

**Composition/Theory Comprehensive Exam Guide**  
**School of Music**  
**University of Missouri**  
(last update: March 2018)

I. Goals and Purpose of the Exam

The candidate will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of tonal and 20<sup>th</sup> century compositional techniques including the analysis of harmony, form, rhythm, and orchestration through sight-singing, keyboard skills, and score identification.

II. Advance Assignments - the candidate will complete each of the Qualifying Skills privately with one faculty member a month prior to the exam.

A. Sight Singing: Using solfege, the candidate is asked to sing a chromatic excerpt that includes modulation with the starting pitch given. The excerpt is usually about eight bars long.

B. Figured bass: performed at sight at the keyboard. The excerpt is usually about four bars long.

C. String Quartet Excerpt: Perform an assigned excerpt at the keyboard. The candidate is asked to play the excerpt at a steady tempo (even though the tempo might be too slow—we are asking for steady above all), to make any reasonable accommodations for adapting a string quartet texture to the piano, and to be prepared to answer analytical questions.

III. Oral Exam (60 min)

Score Identification: The candidate is given two or three score excerpts at sight and must aim to identify the composer, the period, and the piece. Candidates are to press their analytical skills into service in order to achieve this task and to be prepared to answer pertinent questions.

IV. Results

Exams will be graded pass/fail, and no follow-up projects to remedy weaknesses exhibited during the exam will be permitted. If a student does not pass the exam, he/she will be allowed one retake the next semester (not including summer).