

General Guidelines

If you are a music major whose principal instrument is piano, or a music major sufficiently skilled as a pianist to take secondary lessons in piano, you will work on the Piano Proficiency Exam in the context of your lessons.

If your piano background ranges from none or very little to several years, you will at the time of your on-campus audition have an appointment to be placed in the most appropriate level of Class Piano. During your years here you will advance from one class to the next as you are able, until you have passed, with a C- or higher, the last piano class required for your degree (III for B. A. in Music and B.S. in Music (Music Ministry); IV for B. Mus. and B. Mus. Ed.).

ALL MUSIC MAJORS must remain enrolled in either Class Piano or private lessons with University of Northwestern – St. Paul piano faculty for institution credit until they have passed the Piano Proficiency Requirement.

If you are not currently doing so, it would be a good idea to start (or return to) studying piano in order to prepare yourself well for eventual success in the proficiency requirement.

Class Piano Placement Levels

Class I

Class I is for musicians with little or no piano background.

Class II

To be placed in this class, demonstrate the ability to do these things:

- Intervals
- Know all Major and minor key signatures
- Play all Major and harmonic minor scales in one octave, ascending and descending, hands together
- Play I–IV64–I–V65–I in all Major keys and i–iv64–i–V65–i in all minor keys
- Harmonize a simple melody with primary triads (I, IV, V) in blocked chords or arpeggiated accompaniment pattern
- Transpose a simple melody to any other white-key-tonic major key, or to its parallel minor key, and harmonize with blocked chords
- Perform an elementary-level piano piece (16–32 measures long)

Class III

To be placed in this class, demonstrate the ability to do everything listed above for Class II, PLUS:

- Play all Major and harmonic minor scales in two octaves, ascending and descending, hands separately
- Play I6–IV–I6–V42–I in all Major keys and i6–iv–i6–V42–i in all minor keys (same cadence progression as above, but starting with first inversion of tonic triad)
- Play all Major and minor triad arpeggios in two octaves, hands separately
- Perform an early intermediate-level piano piece (24–48 measures long)
- Play a single transposing line (e. g., B-flat clarinet or English horn)
- Play any two parts of a simple four-part choral score simultaneously
- Harmonize a simple melody with primary triads (I, IV, V) in an accompaniment pattern more complex than blocked chords (e. g., arpeggiated, waltz, stride, broken, or Alberti bass, or a two-handed pattern)
- Transpose a simple melody to any other white-key-tonic major key, or to its parallel minor key, and harmonize with blocked chords
- Play from a standard hymnal an easy hymn with slow harmonic rhythm in 4-part harmony (e. g., Wonderful Words of Life)

Class IV

To be placed in this class, demonstrate the ability to do everything listed above for Class II and Class III, PLUS:

- Play all Major and harmonic minor scales in two octaves, ascending and descending, hands together
- Play all four parts of a simple open choral score simultaneously
- Play I64–IV6–I64–V7–I in all Major keys and i64–iv6–i64–V7–i in all minor keys (same cadence progression as above, but starting with second inversion of tonic triad)

Contact Us

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