

University of Illinois School of Music

The DMA Qualifying and Preliminary Examinations: Notes for Students who Matriculated in Fall 2012 or Later

General

1. This exam system applies to all DMA concentrations, and to students who matriculated in fall 2012 or later.
2. What we used to call the Preliminary Exams (taken by students who matriculated before fall 2012) are now broken down into three components:
 - Written exams in musicology and music theory (known as Qualifying Exam 1; “Qual 1”)
 - Written exams in major area and cognate area (known as Qualifying Exam 2; “Qual 2”)
 - Oral exam (known as the Preliminary Exam, or “Prelim”)
3. The Preliminary (oral) Exam comprises the vetting of the research project proposal (which students will develop in 528B) by the four members of the Preliminary Exam Committee; only one member of Musicology *or* Composition/Theory faculty is required for the committee.
4. Musicology and music theory (Qual 1) exams are standardized exams. Major area and cognate area (Qual 2) exams are tailored to the individual student.

Logistics

5. The Qualifying Exams are administered by SOM. Students must complete all coursework (excluding Doctoral Project hours) before taking the Qualifying and Preliminary Exams. When a student is ready to register for the Qualifying Exams he/she should submit the SOM’s online approval form and prepare a degree audit checklist for Jenny Phillips (this should be done the semester before the student plans to take the exams, typically when enrolled in MUS 528B). The form requires students to identify four faculty members willing to serve on the Preliminary Exam committee, two of whom will form the mini-committee for Qual 2; students will also indicate provisional dates for the Qual 2 and the Prelim exams.
6. Once provisionally approved for the exams, the student will be given access to electronic study materials for Qual 1 through the Music and Performing Arts Library (MPAL) website. Full approval to sit the exams will be made once the final semester’s coursework is complete.
7. If a student decides not to take Qual 1 in the semester that he/she has been approved for, he/she should contact the Academic Affairs Office immediately to be removed from the list of candidates.
8. A student must pass Qual 1 before proceeding to Qual 2. A student must pass Qual 2 before proceeding to the Prelim. **Exceptions to the order of the exams will not be made.**
9. The exam schedule enables a student to complete all the exams within one semester. Note that formal appointment of the Prelim committee by the Graduate College must occur no later than three weeks before the Prelim Exam; and that students must be enrolled for the entire semester in which they take the Prelim.

Qual 1

10. Study guides will be made available by Musicology and Composition/Theory for their standardized exams (Qual 1) for each semester’s exams. **Study guides may change from semester to semester, so students should make sure they consult only the guides specified for the semester in which they will sit the exams.** The guides will indicate the location of study materials, including those accessible electronically through MPAL.
11. The Qual 1 exams will be offered once a term on the same day. Normally this will be by the end of the 3rd week in the fall semester and the end of the 5th week of the spring semester, on a Saturday. Dates will be announced well in advance and posted on SOM website. Students will be given 3 hours to complete each exam (i.e. in music theory and musicology), as per now.
12. The standardized exams in music theory and musicology will have two tracks; one in jazz and one in western art music.

13. The setting and grading of the exams are the responsibility of the Musicology and Composition-Theory divisions. Results will be announced within two weeks. The theory and musicology exams will each be awarded a grade of pass or not pass. If a student does not pass either exam, a “not pass” grade will be recorded for that exam and feedback offered. The student can retake the exam two more times. Once both exams have achieved a grade of pass, a PASS result on Qual 1 will be issued by the SOM.

Qual 2

14. Students must have permission to schedule Qual 2 from their mini-committee (faculty representing the major area and cognate area).
15. Qual 2 (major/cognate tailored exam) will normally take place no sooner than three weeks after Qual 1, at a date and time to be arranged through Sandy Horn’s office; students are required to confirm the date at least three weeks ahead of the exam. Students will have developed topic areas for the test beforehand with the two faculty members representing these areas.
16. For Qual 2, the major advisor will act as ‘chair’ of the two-person mini-committee and assemble the question paper and report the results. Students will be given 3 hours to complete each exam; and the exam will be administered by the Academic Affairs Office. A grade of pass or not pass will be awarded for each exam, and results will be announced within one week. If a student’s exam in either area is borderline for pass/not pass, the mini-committee may allow the student to elaborate on his/her answers in an oral interview with both faculty members, in order to decide on the grade. (The date and time of any such follow-up interview will be organized by the chair of the mini-committee in consultation with Sandy Horn’s office.) If a grade of “not pass” is awarded for one or both exams in Qual 2, feedback will be offered, and the student will retake the exam(s) in question. The student can retake the written exam(s) two more times. Once both portions of the exam have achieved a grade of pass, a PASS result on Qual 2 will be issued by the SOM.

Prelim

17. The Preliminary Exam will be an oral defense of the research project proposal before the Preliminary Exam Committee and will be scheduled for one hour.
18. The Preliminary Exam committee *requires* only one member from Composition/Theory or Musicology, not both. Committees must *also include* a representative from the major division, the research director and a representative from the cognate field. Where one faculty member takes two or even three of these roles, the remaining members will be drawn from across the faculty. Three of the four committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty, including the chair of the committee and the research director; two must be tenured at U of I. (With SOM’s approval, a fifth faculty member can sit on the committee in order to fulfill these requirements.)
19. The Request to Appoint the Preliminary Exam Committee form must be submitted to the Academic Affairs (Sandy Horn’s) Office at least three weeks prior to the scheduled Preliminary (oral) exam; the project proposal will be given to the committee members at least three weeks before the exam also.
20. Per Graduate College regulations, a preliminary exam must result in a decision of PASS, FAIL or DEFER. (A decision of DEFER must result in a PASS or FAIL decision within 180 days of the committee being appointed.)
21. The doctoral project, for which there are three options, requires a student write a research paper. Students should normally ascertain early on whether their major advisor or someone else in their division (or a related division) is willing to serve as research director. Students who wish to take Option 1 or 2 (full dissertation; or thesis + recital) under the research direction of a faculty member in Musicology or Composition/Theory are advised to seek permission to develop a cognate in that area.