

Jazz History Entrance Exam

The purpose of the Jazz History Entrance Exam is to determine whether incoming graduate students (and transfer students) have a general knowledge of jazz's cultural and historical origins, widely heard and discussed recordings, and common vocabulary for describing a variety of style features and subgenres. In addition, the exam assesses students' abilities to read and write about academic jazz studies literature. Because this collection of knowledge and skills will be built upon in other courses in the jazz studies degree programs, students who are unfamiliar with the material on the exam will be placed in MUJS Graduate Review of Jazz History (or MUJS 4470/3070 Jazz History for undergraduate transfer students).

Students who have taken an undergraduate jazz history course at another institution may provide the Jazz Division Coordinator of Graduate Studies with a syllabus and sample of written work from the course (if available/applicable) to be evaluated for exemption from part or all of the Jazz History Entrance Exam.

The Jazz History Entrance Exam is made up of four parts. Material for sections 1-3 comes from [*Jazz: Essential Listening \(second edition\)*](#) by Scott DeVeaux and Gary Giddins.

1. Listening Identification

- You will hear excerpts from recordings described in listening guides in the DeVeaux and Giddins text and be asked multiple choice questions to identify the artist, title, and audible elements of the recorded excerpt.

Sample Question:

Example 1 is:

- a. Fletcher Henderson—"Blue Lou"
- b. Coleman Hawkins—"Body and Soul"
- c. Lester Young—"Oh! Lady Be Good"
- d. Artie Shaw—"Star Dust"

A feature of the arrangement in this passage:

- a. Soli
- b. Shout chorus
- c. Improvised solo
- d. Boogie-woogie

2. Form Chart

- Based on a listening example (played 3 times), create a diagram that shows the form of the basic chorus structure (for example, 12-bar blues, 32-bar AABA popular song, etc.), the number of times that chorus structure is repeated in the performance, and significant features of the performance in each chorus (instrumentation, style, arranging technique, melodic or harmonic features, changes in groove, etc.).
- See the listening guides in the DeVeaux and Giddins text for examples of what your diagram might look like and contain.

3. Timeline

- You will be given a set of paragraphs describing widely discussed events in jazz history, and you will be asked to place those paragraphs in chronological order with approximate dates (within one decade). In addition, key words and names will be left out of the text, and you will need to fill in the blanks from a list of options.

Sample list of names and terms:

- Modal jazz
- Sarah Vaughan
- Hot Fives and Sevens
- Ornette Coleman
- *A Love Supreme*
- Ragtime
- Savoy Ballroom

Sample text (does not match sample names and terms list above!):

Date: _____ The record _____ is the best-selling jazz album of all time and features bandleader _____ with saxophonists Julian “Cannonball” Adderley and John Coltrane. One of the pianists on the record, _____, is known for his unconventional voicings, including the quartal harmonies played on the album’s opening track, “So What.”

4. Reading Jazz Studies Literature

- You will be given an excerpt from an academic article on jazz and asked to provide a one-paragraph response to each of a series of questions. To prepare for this portion of the exam, practice reading articles in jazz-related academic journals like [*The Journal of Jazz Studies*](#). Pay particular attention to identifying the author’s central argument and how evidence is used to support that argument.