Piano Proficiency Requirement

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

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 “A” grade for each and all of the individually required sections.

The requirements for the UAF Piano Proficiency Requirement will be distributed. Students are expected to be aware of the details for this music major graduation requirement. The instructor will maintain a weekly diary of assignments and progress for each student. Assignments will vary from student to student depending upon which part(s) of the piano proficiency examination are being prepared by each individual student.

The four sections are listed below:

Section 1
Technique

Prerequisite: For music majors ONLY.

Students will be asked to:

- o Play all major scales up to two sharps and flats and the melodic versions of A minor and B minor in two octaves, hands together, with correct fingering. During jury examinations, students will be required to play ALL scales mentioned above.
- o Play one vocal 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.
- o Play and transpose chord progression formulae in all major keys up to two sharps and flats. Students will be expected to play and transpose the chord progressions in A minor and B minor. During jury examinations, students will be required to play ALL the formulae in one or more keys mentioned above.

The jury’s criterion for satisfactory performance is that the technical exercises be performed 1) with continuity (no starting and stopping), 2) no slower than the required minimum tempo specified by the instructor, 3) and with pitch and rhythmic accuracy.
To receive an “A” grade, students must complete all three requirements of Section 1 by the end of the semester in which they attend the section. They will be allowed to challenge any of the two jury examinations with one, two, or all three of the components listed above. They will present the remaining components at the last jury examination of the semester in which they attend the section.
**Note for beginning students:** While working on the required components of Section 1, beginning students are strongly encouraged that they practice Czerny Little Pianist. This will help them tremendously to complete the rest of the piano proficiency requirement.

**Section 2**

**Harmonization/Transposition and Mandatory Songs Performance**

Prerequisite: “A” grade of Section 1 or approval of instructor

Students will be asked to:

- Harmonize two familiar tunes and then transpose them in all major keys up to two sharps and flats. Along with that, students will harmonize one tune which is in a minor key. (See instructor for suggested tunes) The songs must show use of the Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant chords. The jury will ask students to transpose and perform his or her harmonization (in a major key) in any major keys up to two sharps or flats. The students will also be asked to perform the minor key tune in A minor and B minor. If the student chooses to perform the suggested minor song, he/she will need to use other chords along with I, IV, and V chords.

- Perform the following five traditional songs:

  - *Happy Birthday* | Easy
  - *Alaska’s Flag* | Hard
  - *The Star Spangled Banner* | Hard
  - *America, the Beautiful* | Easy
  - *America (My Country ’tis of Thee...)* | 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 piano 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 songs 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. 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 specified by the instructor, 3) and with pitch and rhythmic accuracy.
To receive an “A” grade, students must complete all requirements of Section 2 by the end of the semester in which they work on the section. They will be allowed to challenge any of the two jury examinations with one or two of the components listed above. They will present the remaining component at the last jury examination of the semester in which they attend the section.

Section 3

Solo Literature Performance

Prerequisite: “A” grade of Sections 1 and 2 or approval of instructor

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 two pieces by memory from the classical piano repertory in contrasting historical style periods (with each piece consisting of at least one full page in length). 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. 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 specified by the instructor, 3) and with pitch and rhythmic accuracy.

To receive an “A” grade, students must complete all requirements of Section 3 by the end of the semester in which they work on the section. They will be allowed to challenge any of the two jury examinations.

Section 4

Sight-Reading

Prerequisite: “A” grade of Sections 1, 2, and 3 or approval of instructor

In this section students will learn how to sight-read accompaniments to art songs, instrumental solos, and simple piano music. There will be a packet of sixty (60) pieces. Students will be given the opportunity to play through the pieces in class several times per semester. The degree of difficulty of the pieces progresses gradually, from beginner’s level to more advanced. When taking the sight-reading portion of the piano proficiency requirement, students will be asked to play pieces only from the packet mentioned above. None of the first twenty (20) pieces will be selected for jury presentation. Their purpose is to serve ONLY as exercise materials. Sight-reading is not only the ability to play something for the first time, but is also the ability to recall music quickly. As always, slow steady tempos are the most beneficial.

To receive an “A” grade, students must complete the requirements of Section 4 by the end of the semester in which they work on the section. They will be allowed to challenge any of the two jury examinations.
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. 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.

To be allowed to present a pre-recital hearing for a Junior Recital, the student MUST complete the following parts of the Piano Proficiency Requirement during the semester prior to the semester in which the recital is intended to be presented:

**Sections 1, 2, and 3**

To be allowed to present a pre-recital hearing for a Senior Recital, or to be allowed to student teach, the student MUST complete all four sections of the Piano Proficiency Requirement during the semester prior to the semester in which the recital or the student teaching are intended to be presented.

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

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 requirements 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 collective decision of the piano proficiency jury.

When students near the completion of the requirement, they should enroll in Music 253 the following semester: Piano Proficiency (0 cr.). A “Pass” grade for this course will then be recorded on the student’s academic transcript.