

Entrance exams in higher music education in Norway:

Research, analysis, and guidelines for revised and improved tests

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1. Background

Entrance exam traits:

- Tertiary music education in Norway is **offered in all the main** cities across the country.
- The **entrance exams** in ear training and music theory **are the same** for all institutions.
- The **exam is uniform**, and every student, no matter what they decide to study (folk music, music production, violin playing, composition, jazz, etc.), must pass the same type of exam (same content and procedure).

Last entrance exam revision – 2017: Facts

- The exams are **considerably shorter**, and the curriculum is significantly reduced, particularly in **music theory**.
- The format was changed from paper-based to digital.
- **Ear training” and “Music theory”** were blended in a **joint exam** for the first time.

2. Justification

Teachers' experiences with the current exam:

- Significant variation in level among the students.
- The content of the test does not provide sufficient information about the student's skills.
- It requires time and resources to map the students' levels.

3. Goals

- **Analyse, describe, and compare** the current and previous entrance exams.
- **Suggest changes** to content, skills covered, organization, grading, and testing methods.

4. Steps

Part 1: Evaluation – Where are we now? (part 1 finished by Dec 2023)

- Analyse and describe the current entrance exam.
- Results of first-year students doing the previous tests show diminishing aural and music theory skills (autumn 2022 and 2023):
 - UiT, UiS: More than 50% of the first-year students failed the old tests. On the theory tests, some students scored only 8 out of 70 points. On the ear training tests, the lowest score was 26 points out of 100. Some of these students got a rather good score on the current test.
 - NMH: Most students passed the old tests, and their scores were comparable with their scores on the current test.
- Debate in the collegium, Scandinavian ear training conference in Stavanger 2023.
- Detailed analysis of the test.
- Cooperation with FUM to assure support for our work.

Part 2: Comparison – The other Nordic countries

- Entrance exams from other Nordic countries are collected here: <https://www.uis.no/en/research/ear-training-pedagogic-conference>.
- Investigation of digital solutions in other Nordic countries' tests.
- Analysis of contents and structure in these tests.

Part 3: Purpose – What should the 1st year students know?

- What is the function of the test now and what should it be?
- Query/survey to teachers in higher music education in Norway.

Part 4: Revision – Make new tests

- Investigate different possibilities and options for software.
- Decide the frames for a revised test (length, content, types of tasks, etc.)
- Make prototypes for the different tasks.
- Make 4 sets of the new test and a demo test.
- Testing the revised tests.
- Presenting and implementing the test.