Aural Skills Graduate Award Form

This page provides information on this specific Graduate Award. There is no additional preparation required prior to the interview.

Who Is Eligible?

This is a graduate award to teach aural skills. To be considered, you must:

1. Provide transcripts that show exemplary aural-skills grades (i.e., nothing lower than an A-).
2. Submit a short statement (one paragraph, online with your application) explaining why you want to be an aural skills instructor and how your background/training have prepared you for this.

The most qualified candidates will be selected for 15-minute interviews that will take place on the day of their degree-program audition. During this interview, candidates will demonstrate their aural musicianship by:

- Sight-singing several melodies and rhythmic exercises of progressive difficulty, in any clef
- Sight-reading and/or improvising harmonic progressions at the piano
- Realizing a figured bass at sight
- Harmonizing a diatonic melody at sight
- Analyzing a Bach chorale harmonization at sight
- Coaching a “student” who is struggling in sight-singing a melody

What are the Responsibilities?

Teaching Assistants (TAs) usually teach 2–3 sections; each section meets two hours per week (semester one meets three hours per week). TAs with fewer than three sections also tutor students who need individual help. All TAs are required to attend a one-week training workshop, held during the week before classes begin. All applicants who are offered a TA position teaching aural skills must make plans to be here for the workshop. Each fall, all TAs interview incoming freshmen and transfers for theory placement during orientation for new students. In addition, all recipients of the Aural Skills GA will be required to take TH421, Pedagogy of Music Theory, during the first semester of their employment.

Our Curriculum

The Eastman undergraduate aural-skills curriculum spans five semesters: the first four cover tonal materials; the fifth covers 20th-century materials. Melodic and harmonic reading and dictation, rhythmic reading, and improvisation are taught throughout. The program presently has fifteen teaching assistants: six for freshmen classes, five for sophomore, and four for the fifth semester. The workload is 8–9 hours per week. Three to five Teaching Assistant openings are expected annually, with priority for assignment given to theory majors. Applicants in other majors will be scheduled for an Aural Skills interview (see below).

Our Pedagogical Approach

Some of the components of our aural skills classes are:

- Singing of pitch patterns, melody, and rhythm (prepared, and at sight)
- Performance of sing-and-play exercises, student compositions, improvisation
- Ensemble singing
- Use of fixed-do solfège and moveable scale degree numbers
- Reading of music in five clefs, and transposition of instrumental parts to concert pitch
- Dictation of pitch patterns, melody, rhythm, two-voice counterpoint, four-voice chorale style, either from the piano or from recordings from the literature

Textbooks include N. Rogers and R. Ottman, Music for Sight Singing, 9th edition; A.C. Hall, Studying Rhythm, 3rd edition; and numerous scores from the vocal and instrumental literature.

If you have questions about the requirements for the Aural Skills Graduate Award, please contact Professor Seth Monahan at smonahan@esm.rochester.edu.