

Piano Proficiency Requirement

for students in all undergraduate degree programs in Music at the Department of Music University of Alaska Fairbanks

The need for minimal levels of piano performance skill for undergraduate music majors is recognized as necessary by the National Association of Schools of Music, the Music Educators' National Conference, and by the vast majority of music teachers in the public schools.

Piano Proficiency at UAF is evaluated by means of jury examinations given twice per semester during the regular academic year. Students may challenge the requirement in separate parts. To pass the requirement, the students must earn a juried "Pass" grade for each and all of the individually required parts.

The course: Mus. 153: *Functional Piano* is offered by the Music Department to help music majors learn any or all parts of this requirement. The grade for the course reflects the instructor's assessment of the student's weekly progress in the course; but is independent of the jury evaluation process for the Piano Proficiency degree requirement.

Students may challenge parts of the requirement in any order. Once they have passed any portion of the jury requirement, they will not be required to take that portion of the exam again. Each part of the requirement is defined on the following pages:

Note to transfer students

The UAF Department of Music will honor completion of the piano proficiency for requirements passed in their entirety at other NASM-accredited schools provided that 1) a letter is received from a faculty member at the former institution that describes in detail the nature of the school's piano proficiency requirement and 2) the requirement is substantially the same as required at UAF. (If the former institution does not require piano proficiency, then the transfer student must pass the UAF requirement in its entirety.)

Decisions about the acceptability of former school's standards to fulfill the UAF piano proficiency requirement shall be made by a collective decision of the piano proficiency jury.

Part 1: Solo Literature Performance

Two pieces of solo piano literature are required to be passed on the same jury when performed from memory and at the minimum tempos specified by the functional piano instructor. The instructor has the right to exclude specific works that he or she believes do not meet minimal level of performance ability.

Students are required to perform memorized two compositions from the classical piano repertory in contrasting historical style periods (with each piece consisting of at least one full page in length). One composition should be a composition from the twentieth century. See your instructor in advance for an assessment of the difficulty of the piece(s) you wish to perform to pass this part of the requirement.

Students may propose alternate works to the coordinator of the Piano Proficiency requirement. If approved, the coordinator may specify a minimum performance tempo. (Students should propose works before beginning to learn them.)

The jury's criterion for satisfactory performance is that the works be performed 1) with continuity (no starting and stopping), 2) no slower than the required minimum tempo, 3) and with pitch and rhythmic accuracy.

Keyboard performance majors will be understood to have passed the piano performance portion of the requirement as soon as they have successfully passed the second year of applied music study (in either piano or organ) with a "C" grade.

Part 2: Choral Warm-Up Exercise

Effective Fall 2007, the following exercise is required for all music majors.¹

Students will be required to perform one choral warm-up exercise chromatically through all twelve major keys.

The warm-up exercise must be played in a manner that would make it usable in a public school classroom chorale rehearsal situation.

The image shows a musical score for a choral warm-up exercise. It is written in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 69. The score is for piano and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music is chromatic, moving through all twelve major keys. The piece is marked "through all twelve keys".

¹ Students who enrolled in the B.A. in Music, or the B.M. in Music Performance prior to Fall Semester 2007 are exempted from this part of the requirement.

Part 3: Mandatory song performance.

All students will be expected to perform the following five traditional songs.

		Level of Difficulty
<i>Happy Birthday</i>	(in G Major)	Easy
<i>Alaska's Flag</i>	(in E-flat Major)	Hard
<i>The Star Spangled Banner</i>	(in A-flat major)	Hard
<i>America, the Beautiful</i>	(in B-flat major)	Easy
<i>America (My Country 'tis of Thee...)</i>	(in F major)	Easy

Music arrangements are available for each of these songs. These traditional songs may be performed either from score or from memory. Piano majors will be required to play full harmonizations for the mandatory tunes. Students who are not keyboard majors will be allowed to perform basic "block chord" harmonic accompaniment for these melodies. Models of both types of arrangements are available. Students will *not* be asked to transpose these melodies

Students must present these songs to the jury in one of the following groupings:

Option 1: All five harmonizations at one sitting, or

Option 2: One or two easy songs along with one or two hard songs.

The jury will *not* listen to only one song (unless the student has only one remaining song to pass). Further, when more than one song is performed, students must perform the more difficult song first. If they do not pass that song, the jury will not hear the other songs.

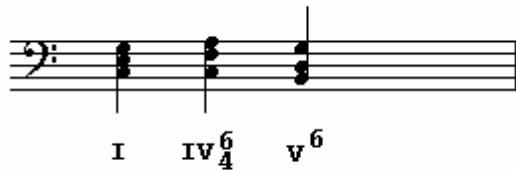
Part 4: Harmonization/transposition of campfire-type melodies

The student will also be asked to harmonize and transpose familiar campfire-type tunes, at a tempo of sufficient speed to lead singers. A member of the jury will select a tune from a list of seven submitted to the jury members by the piano proficiency candidate.

Candidates will be asked to harmonize the melodies in the original key and then transpose the same tune to one or more keys to be selected by the jury. The jury may ask for students to transpose and perform his or her harmonization in *any* of the eleven other keys.

See your instructor for a source of acceptable tunes. The songs must show use of the Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant chords in appropriate inversions.

For the key of C major, those inversions would be:



The tunes must be played in a sufficiently energetic manner to ensure that the performance will be usable in a public school classroom to lead children in singing.

Part 5: Four part chorale performance

Chorales shall be selected from *371 Chorales* by J.S. Bach. Since not all of the chorales are easily played on the piano, the Department has a list of recommended chorales and required minimum tempos.

Students must assemble a list of their preferred *twelve* Bach chorales for presentation to the jury. A member of the jury (*not* the student's Functional Piano instructor) will select two or more chorales for the student to perform. If the student does not submit a list of twelve selected chorales, the jury may select from *any* chorale on the Department's recommended list.

The student shall be expected to perform the entire chorale, with repeats as indicated. The chorale must be performed 1) with continuity, 2) no slower than the required minimum tempo, and 3) with pitch and rhythmic accuracy.

Minimum progress expected

All students should commence study of piano proficiency skills immediately upon beginning their music degree studies.

Students are expected to have completed all portions of the piano proficiency requirement by the end of their sophomore year. Some students take longer to do this. The important point is that students should commence piano study as soon as possible so as to minimize delays in degree-completion progress during the junior and senior years.

The parts of the Piano Proficiency Requirement are summarized below:

- 1. Solo Literature Performance**
- 2. Choral Warm-up Exercise**
- 3. Mandatory Song Performance**
- 4. Harmonization/Transposition of campfire-type melodies**
- 5. Four-part Chorale Performance**

To be allowed to present a pre-recital hearing for a Junior Recital, the following parts of the Piano Proficiency Requirement must be completed the semester prior to the semester that the recital is intended to be presented:

Parts: 1, 2, 3, and 4, or Parts 1, 2, 3, and 5

To be allowed to present a pre-recital hearing for a Senior Recital, or to be allowed to student teach, **all five parts** of the Piano Proficiency Requirement must be completed the semester prior to the semester to the recital or the student teaching experience:

As indicated earlier, Piano Proficiency jury examinations are scheduled twice each fall and spring semesters: near the mid-point in the semester, and just prior to final examination week. Jury examinations are not scheduled during the summer months.

When students near the completion of this requirement, they should enroll in Music 253: Piano Proficiency (0 cr.). A pass grade for this course will then be recorded upon the student's academic transcript.