

Graduate Entrance Examination in Music History

All incoming graduate students in the MA (Music History and Theory), MMus (Composition), PhD (Music History and Theory), and DMA programs are required to take the Graduate Entrance Examination in music history. The exam has two purposes. First, it assesses if students have a knowledge of music history equivalent to that expected of UBC undergraduate students. It also helps us decide who can take required or elective graduate courses in music history.

The entrance examination will test your knowledge of stylistic and cultural developments in Western music history from the Middle Ages to the present day. If you do poorly on any section of the test, you will have the option of retaking that section of the exam the following year or you could audit undergraduate courses (120, 121, 220, 221) in the relevant historical periods. Students who came close to passing sections of the exam may be given the option of writing an essay for the relevant historical period instead of retaking sections of the exam or auditing a course.

All Master's students must complete remedial assignments or successfully retake sections of the exam before graduation and doctoral students must do so before being admitted to candidacy.

The examination lasts three hours and consists of two sections:

1. Short-answer questions covering five periods: Medieval/Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Music since 1900. All students must complete this section.
2. Essay questions with choices of topics for each of the five historical eras:
 - a) All students must answer the questions on Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Music-since-1900 topics.
 - b) The Medieval/Renaissance section is to be completed by MA and PhD Music History and Theory students and those in the DMA programs. MMus (Composition) students should take this section of the exam only if they would like to take a seminar in Medieval or Renaissance music.

Samples of short-answer questions:

1. When did measured Organum first appear?
2. Give two important characteristics of Dufay's motets.
3. Name an opera by Alban Berg.
4. Mention two principal genres used by Monteverdi.

Samples of essay topics:

1. Discuss the development of Haydn's quartet writing, by giving examples of stylistic types from his early, middle, and late creative periods.
2. With precise examples, discuss the relationship between composers and patrons during the nineteenth century.

3. Compare late baroque French and Italian Opera as exemplified in the works of Rameau and Handel.
4. Discuss the emergence and use of the twelve-tone system in the works of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg.

In preparation for the Graduate Entrance Examination, we suggest that students study a general history of music such as the widely used one by Grout/Palisca/Burkholder.