

Piano Guidelines for Music Majors at Sheridan College

This document is for advising freshmen and transfer students who need to be placed in the piano class sequence.

As a general rule of thumb, it is strongly recommended that all music majors 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 1300 Class Piano I and complete the four-semester sequence in order.
- Music majors with **some** keyboard experience (three to five years of *recent* study) may elect to “test out” of one or more components of the four-semester sequence. Competency guidelines for each level can be found on the following pages. Students should contact a piano instructor as soon as possible 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.
- Music majors with more **substantial** keyboard experience (over five years of recent study) planning on making piano their major instrument should enroll for private lessons. The student may petition for the waiving of the Class Piano requirement of the Music A.F.A. and instead enroll in an elective in the major area to attain the total credits necessary for graduation. However, such students will be asked to complete the competency guidelines for Class Piano IV by the end of the first semester of study. Students unable to achieve this task should register for Class Piano IV (or appropriate level) in lieu of private lessons the following semester.

Test-Out Exam for MUSC 1300: Class Piano I¹

The student should be able to complete any of the following tasks:

- A. Name and play white and black keys and enharmonic equivalents.
- B. Read and play treble and bass clef notes.
- C. Realize melodic and harmonic intervals at the keyboard.
- D. Play “Highlander Tune” in both its original key and transposed to G major.
- E. Improvise a four-bar melody harmonized with a drone using a five-finger pattern and given rhythmic framework.
- F. Sight-read an eight-bar piece in the treble clef and another in the bass clef.
- G. Prepare and perform “Olé!” with accurate interpretation of rhythm, pitches, dynamics, and articulations.
- H. Be able to play a five-finger scale pattern and triad study in any major key from memory.

Test-Out Exam for MUSC 1301: Class Piano II

- A. Improvise a melody over the top of quarter-note block chords using one verse of the 12-bar blues as your formal structure. Use chord tones from the prevalent triad to construct your melody. Occasionally flat the third of each chord to create a “blue” note.
- B. Prepare the student part of the duet “Razzle Dazzle” and play it with your test administrator.
- C. Harmonize a lead sheet for “Git Along, Little Dogies” using a waltz-style pattern and correct inversions.
- D. Sight-read two eight-bar pieces.
- E. Be able to play any major scale, one octave ascending and descending, hands separately using correct fingering, from memory.
- F. Prepare and perform “Time-Clock Blues,” a piece that contains a change of the five-finger position.
- G. Prepare and perform “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”.
- H. Prepare and perform “The Galway Piper” in both its original key and transposed to F major.

¹ Study materials for each test-out exam can be obtained from any piano instructor.

Test-Out Exam for MUSC 1302: Class Piano III

- A. Prepare and perform “Ah, Vous Dirai-je, Mamman?” a piece that employs an Alberti bass accompaniment.
- B. Play a simplified version of “The Entertainer” to demonstrate understanding of syncopation.
- C. Prepare and perform Robert Schumann’s “Chorale” using proper pedaling technique.
- D. Using one verse of the 12-bar blues as your structure, improvise a melody over an accompaniment consisting of quarter-note dominant seventh chords in the key of your choice. Use an appropriate transposition of the blues scale over the prevalent seventh chord to construct your melody.
- E. Sight-read two eight-bar pieces that use a homophonic accompaniment.
- F. Perform the student part of the duet “Polovetzian Dance” and play it with your test administrator.
- G. Be able to play any harmonic minor scale, one octave ascending and descending, hands together using correct fingering, from memory.
- H. Prepare and perform “Lydian March” to demonstrate understanding of modes.

Test-Out Exam for MUSC 1303: Class Piano IV

- A. Be able to play any major scale or harmonic minor scale, two octaves ascending and descending, hands together using correct fingering, from memory.
- B. Sight-read an eight-bar modal piece, then identify the mode employed.
- C. Harmonize “Streets of Laredo” using an appropriate accompaniment (no block chords).
- D. Prepare and perform **two** works from the list below. Each piece must be correctly interpreted according to the stylistic conventions of its respective historical period.
 - 1. Baroque Era: “Tambourin” by Rameau
 - 2. Classical Era: “Minuet in C” by Mozart
 - 3. Romantic Era: “Melody” by Schumann
 - 4. Modern Era: “Springtime Song” by Bartók
- E. Realize a four-part vocal score of “Red River Valley” at the piano.
- F. Perform “America the Beautiful,” singing while you accompany yourself on the piano.