

Piano Guidelines for Music Majors

As a general rule of thumb, all AFA-seeking music majors should enroll for and complete the entire four-semester sequence of Class Piano. This is particularly essential for those who plan to transfer to a four-year institution. More specific guidelines are as follows:

- Music majors with no prior keyboard experience, or those who have not studied piano within the five years prior to enrollment as a music major should enroll for MUSC 1290 Class Piano I and complete the four-semester sequence in order.
- Music majors with keyboard experience (three or more years of recent study) may elect to “test out” of one or more components of the four-semester sequence. Study materials for each test-out exam can be obtained from any of our piano faculty. Students should contact a piano instructor as soon as possible should they wish to schedule an appropriate test-out exam. A grade of “C” or better is considered a passing grade. A testing fee will apply and must be arranged through the Office of the Registrar as described below. Students should remain enrolled in class piano until they pass the exam or exams.

Class Piano Sequence Test-Out Policy for Experienced Piano Students

The purpose of the class piano sequence is to develop or expand solo performance and/or accompanying skills through individual instruction, ensemble activities, performance opportunities, and individual practice and study. The four courses of the class piano sequence are required for completion of the AFA in Music.

Students with several years of private piano training may find some of the content of the sequence rudimentary and unnecessary for completion of their core music training at Sheridan College. It is with these students in mind that the following policy procedure for challenging the sequence is implemented:

- **Step 1:** The student should consult with the class piano instructor to determine the best course of action for his or her particular situation.
- **Step 2:** If it’s determined that the student should challenge one or more of the courses, the class piano instructor or other member of the piano faculty will administer the exam to the student at a mutually convenient time.

- **Step 3:** For *each* of the four class piano courses that is successfully challenged the student and instructor should fill out the top portion of a Program Waiver form, available on the college website in the Student Forms section of the Records Office Page (web shortcut: mcaf.ee/4bx9te).
- **Step 4:** The student should take the partially completed form(s) to the Coordinator of Music who will collect the remaining signatures. Once ultimately signed by the Chief Academic Officer, the requirement that each challenged course fulfills for the AFA in Music will be waived. NOTE: The student may have to take elective courses in place of each waived credit in order to meet the minimum number of credits for graduation.

For students who successfully challenge all four class piano courses, simultaneous satisfaction of MUSC 2395 Piano Proficiency Exam is granted without further examination. For this to be officially included on the student's transcript, the student should register for MUSC 2395 Piano Proficiency Exam (0 credits), which serves as proof of keyboard competency for students transferring to a four-year college or university.

Piano Proficiency Examination Guidelines

Piano Proficiency Exam (General Transfer Emphasis¹)

Requirements & Study Guide

1. **Technique** — Perform any major or harmonic minor scale, hands together in two octaves with correct fingering.
2. **Prepared Harmonization** — Harmonize lead sheets of two assigned melodies that employ both primary and secondary chords. One melody will be in a major key and the other in a minor key. They will be in different meters. Use an accompaniment appropriate for each melody (no block chords).
3. **Sight-Reading Harmonization** — Harmonize lead sheets of two simple melodies at sight using primary chords. One melody will be in a major key and the other in a minor key. Use an accompaniment appropriate for each melody (block chords are acceptable).

¹ Students planning to transfer to UW, BHSU, or other specific four-year institution should prepare from those institutions' respective piano proficiency guidelines. Consult with a member of the piano faculty for more information.

4. Transposition — Transpose one of the prepared lead sheets from the harmonization section above into two keys (M2, M3, P4 or P5 from the original key). Do the same for one of the sight-reading harmonizations. For each, use the same accompaniment applied to the original keys.
5. Accompaniment — Choose and prepare a simple vocal or instrumental accompaniment related to the student's area (it is not necessary to bring a soloist to the exam).
6. Sing and Play — Prepare and sing, while accompanying yourself at the piano, a patriotic song such as "America," "America the Beautiful," or "The Star-Spangled Banner."
7. Score Reading — Prepare and perform a three-part vocal score. The student must read from the score itself.
8. Improvisation — Improvise for a minimum of two minutes using a pre-approved harmonic framework such as the 12-bar blues pattern.
9. Prepared Literature — Prepare and perform two works from Agay: Easy Classics to Moderns (or other works of similar difficulty). The pieces should be from two contrasting stylistic periods.
10. Sight-Reading Literature — Perform at sight a homophonic composition that uses a simple chordal accompaniment and a simple four-part hymn.