

Music Theory Diagnostic Examination
Updated May 2024

Before you are allowed to register for most graduate level courses in music theory, you must pass the department's music theory diagnostic exam, which is an online multiple-choice test with 20 questions on chordal type/function, non-chord tones, cadences, and sequences. We suggest you review these materials using standard undergraduate theory textbooks such as those by Marvin and Clendinning, Kostka and Payne, Aldwell and Schachter, Roig-Francolí, or Laitz.

Example questions

The image shows four staves of music in D Major. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The notes are: Treble 1 (D4), Treble 2 (F#4), Bass 1 (D3), and Bass 2 (F#3). This represents a D major triad.

In D Major

CHORD TYPE/FUNCTION

ANSWER: borrowed chord (modal mixture)

The image shows two staves of music in G Minor. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom is in bass clef. The notes are: Treble (Bb4, D5) and Bass (G3, Bb3). This represents a French augmented sixth chord.

In G Minor

CHORD TYPE/FUNCTION

ANSWER: French augmented sixth

The image shows two staves of music in G Minor. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom is in bass clef. The notes are: Treble (Bb4, D5, Fb5, D5, Bb4) and Bass (G3, Bb3, D4, G3). The Fb5 note in the treble staff is a suspension.

NON-CHORD TONE

ANSWER: suspension

CADENCE TYPE
ANSWER: half

SEQUENCE TYPE
ANSWER: descending 5-6