

**Mississippi State University**  
**Department of Music**

**PIANO PROFICIENCY EXAM**

The Piano Proficiency Exam is given to all music majors, and all exam components must be passed before graduation. The purpose of the exam is to ensure minimum competence in keyboard skills necessary for success as a professional in the field of music or music education.

## **Policy**

This exam will be given as the final exam for MU 3111 and MU 3122, or on a per-need basis during applied piano juries at the end of the semester. It is recommended that transfer students take the exam prior to or during the first week of class of their first semester at MSU. Three faculty members, including at least one member of the piano faculty, will grade each area of the exam “Pass” or “Fail.” At least 2 grades of “Pass” per area must be given for a student to pass the area. Students must pass each area of the exam with a score of 70% or above. Students who fail any area will be required to retake the exam in its entirety and enroll in an appropriate piano course recommended by the faculty members evaluating the exam.

## **Requirements**

The Piano Proficiency Exam requirements are based on the third semester of piano class, MU 3111 Piano Class III or MU 3122 Functional Skills Piano II. Details of the exam follow.

1. Major Five-Note Scales:

- For each key, play the scale ascending and descending, followed by the broken tonic triad, ascending and descending, and end with a blocked tonic triad.
- Play all major keys, going up or down chromatically from a given starting pitch (ala vocal/choral warm-up).
- Hands together.

2. Scales and Arpeggios:

- All major and harmonic minor scales
- Two octaves, ascending and descending (using correct fingering)
- Hands separate or hands together

3. Progression with Primary Chords: (I-IV6/4-I-V6/5-I and i-iv6/4-i-V6/5-i)

- All major and minor keys
- Hands together

4. Sight Reading:

- Two-voice texture or melody accompanied by broken chords (such as Alberti Bass, rhythmic blocked chords, waltz bass, or other styles)

5. Prepared Piece (Piano Solo):

- Play, with score or by memory, a prepared piece for piano at the level of:
  - a. *Minuet in G Major* by J. S. Bach from Anna Magdalena’s Book
  - b. *Sonatina in C Major, Op. 36 No. 1* by Muzio Clementi
  - c. *Ivan Sings* by Aram Khachaturian

- Use of the damper pedal will be expected if appropriate to the musical style

#### 6. Improvisation:

- Improvise a right-hand melody with specified left-hand chords as an accompaniment in a given time signature (chords may be blocked or broken)
- Harmonies will be provided and include diatonic triads (major, minor or diminished in the key) and dominant seventh chords in root position or inversions.
- Chord progression notation will be jazz/popular symbols (C, Am, G/B, etc.)

#### 7. Transposition:

- Transpose an 8-measure example to a key that is up or down an interval distance from the written key. (i.e., up or down a major or minor 2nd, major or minor 3rd, perfect 4th, or perfect 5th)

#### 8. Score Reading:

- Simultaneously play two parts from an SATB open score. Prepare all potential combinations of two parts (i.e., Soprano and Alto, Soprano and Tenor, Soprano and Bass, Alto and Tenor, Alto and Bass, Tenor and Bass).
- Students may receive the score one week in advance for practice. Email Dr. Klein [jklein@colled.msstate.edu](mailto:jklein@colled.msstate.edu) for a pdf of the score.

## Bibliography

Lim, C.K., & Garcia, S. (2023). *eNovativePiano*. <https://enovativepiano.com/>

Lancaster, E. L., & Renfrow, K.D. (2008). *Alfred's Group Piano for Adults, Book 2* (2nd ed.). Alfred Publishing Company.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Exam: \_\_\_\_\_

Proficiency Exam Requirements:

	Pass	Fail	Score
1. Major 5-note Scales:	_____	_____	_____
2. Scales and Arpeggios:	_____	_____	_____
3. Chord Progression	_____	_____	_____
4. Sight Reading:	_____	_____	_____
5. Prepared Piece:	_____	_____	_____
6. Improvisation:	_____	_____	_____
7. Transposition:	_____	_____	_____
8. Score Reading:	_____	_____	_____

Signatures of faculty evaluators:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Piano Faculty Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Piano/Music Faculty Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Piano/Music Faculty Member