Graduate Orientation Examination in Music Theory

The Theory Entrance Exam is mandatory for all students beginning a graduate degree program at the College of Music at MSU. (This includes students who have completed a bachelor's program at MSU). The only exceptions to this are MMs in Jazz and PhDs in Music Education, except those who plan to take one or more music theory courses. The exam is given before the start of each semester, with the Summer exam being right before MSU’s 2nd-half Summer begins. Your score affects when you can enroll in other theory courses.

Students taking the test are required to take the first two exam parts. These cover:

a. Aural Skills (lasts about 30 minutes)
   (Tests recognition of chord type, ability to take down simple textures, melodic dictation, error detection and so forth. To prepare, students should find their own materials and use these to practice basic listening skills.)

   If your score is below 70% on this section, Music 201 (Aural Skills Review) is a graduation requirement.
   Students who are required to take MUS 201 must complete the course with a grade of 2.0 or higher at some point during the student’s degree program.
   * Music 201 is a one-credit course that does not count toward your total credit requirement.*

b. Basic Written Theory (lasts 40-80 minutes)
   (The theory material is basic theory, dealing with diatonic and chromatic harmonic vocabulary and part-writing. Its contents are generally covered in any undergraduate text.
   Texts used at MSU have included: Aldwell/Schachter, Kostka/Payne, and Laitz)

   If your score is below 70% on this section, Music 200 (Music Theory Review) is a graduation requirement and a prerequisite for any 800- or 900-level theory course.
   Students who are required to take MUS 200 must complete the course with a grade of 2.0 or higher before enrolling in any 800-, or 900-level music theory course.
   * Music 200 is a one-credit course that does not count toward your total credit requirement.*

The Entrance Exam also has four optional parts designed to help advisors determine which theory courses are appropriate for the graduate students they advise. You are encouraged to take as many of these four tests as you would like. These parts are:
   a. Counterpoint
   b. Orchestration and Basic Instrumentation
   c. Tonal Forms
   d. Early Twentieth-Century Techniques

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To enroll in any graduate theory course you must satisfy one or more of the following requirements.

Pass the Basic Written Theory portion of the Orientation Examination with a grade of 70% or higher.
OR
Complete MUS 200 (Music Theory Review) with a grade of 2.0 or higher.