presentation skills are emphasized in this course.**

### I. Basic Analytical Terms, Concepts, and Skills

- A. Be able to explain the terms and concepts of form, tonal structure vs. design, unity vs. diversity, symmetry and proportion, genre vs. form, grouping, sections, role of harmony in form, etc.
- B. Be able to explain and use Schoenberg's compositional theories in analysis.
  - 1. Be able to explain coherence vs. comprehensibility.
  - 2. Be able to identify motives and any transformations thereof, including use of proper musical terms and labels.
  - 3. Be able to identify use of "sentence form" and how basic musical elements can be seen to generate compositional material.
  - 4. Be able to apply Schoenberg's musical idea (*Idee, Gedanken, Ausführung, Einfall, Gestalt, Grundgestalt*, and so forth) to a musical work.
- C. Be able to discuss the role of musical parameters beyond pitch in the generation of musical form and emotional effects.
- D. Know standard notation symbols used in this course: upper-case letters for sections, Greek letters for motives, lower-case letters for themes, RN for harmonies or key areas, wavy line, arrows, etc.

### II. Phrase Analysis in Complete Works.

- A. Be able to find and identify cadences and key areas in orchestral scores.
- B. Be able to distinguish between phrases, sub-phrases (phrase segments), links, bridges, and motives.
- C. Label phrases, periods, phrase chains, and phrase groups with appropriate terms.
- D. Be able to make a phrase diagram with proper notation.
- E. Identify classical hypermeter in straight-forward classical passages.
- F. Be able to identify compositional devices that affect hypermeter and phrasing
- G. Be able to determine phrasing by making voice-leading & harmonic reductions of complicated textures.
- H. Be able to use the above to conceive and judge musical interpretations of works on the phrase level.

### III. Analysis of Small Forms.

- A. Be able to identify diagrams of these forms: binary, bar, ternary, and compound (composite) ternary. All diagrams must use design \*and\* tonal structure.
- B. Know how to various adjectives on the above: simple vs. rounded, fully sectional vs. sectional vs. continuous, open vs. closed.
- C. Be able to analyze complete movements and diagram their form.
- D. Be able to discuss the differences between binary and ternary form.
- E. Be able to discuss how composers can obfuscate sectional divisions and why.

### IV. Analysis of Larger Forms.

- A. Be able to identify and distinguish between diagrams of these forms: rondo vs. ritornello, sonata vs. ternary or binary, sonatina, sonata-rondo, and classical concerto.
- B. Know the normal genres that contain the above forms.
- C. Be able to analyze and make a stereotypical diagrams of these forms that includes tonal structure \*and\* design as well as all appropriate terminology each form and its sections.
- D. Be able to analyze scores or analyze aurally any of these forms.
- E. Be able to describe the process involved in any of the forms, esp. sonata principle.
- F. Be able to describe the relationship between simple forms and complex forms.

### V. Analysis of Contrapuntal and Eighteenth-century Genres

- A. Be able analyze and use proper terms for canon, imitation, and similar procedures.
- B. Be able to analyze inventions with proper terms.
- C. Be able to analyze fugue with its numerous terms, including invertible counterpoint, real vs. tonal answers, etc.
- D. Know miscellaneous terms such as fuato, fughetta, point-of-imitation technique, passacaglia, chaconne, etc.

### VI. Analysis of Popular Music

### VII. General Concepts

- A. Be able to briefly describe the compositional styles of representative composers studied during all four semesters.
- B. Be able to briefly describe technical features of compositional periods and style by citing pieces studied during all four semesters.
- C. Be able to cite stereotypical locations of musical forms in specific genres and movements, as well as in specific pieces studied during all four semesters.
- D. Be able to discuss the role of composer, performer, and audience (if applicable) in the interpretation and significance of specific works.
- E. Develop oral presentation technique, including defining terms, making visual aids (overheads), encouraging discussion, fielding questions/objections, and so forth.
- F. Be able to understand and navigate through divergent points of view.
- G. Be able to dissect good and poor arguments for support of such viewpoints.
- H. Be able to formulate and defend one's opinions articulately.