D.M.A. COMMON MUSIC THEORY EXAM
Overview and study tips

The D.M.A. music theory exam will be a three-hour written examination, offered once each semester, with the following components:

1. CORE COMPETENCIES. Approximately 12-15 isolated one-to-two measure examples.

   Skills required and study tips:
   Fundamental theory skills such as the notation of scales, modes, and collections; spelling, resolving, and identifying tonal harmonies in SATB texture; cadence ID; key relationships. Practice these skills at an online theory site. Review an undergraduate theory textbook to practice these skills (see page 3)

2. SCORE ANALYSIS—various passages will be shown (one using imitative technique, one “tonal” piece, and one twentieth or twenty-first century piece) and each will require a response. Answer directed questions about analysis of the passage (e.g., harmonic identification and analysis as directed, compositional devices, tonalities used and how established, tonal design, motivic use/development, rhythmic style/devices, etc.) There will also be opportunity for more open-ended questions regarding the excerpt in question.

   Skills required and study tips:
   Terminology and analytical skills specific to musical forms of different eras (i.e., Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Post-tonal, Serial) Score reading fluency (instrumentation and transpositions) Appropriate analytical tools for music of different eras SATB part writing Roman numeral/figured bass realization Phrase structure Ability to analyze common harmonic sonorities

3. ESSAY RESPONSE—a complete movement and/or piece. Written essay response required, possibly also involving musical notation responses. Your score will be determined both on the content and the quality of your writing.

   Skills required and study tips:
   Clearly organized and thorough discussion of the musical example Ability to address in depth the directed questions and not generalize Evidence of detailed and musically expressive writing (not bullet points)
4. SCORE ID AND COMMENTARY: Given unidentified score excerpts to look at, comment on these excerpts, addressing specific stylistic characteristics and probable date (within a reasonable range) of composition and composer.

Skills required and study tips:
Browse various music anthologies and scores of landmark works, noting musical characteristics specific to various genres and historical eras and representative composers

5. TERMINOLOGY: Briefly define or explain analytical terms and concepts that will be listed according to courses taken.

Skills required and study tips:
Review course notes from all classes taken and compile a vocabulary list
Browse the index of a standard undergraduate theory textbook; look up unknown terms
Ability to answer clearly and thoroughly (not bullet points)

General strategies for success:

• Form a peer study group
• Allow yourself ample time to prepare (at least 3-4 months)
• The exam provides time allowances for each section; bring a watch and budget your work on each section accordingly
• Read each question carefully and answer what is asked (e.g., sonorities vs. Roman numerals, etc.).
• We consider the content of this exam to be standard working knowledge in the areas of tonal and post-tonal theory and analysis. Be prepared to answer questions beyond simply the content of your recent graduate courses. In other words, you should also review concepts covered in a typical undergraduate core theory curriculum and remediate any weaknesses or omissions in your prior studies. The questions posed on this exam are gauged at the level of a knowledgeable, competent, finishing undergraduate music theory student.
• If necessary, work with a tutor to remedy specific weaknesses. We highly recommend you work with someone familiar with the terminology and methodologies covered in the exam (i.e., a current teaching assistant in the theory division, doctoral candidates in music theory, or other doctoral students who have successfully passed the exam)

Good luck!
Suggested reading: (The following books are recommended sources for study relative to the points given above. We are not recommending that you read each and every one from cover to cover. Rather, you should consult this list as needed to remediate any weaknesses you may have.)

Harmony:
- Kostka, Stephan and Dorothy Payne. *Tonal Harmony: With an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*
- Aldwell, Schachter, and Cadwallader. *Harmony and Voice Leading*
- Roig-Francoli, *Harmony in Context*
(Please note: there are roughly 200 published undergraduate theory textbooks. Choose one for review that is up to date and in current use. It is also a good idea to browse 2-3 to compare their content and refresh your knowledge of the concepts within.)

Counterpoint:
- Kennan, Kent. *Counterpoint*
(Study in this book should be undertaken from the standpoint of analysis you would apply to baroque contrapuntal pieces regarding motivic and thematic use, form, phrases, cadences, tonality changes, and contrapuntal devices and procedures. The purpose of your study does not involve composing counterpoint or executing detailed analytical (voice-leading) reductions. Recommended are Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 20.)

Form and Analysis:
- Green, Douglass. *Form in Tonal Music: An Introduction to Analysis*
- Berry, Wallace. *Form in Music*
- James Mathes. *The Analysis of Musical Form*

Twentieth-century techniques:
- Kostka, Stephan. *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music*
- Straus, Joseph. *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*

Other:
- Laitz and Bartlette. *Graduate Review of Tonal Theory: A Recasting of Common-Practice Harmony, Form, and Counterpoint*
- Deborah Stein, *Engaging Music*
(Offers an overview of analytic approaches and models of how to write analytically)

Web:
- http://www.musictheory.net/
- http://web1.hamilton.edu/javamusic/
- http://www.arts.ilstu.edu/~staylor/music203/index.html