

University of Miami Frost School of Music  
Doctor of Musical Arts  
Jazz Composition

**Qualifying Examinations and  
Doctoral Candidacy Procedures**

**Introduction**

To be accepted into candidacy and to defend the DMA essay proposal, all MSJ DMA students in jazz composition must satisfactorily complete all portions of the **DMA Qualifying Examinations in Jazz Composition**. Students who fail any exam or section of any exam are allowed one retake of that exam/section in the following semester (or earlier at the discretion of the jazz faculty). The faculty may also recommend a remediation project in lieu of an exam retake. **Students who fail any portion of either exam for the second time or fail to complete the remediation project in an accurate and timely manner will be dismissed from the program.**

Students will be notified by the jazz department of the exam dates a minimum of two months ahead of the exam time. Exact times and locations will be provided in a timely manner. The MSJ qualifying exam may be taken no sooner than the third semester of study. Remediation assignments will be given a strict deadline for completion.

**DMA Qualifying Examinations in Jazz Composition**

Exams will be administered by the Department of Studio Music and Jazz. The purpose of the MSJ qualifying examinations in Jazz Composition is to measure the student's ability to: (a) apply fundamental knowledge in teaching a wide variety of courses within the discipline, (b) function at a high professional level as a jazz and media music composer, arranger and orchestrator, (c) synthesize existing knowledge and generate new understandings that contribute to the jazz discipline as a composer, arranger, and/or educator. The exam process includes: written tests in jazz theory, analysis, and history of jazz arranging/composition, and a demonstration score assessing specific jazz arranging, orchestration and compositional techniques.

**I. Pre-exam arranging project (take home)**

1. Arrange a composition (provided) for big band in a concert sketch format that includes no more than 3 staves (grand staff plus 1) for saxophone section and 3 staves for brass section (4 trumpets, 4 trombones). Also include a staff for guitar, grand staff for piano and staves for bass and drums. The form should include an 8 measure intro, 32 measure head (vary scoring), 8 measure saxophone soli (tutti style), 8 measure shout chorus and 8 measure(+) ending.

2. Arrange a lead sheet (provided) for vocalist, strings orchestra and piano. The string orchestra is comprised of 8 1<sup>st</sup> violins, 8 2<sup>nd</sup> violins, 6 violas, 6 celli and 3 basses. The form should include the following: an intro of 8 measures, a complete vocal statement of the tune with string/piano accompaniment, 8-16 measures featuring strings/ piano, a recapitulation of 8-16 measures of the tune and an ending. The score format in order: vocal line (with lyrics), piano (grand staff), 1<sup>st</sup> violin, 2<sup>nd</sup> violin, viola, cello, bass.

## II. Written test in jazz theory and analysis:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and recognition of the basic asymmetric and symmetric scale systems typically utilized in jazz composition and arranging, including modes and related chords of major, melodic minor, select modes of harmonic minor and harmonic major, and chords derived from whole tone, diminished, and augmented, and other symmetric scales.
2. Demonstrate chord voicings of 4-6 part density based on chord symbols derived from the above chord scales in 4 way close, drop 2, drop 2 and 4 and spread styles.
3. Harmonize an assigned lead line in tutti style for a saxophone section with voicings of 4 and 5 part density in close and semi open positions utilizing approach techniques to facilitate proper voice leading.
4. Score an assigned lead line in tutti style for 8 brass (4 trumpets, 3 tenor trombones and bass trombone). Demonstrate the use of upper structure triads, quartal voicings, 4 way close, drop 2, spreads and approach techniques. Density should extend from 4-6 part or more.
5. Analyze excerpts from two scores (provided), one for big band and one for studio orchestra. Include in the analysis a) voicing types, b) use of approach techniques, c) coupling techniques, d) cross section writing and e) discussion of timbre.
6. Write a detailed harmonic and melody analysis of a standard jazz composition (provided) including modulating key centers, diatonic and non-diatonic chord progressions and motivic analysis.

## III. Essay test in jazz composition/arranging history

1. The examiner will select three composers from a list provided prior to the exam. Students will write an essay detailing how each composer contributed to the evolution of the art form. The following topics should be addressed: brief biography, influences, important contributions, stylistic description, and subsequent composers influenced.
2. The specific list of composers may evolve over time but will include the following major figures: Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Clare Fischer, Gil Evans, Maria Schneider, Bob Brookmeyer, and Kenny Wheeler.

## **DMA Qualifying Examinations in Jazz Composition - individual tests and procedures:**

The exams will consist of two written exams and a pre-exam projects/essays. The faculty of the Department of Studio Music and Jazz will approve the following written exams. The exams will be administered separately on the designated exam day.

### **I. Pre-exam arranging project:**

A member of the MSJ faculty will provide materials for the arranging projects two weeks prior to the written exam. Both projects are due on the day and time of the written exam. Both projects will be graded by members of the MSJ faculty. Students must score 80% or above on the projects to pass.

### **II. Written test in jazz theory and analysis:**

A member of the MSJ faculty will administer the group exam. Students will be given 180 minutes to complete the exam. The exam will be graded by a member of the MSJ faculty. Students must score 80% or above on each section of the exam to pass.

### **III. Written essay test in jazz composition and arranging history:**

DMA students in Jazz Composition will be provided students with a list of composers no later than the second semester of study. Students will be given 120 minutes to complete the exam. The essays will be graded by members of the MSJ faculty. Students must score 80% or above to pass.

## **MSJ DMA Qualifying Exam Timeline:**

The MSJ Qualifying exam will be given at a prescribed time and place in the fall semester. Students should plan on taking the exam near the end of the third semester of doctoral study.

- Students will be notified of the exact exam dates no less than two months (60 days) before the exam date. Written exams may not be postponed or given at individual times without written permission from the jazz faculty.
- All parts of the qualifying examination (written tests, scores and essays) must be successfully completed **BEFORE** the DMA essay proposal defense can occur.
- If a student fails any portion of the qualifying exam, the student may be asked to revise or retake that portion, including any of the written or scored components. Retakes will be scheduled according to the availability of the necessary faculty and the student's schedule. In lieu of a retake the faculty may recommend a remediation project. **A student who fails any portion of exams, scores or essays twice or fails to complete a remediation project to**

**the faculty's satisfaction by the assigned due date will be dismissed from the program.**

- Upon completion of all DMA qualifying examination, the DMA essay proposal defense will be scheduled while classes are in session in the fall or spring semesters, in consultation with the DMA essay advisor. Students must submit the essay proposal to the essay committee two weeks prior to the scheduled defense.
- Qualifying exams and retakes will only be given **while classes are in session.**