



As the month of April begins, we find ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic that has brought significant changes to our daily lives. Self-isolation, social distancing, frequent handwashing, and stocking up on household supplies have all become “the new normal.”

This new reality has given us the opportunity to think creatively and broaden our horizons, both in our personal and professional lives. Many of us have turned to online platforms such as Skype, Facetime, and Zoom to keep in touch with friends and family, but also to offer lessons to our students. At this stressful time of crisis, continuing with music lessons can be especially beneficial to our students, providing a point of focus, a calming influence, and – as always – a sense of accomplishment and joy.

For those students who have been working all year in preparation for RCM Theory examinations, the prospect of being unable to complete this goal due to current restrictions on public gatherings might be quite discouraging. Fortunately, we have a solution in place that will allow students preparing for Level 5 – 8 Theory exams in the May session, to reach their goals and earn their certificates online. Students who had registered for in-person examinations will be provided with an online examination, along with a complimentary online study guide to help them prepare for the online exam.

Those of you who are not yet familiar with these study guides may have some questions. The points below will provide some ideas on how you can best support your students in their transition from working on theory tests with pencil and paper, to preparing for an exam using a computer or iPad.

As one who has taught traditional theory for many years, and has had the opportunity to become familiar with the RCM theory study guides, I encourage you to explore and embrace this solution with an open mind – particularly at this challenging time, when the digital world is providing an opportunity to stay connected and move forward with teaching and learning. In this ever-evolving world around us, the ability to be flexible and adapt to new circumstances is paramount. Your students will likely enjoy making this adjustment, and it will provide a new way for them to demonstrate their understanding of theory concepts. You may be pleasantly surprised to find that for some of your students, the challenge of “tidy penmanship” is no longer an issue.

Additional information about instructional webinars to introduce you and your students to the online study guide and exam will follow shortly. Please be sure to join us for these important sessions.

Wishing you good health and safety in the weeks ahead,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Lopinski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Janet Lopinski
Senior Director, Academic Programs

What you need to know about the Online Theory Study Guides

- The concepts presented in the online study guides and tested in the unit tests and final exam are based on the requirements outlined in the Theory Syllabus, 2016 Edition.
- Theory concepts are organized in units reflecting the Theory Syllabus and Celebrate Theory books and include similar explanations.
- The way in which the concepts are tested is different. Generally speaking, in the written examinations, the focus is on demonstrating understanding of theory concepts by either writing or identifying. Writing out key signatures, scales, chords and other elements requires accurate and legible penmanship, and therefore preparations involve attention to detail in the written responses. Online examinations test students' understanding of the concepts in other ways, including identification of elements, selecting the correct answer, or identifying the best solution.
- Students who have prepared for a written exam and are switching over to online should focus on becoming familiar with the new question types, by working through the practice tests and unit tests in the online study guide.

Examples of differences between testing strategies in the written and online exams include:

TOPIC	WRITTEN EXAMINATION	ONLINE EXAMINATION
Pitch and Notation	- Drawing or naming individual notes	- Naming notes, choosing the correct answer from a drop-down menu
Rhythm and Meter	- Adding missing rests	- Identifying the correct way to complete a measure with rests (choosing from two possible solutions)
Scales and Key Signatures	- Writing scales	- Identifying scales
Intervals	- Naming or writing intervals	- Naming intervals, choosing from a drop-down menu of possible answers
Melody Writing	- Writing a parallel period, using musical notation on the staff	- Dragging and dropping appropriate melodic components onto the staff to create a parallel period.

- Unit tests in the online study guide provide the opportunity for students to become familiar with the question types that will be featured on the final exam. Much like completing “practice exams” in advance of written theory examinations, the unit tests help students assess their knowledge, expose any areas of weakness, and build confidence in advance of the final exam.
- Unit tests contribute to 40% of the final mark, providing students with credit for their preparation time.
- For additional practice, students may purchase the theory apps that provide additional questions. Concepts can also be reviewed within each unit prior to attempting the practice tests or unit tests.