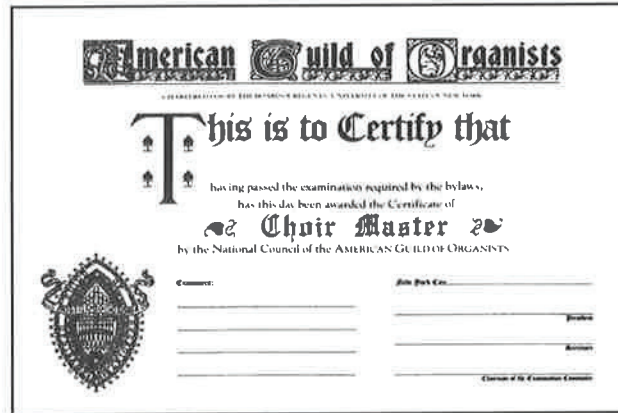




AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS MANUAL OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CHOIR MASTER EXAMINATION



This manual of procedure has been developed to facilitate candidates' preparation for the examination and to aid in ensuring fair and orderly administration of the examinations by the chapter dean, the examination coordinator, the proctors, and the examiners. While some adaptation to specific circumstances can be expected and should be allowed, any significant modification of these procedures must first be approved by the director of the Committee on Professional Certification.

The manual has been written in formal language and arranged in legal fashion in order to convey the intent that the examination be conducted in a precise and professional manner consistent with the standards of the Guild. Each person involved in the examination—dean, coordinator, proctor, examiners and candidate—should read the entire manual carefully and thoroughly, with particular attention to the section directed to his or her specific role.

While maintaining an orderly testing procedure is the goal of the manual, each person involved in the test is reminded that the foundation of the Guild's entire certification program rests on people and exists for their benefit. Each person should deal, and be dealt with, fairly and sensitively, especially where the candidate's needs, aims, and interests are concerned.

Revised 2008
THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1260
New York, NY 10115
212.870.2310
Exams@agohq.org
www.agohq.org

CONTENTS

Timelines/Instructions for:	page
Dean/Coordinator	1
<i>After the examination</i>	5
<i>Mailing the examination(s)</i>	5
Proctor	6
<i>Mailing the examination(s)</i>	8
Examiners	9
Candidate	11
<i>After the examination</i>	16
Appendix A:	
<i>Sample schedule for the Choir Master Examination</i>	17
Appendix B:	
<i>Choir Master Examiners' mark sheets</i>	18

Each candidate, the examiners and the coordinator/proctor should become thoroughly familiar with the entire contents of this manual by reading it carefully several times.

Legend:



coordinator



proctor



examiners



candidate



quartet/singers

NOTES/SCHEDULE/ADDRESSES



Overview

Coordinator's responsibilities

Paperwork given at any chapter

First duties

Appointment of examiners

Qualifications of examiners

DEAN / COORDINATOR

The success of the Guild's certification program depends in large part on the careful organization and the fair and competent supervision of the examination process. The chapter dean, and/or the examination center's designated examination coordinator, is the person responsible for making certain that these procedures are followed scrupulously, with everything being done well, promptly, with complete integrity, and with fairness to the candidate.

ADVANCE PREPARATIONS

1.1 If a chapter shall have been designated an examination center, its dean shall appoint an examination coordinator, subject to confirmation by the chapter executive committee. The dean may elect to serve as coordinator him/herself. The coordinator shall be responsible for the administration of all examinations given in the spring.

1.2 *The paperwork portion of the Choir Master examination may be given separately at any chapter.* If the chapter is not an examination center, the dean shall appoint a coordinator especially to oversee such paperwork examinations when there are applications for these.

1.3 The dean and/or coordinator (hereafter referred to only as "coordinator") shall read thoroughly this manual and the certification requirements published in the previous July issue of THE AMERICAN ORGANIST.

1.4 The coordinator shall request from National Headquarters additional copies of the certification requirements and shall make these available to all interested persons.

FEBRUARY 1

2.1 The coordinator shall nominate two or more persons who are qualified and able to serve as examiners for the practical portions of the Choir Master examination. The coordinator shall first ascertain the availability and interest of these persons and shall discuss with them the remuneration involved. It is to be understood by all that an examiner must be excused if a candidate applies with whom he/she has a special personal or professional connection (e.g., a teacher-student relationship). In that case it will be the coordinator's responsibility to find another qualified examiner.

2.2 Qualified examiners are those persons who hold a Guild certificate at least at the level which they are being asked to evaluate. Where certificate holders are not available, other persons may be nominated who possess the professional expertise and requisite knowledge of and interest in the Guild certification program. Non-certified examiners must be approved by the Director of the committee. *No examiner shall examine any*



The test site

The piano should
be in good repair
and in tune

Quiet is imperative!

Quiet room with
well-tuned piano

Secure sufficient
copies of the anthems
in specified editions



Who
appoints the
proctor?



candidate prepared wholly or in part by the said examiner.

2.3 The coordinator shall make arrangements with a church or school for a place to hold the examinations. The coordinator should note that the Choir Master examination requires the provision of a waiting room where each candidate can wait immediately prior to the practical section of the examination, completely isolated from the sounds of any previous examinations. In addition, the coordinator shall arrange for the provision of a rehearsal room which has a well-tuned and mechanically reliable spinet, upright, or grand piano. The piano must be situated so that the candidate, and the accompanist if one is requested, have all the necessary unobstructed sight-lines. In addition, the room should have sufficient space for four singers to be placed at an optimum distance from the conductor, and for two examiners to be situated so as to be able to observe the rehearsal without becoming a part of it. The room should also be free from loud traffic and other disturbing noises. Candidates' access to the waiting room must be by a different route from that taken by the examiners to the place of the examination. *The coordinator is reminded that the national Guild, the local chapter, the candidate, and any other Guild member shall not be liable for any expense incurred in tuning or repairing the examination piano.*

2.4 The coordinator shall also arrange for the provision of a quiet room, completely sound-proofed from external noises, for the paperwork. The quiet room must have a good-sounding, trouble-free, in-tune piano.

2.5 The coordinator, when informed of a Choir Master candidacy at the center, shall proceed to secure copies of the required anthems in the specified editions. It may be found necessary to order them, if they cannot be borrowed from a local church or other choral group. Only in cases of extreme need should photocopies be used. *Copies are needed for each singer, for the accompanist (if there is one), and for each of the two examiners.* If no particular edition is specified on the requirement sheet, the edition should coincide with that to be used by the candidate. Examination centers are not reimbursed for music purchased; the expense is the candidate's.

APRIL 1

3.1 The coordinator shall receive from each candidate a duplicate copy of the application sent to National Headquarters.

3.2 By late April /early May the coordinator shall confirm to National Headquarters, the examiners nominated.

EARLY MAY

4.1 *The coordinator shall appoint a proctor, who shall be a member of the Guild in good standing and who can be depended upon to conduct the examinations in a responsible and precise*



manner while doing everything possible to set the candidate at ease. No proctor may serve who has assisted in preparing any of the candidates. Since the proctor shall be charged with playing ear tests on the paperwork sections of the examinations (if there are candidates taking the paperwork), he/she should be a person with considerable keyboard facility. The coordinator shall inform the proctor of the compensation policy.



Arrange
for the
singers

Requirements
for the singers

4.2 The coordinator shall arrange for a quartet of four singers (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) to be present for the practical section of the examination. A larger vocal group, though not required, may be used if the coordinator is able to arrange it at no additional cost to the Guild. National Headquarters will allow a specified maximum amount to be paid to each of four singers in return for his or her services. *Under no circumstances shall a candidate be allowed to provide his/her own group of singers. Singers selected should have voices and reading skills which allow the conductor to demonstrate the entire range of rehearsal methods, vocal practices, and conducting techniques. The singers should have copies of the required anthems in advance, have rehearsed them individually so as to be able to sing them unaccompanied if requested to do so by the candidate, and be able to arrive at the examination room no later than fifteen minutes in advance of the examination. Each examination will last forty-five minutes.*

Accompanist
supplied if
requested

4.3 The coordinator shall make arrangements for a competent accompanist to assist each candidate who requests one. A specified maximum amount will be paid the accompanist by Headquarters. *The candidate may not provide his/her own accompanist.*

Confirm
arrangements with
the test site; check
equipment and
piano

4.4 The coordinator shall confirm arrangements with the church or school chosen as the examination site, make certain that the pianos to be used will be in good condition, and see that the necessary tables and chairs will be available for both the practical and paperwork sections of the examination.

Coordinator
compiles a list of
candidates



4.5 The coordinator shall compile a list of candidates, including detailed information about each examination to be taken. He/she shall indicate which sections each candidate has elected to take (practical, paperwork, or both). At this time the coordinator shall reconfirm the examiners to be used, and that, as far as can be determined, no conflicts of interest exist between any examiner and any candidate. If there are no candidates for this or any other examination, the coordinator shall notify National Headquarters.

One month in
advance: Examination
schedule sent to
candidates, proctors,
singers, accompanists
and test site contacts.

4.6 The coordinator shall prepare an examination schedule (see Appendix A). Copies shall be sent to all candidates, examiners, proctors, singers, accompanists, and to the church or school contact person(s). The coordinator shall pencil in names adjacent to candidate numbers only on the copies which go to the proctors and to the contact person(s). On the copy which is sent to each



Candidate may request a one-half hour practice period



Examination materials arrive

Check the exam materials promptly



Materials given to proctor

Confirm schedule with test site, proctor, examiners, singers, accompanist



Coordinator is available on examination day

candidate the coordinator shall write in only that person's name next to the appropriate candidate number. *Under no circumstances are candidates' names to be included on the examiners' schedules, even though the preservation of anonymity is not always possible in the practical section of the Choir Master examination.* All copies of the schedule shall include instructions concerning the location of and access to the waiting room, where each candidate is to wait prior to the examination. If so desired, and if arrangements can be made conveniently, the candidate shall be permitted a one-half hour practice period in the rehearsal room where the examination is to be given.

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO THE EXAMINATION

5.1 The coordinator shall receive from National Headquarters a packet containing the examinations, the return envelope, copies of the Manual of Procedure for the proctors and examiners, copies of the requirement sheet, three copies of the Examination Hymn Booklet, and the coded list of candidates. The packet should be opened immediately, in order to ascertain that the correct number of coded examinations has been included, that each copy of the examination is complete, that the appropriate number of manuscript work sheets and answer sheets has been enclosed, and that two copies of the examiners' mark sheets have been included for each candidate. *The coordinator shall notify Headquarters immediately should any omissions or other problems be discovered.*

5.2 *Observing strictest secrecy, the coordinator shall make certain that each examination bears the correct candidate code number.* The coordinator shall then distribute to the proctor the examiners' copies of the mark sheets, comment sheets, and the examination. The proctor shall also receive the candidates' copies of the examination, including the proctor's version of the ear tests. The coordinator shall also be sure that each proctor and examiner receives a copy of this manual and a copy of the certification requirements, and that each one reads these documents. Finally, the coordinator shall remind the proctor for the practical part of the examination to obtain the signatures of all examiners, neatly produced on the form provided by Headquarters, in black ink.

5.3 The coordinator shall reconfirm the arrangements and the schedule with the school or church where the examination is to be held. In addition, the coordinator shall confirm the schedule, especially the arrival times, with the proctor, examiners, singers, and accompanist, making any adjustments necessitated by candidate cancellations.

EXAMINATION DAY

6.1 If not serving as a proctor, the coordinator shall nonetheless be available to assist with the resolution of any problems that may arise in the administration of the examination.



Mailing the
examinations

Please return
examinations promptly

Write a note of
thanks

Expense reports

Certificates

Publicize the success
of candidate(s)

Cancellations

AFTER THE EXAMINATION

7.1 The coordinator shall receive from the proctor all examiners' mark sheets and comment sheets, and sheets with the signatures of each examiner (see paragraph 5.2), together with the envelope containing the paperwork section from each candidate's examination. The coordinator shall mail these and the duplicate copies of the candidates' application forms to National Headquarters using the envelope provided by that office. The envelope should be sent by a rapid delivery agency that provides a delivery receipt, and should be sent promptly, in order to avoid delays in the grading process.

7.2 The coordinator should acknowledge, preferably in writing, the assistance of the proctor and the permission of the church or school to use its facilities.

7.3 On the form provided, the coordinator shall notify National Headquarters of the amount paid each examiner, proctor, singer, and accompanist, any additional expenses incurred with the prior approval by Headquarters, and the name and address of the person to whom the examination center expense check is to be sent.

7.4 Successful candidates shall receive their certificates once examiners' signatures have been obtained. A list of successful candidates will be published in THE AMERICAN ORGANIST.

7.5 The coordinator shall work with the dean of the local chapter to devise appropriate means of publicizing the achievement of successful candidates. Recognition in the chapter newsletter and at chapter meetings is encouraged.

7.6 For rules governing cancellation of an examination, see the annual listing of professional certification requirements, under the heading "Examination Fees."



The proctor sets
the tone

Proctors are
Guild members

Information and
test schedules
Discretion required



Proctor
receives
exams, hymn booklet
and mark sheets.

Strict secrecy
required

Review manual
and schedule

Practice the ear
tests according to
requirements



Arrive early

Check the rehearsal
room

PROCTOR

Prompt, helpful, and efficient conduct of the examination will do much to ensure that the candidate is given every advantage at examination time. Throughout the entire procedure, the proctor is expected to treat the candidate with courtesy, displaying sensitivity to any anxieties the candidate may have. During the test, the proctors should refrain from making any sounds or movements which might distract the candidate in any way. The proctor in charge of the paperwork section of the examination should remember to practice playing the ear tests, so that the candidate will have no cause for complaint in that regard. The proctors should remember that the Guild's professionalism is very much at stake in the way the test is administered.

EARLY MAY

1.1 The proctor shall be appointed by the examination coordinator. The proctor shall be a member of the Guild in good standing.

1.2 The proctor shall receive from the coordinator a schedule of the examinations together with a list of the candidates' names. The names are to be held in the strictest confidence. The proctor shall also receive a copy of this manual and a copy of the certification requirements.

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO THE EXAMINATION

2.1 The proctor shall receive from the coordinator the candidates' copies of the examinations. He/she shall also receive three copies of the Examination Hymn Booklet, and the examiners' copies of the mark sheets, comment sheets, and the examination. He/she shall divulge the contents of the examination to no one.

TWO DAYS PRIOR TO THE EXAMINATION

3.1 The proctor shall review the examination schedule and shall review the instructions for each part of the examination by reading this manual in its entirety.

3.2 The proctor shall practice the ear tests which are part of the paperwork section of the examinations. He/she shall take particular pains to make certain that the rhythm is played very precisely, that there is no stumbling, and that there is a slight accentuation of the strong beats. He/she should also observe equal voicing of the tones in each chord.

EXAMINATION DAY - Practical Work

4.1 *The proctor shall arrive thirty minutes in advance of the examination in order to make certain that the waiting room is open and that the rehearsal room is ready for the examination, with chairs for the singers, a conductor's stand for the candidate, the piano in an appropriate place, and a table and chairs for the*

Distributes examinations, mark sheets, comment sheets, hymn booklet to examiners



Proctor escorts candidate to rehearsal room

No intentional errors

At the end of forty minutes, singers and accompanist are excused



Proctor places keyboard tests in front of candidate

Candidate is dismissed

No comments please

Proctor collects mark sheets and examiners' comments



Please mail promptly

Candidate retains exam materials



examiners. The proctor shall distribute to the examiners their copies of the mark sheets, comment sheets, the Examination Hymn Booklet, and the examination. The proctor shall also provide sharpened pencils and scratch paper for the examiners. *The examiners may be seated together, but they must arrive at and record marks independently.* The proctor shall retain one copy of the Examination Hymn Booklet for the candidates' use in question Ch 2.

4.2 Ten minutes in advance of the first examination, the proctor shall escort the candidate from the waiting room to the rehearsal room and shall assist in making any last-minute changes in the physical arrangements of the rehearsal space. *No one shall be present at the examination except the candidate, the proctor, the singers, two examiners, accompanist if requested, and, at his/her own discretion, the examination coordinator.*

4.3 *The proctor shall at no time encourage any intentional errors on the part of the singers.*

4.4 At the end of forty minutes, the proctor shall signal the candidate and the examiners that time is up for the rehearsal and direction of the anthems, and shall excuse the singers and accompanist unless other Choir Master examinations are to follow. The proctor shall then place the keyboard tests (including the Examination Hymn Booklet turned to the hymn designated in the examination text) in front of the candidate, who shall be seated at the piano (or organ, if there is one in the rehearsal room and if the candidate prefers to use it). *After the candidate has scanned each test in question Ch 2 for no more than sixty seconds, the proctor shall give the signal to begin playing the test.*

4.5 At the conclusion of the keyboard tests, the proctor shall dismiss the candidate. *The proctor shall refrain from giving the candidate any assessment, positive or negative, of the performance.* Ten minutes in advance of the next examination, the proctor shall escort the next candidate from the waiting room to the rehearsal room.

4.6 When the examiners have completed their mark sheets and comment sheets, these and the form containing the examiners' signatures, neatly produced in black ink, shall be collected by the proctor and placed in the envelope provided by National Headquarters. When all Choir Master practical examinations have been completed, the proctor shall turn over these envelopes to the coordinator, who shall be in charge of sending the examinations and other materials to National Headquarters.

4.7 *The candidate may retain his/her own copy of the practical section of the examination, but must not show this to any candidate not yet examined.*

Arrive early!



Check quiet room
and materials

Practice the ear tests
according to
requirements

Distribute the
paper work,
retaining proctor's
copy of ear tests

Proctor plays the
ear tests according
to specifications

No books or study
aids in room

Proctor is always
present

Candidate may not
use a keyboard
instrument

Collect the papers
at the end of the
allotted time



Coordinator
please mail
promptly

EXAMINATION DAY - Paperwork

5.1 *The proctor shall arrive thirty minutes in advance of the paperwork examination.* The proctor shall make certain that the quiet room is in order, that the writing desks are spaced well apart, and that sharpened pencils and two kinds of scratch paper are provided: plain and music manuscript. The proctor shall practice playing the ear tests one last time. He/she shall also make certain that the lighting is adequate and that the room is indeed sound-insulated.

5.2 When all the candidates to be examined have arrived and are in their places, the proctor shall distribute the examinations, *making certain that the proctor's version of the ear tests has been removed from the candidates' copies.*

5.3 The proctor shall play the proctor's version of the ear tests. The proctor shall play each test as instructed: on the piano, evenly and without hurrying, after playing a four-note tonic chord in the range of the test in question, announcing the clef, key, and time signature for each test. The proctor shall play at the prescribed tempo, usually a beat = ca. 60, with clear rhythmic stresses and an even touch in both the horizontal and vertical relationships. The proctor shall allow thirty seconds between each playing of a test, and shall allow exactly three minutes after the final playing, so that the Candidate may complete the writing of the test.

5.4 The proctor shall make certain that the candidates bring no books or other study aids into the examination quiet room and that the candidates do not communicate or otherwise assist one another in any way. The proctor shall remain in the examination room at all times. Candidates may leave the room only if absolutely necessary, and then only one at a time. Proctors should note that no candidate is allowed to use a keyboard instrument in the completion of the paperwork sections.

5.5 At the end of three hours, the proctor shall collect the papers and place them in the envelope provided. The proctor shall then return the envelope to the coordinator, who is in charge of sending the examinations to National Headquarters. The proctor should note that all work sheets must be included with the returned examinations. Candidates may, at their discretion, retain any duplicate copies of work sheets, as well as their copies of the examination text.



Role of the examiners

EXAMINERS

The interest and expertise of the examiners are extremely important to the success of the Guild's certification program. The examiners' contribution of time and effort is much appreciated. The purpose of having local examiners evaluate the practical sections of the examinations is to give the candidates the advantage of a realistic performance/testing situation. Examiners who have questions concerning evaluation standards should contact the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification, c/o National Headquarters.

FEBRUARY 1

Examiners appointed

1.1 Potential examiners shall be contacted by the local dean or coordinator concerning their interest and availability to serve at the examinations. The two examiners chosen shall be notified by the local coordinator by early May. No person may examine a candidate whom he/she has prepared wholly or in part for the examination in question. If any conflict of interest exists or arises between a potential examiner and a candidate, it is the examiner's responsibility to disqualify himself/herself.

EARLY MAY

Examiners receive list of candidates with code numbers only

2.1 The appointment of examiners shall be confirmed by the coordinator. Examiners shall be furnished with a list of candidates, using candidate code numbers only (no names), and complete information on each examination to be evaluated. Examiners shall also be furnished with a schedule, detailing the place of the examination, the time the examiners are expected to arrive, the access route for examiners to the place of the examination, and the time of each examination (see Appendix A for a sample schedule).



Coordinator provides copies of exam repertoire

2.2 The coordinator shall provide examiners with copies of the specified anthems in the editions to be used by the candidates. The coordinator shall provide examiners with copies of the examination requirements and of this manual.

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO EXAMINATION



Preparations prior to examinations

3.1 The coordinator shall reconfirm all arrangements.

3.2 Examiners shall familiarize themselves with the music which the candidates will be rehearsing and performing.

3.3 Examiners shall read carefully and thoroughly the certification requirements and every part of this manual.

EXAMINATION DAY

Arrive early

4.1 *The examiners shall arrive fifteen minutes in advance of the first practical examination and shall take their places at the examiners' table, which should be in full view of the candidate and the singers.* The examiners shall receive from the proctor

Examiners receive the examination mark sheets and comment sheets



Do not communicate with the candidate

Monitor the time

Examiners give clear directions as to what is rehearsed and what is performed



Candidate has no prior rehearsal with singers or accompanist

Candidate rehearses portions requested

Candidate conducts portions requested

Any work may be rehearsed with accompaniment

Criterion for success

their copies of the mark sheets, comment sheets, *Examination Hymn Booklet*, and examinations, and shall review the contents of these (see Appendix B). *Examiners should note that to pass, a candidate must score at least 50% of each item (as defined on the mark sheet) and a total of at least 70 points on the entire examination. Examiners are not permitted to give fractional marks.*

4.2 Examiners shall not communicate with the candidate in any way before, during, or immediately after the examination, except to give directions for stopping or starting, rehearsing, or performing. *Although examiners may sit next to each other, they must arrive at their marks independently. Examiners are expected to write comments on the sheets provided. It is important to the candidate, whether successful or unsuccessful, that strengths be recognized and weaknesses discussed in a constructive way.* Because of the structure and focus of the examination, one or both of the examiners shall be responsible for monitoring the time, so that part or all of each of the required anthems is rehearsed and/or performed. *The examiners shall be responsible for giving clear directions as to what is to be rehearsed and what is to be performed.* In the course of rehearsing a piece, the candidate shall be responsible for covering such techniques as are desirable and applicable for that piece. Among these techniques may be methods of breathing, tone production, purity of vowels, and clear enunciation. The proctor shall stop the conducting portion of the examination at the end of forty minutes. While the structure of each individual examination and the result of the grading are left entirely to the discretion of the local examiners, the examiners should bear in mind the following:

- a. *The candidate will not have had any prior rehearsal with the singers and accompanist provided for the examination.*
- b. *The candidate should actually rehearse those portions which the examiners wish to have rehearsed, demonstrating a thorough command of rehearsal techniques as well as a command of the different aspects of good choral sound and interpretation, for all of the styles represented in the specified anthems.*
- c. *The candidate should actually conduct those portions which the examiners wish to have performed, directing either from the piano or at the conductor's stand, as the candidate chooses.*
- d. *Some works, by their style, ought to be performed unaccompanied; those same works and works in other styles may be rehearsed with accompaniment, entirely or in part.*
- e. *Whether the candidate chooses to play for the rehearsal, use the accompanist provided, or rehearse without piano should not be a criterion of success. The only criterion of success should be how well the candidate succeeds at what he/she sets out to do.*

Style



Keyboard proficiency
required

Grading without
consultation

Examiners' fees

f. There is a wide divergence in acceptable concepts of rehearsal practices, conducting techniques, choral and vocal methods, and interpretive styles. *Examiners should evaluate how well the candidate accomplishes what he/she apparently has set out to demonstrate, and how thoroughly all of the expectations listed in the certification requirements are met.*

g. *A reasonable level of competence in the keyboard tests is expected (question Ch 2). When the examination has been finished and the candidate excused, the examiners shall complete the mark sheets and write their comments without consulting each other in any way. At the end of all the examinations, the examiners shall return the mark sheets and the comment sheets to the proctor. They shall also return any copies of the anthems provided them for the purpose of evaluating the examination. Finally, on the form provided by the proctor, they shall produce their signatures, neatly written in black ink.*

AFTER THE EXAMINATION

5.1 Each examiner shall receive a check promptly from the chapter sponsoring the examination center, the amount determined by the number of candidates examined.



Overview

Where to find
answers to questions

CANDIDATE

One reason for compiling in a single manual all of the instructions concerning procedure for a certification examination is to give the candidate a complete picture of the examination process. The Guild's certification program exists for the benefit of individual candidates, and it is each candidate's right to have everything done thoroughly and in order. It is the candidate's responsibility to study carefully the test requirements published in the July issue of THE AMERICAN ORGANIST or available separately from National Headquarters. Should there be any point which the candidate does not fully understand, he/she should request an explanation or clarification from the Director of the Committee on Professional Certification or the local examination coordinator.

Who can
take AGO
examinations?



Obtain scores and
study materials

Deadline and
procedure for
submitting application

Cancellation
requirements

Sections 1 and 2 may
be taken singly or
together

Paperwork may be
taken at any local
chapter site

ADVANCE PREPARATION

1.1 In compliance with the AGO's status as an educational, not-for-profit organization, examinations are open to members and non-members. Candidates who do not hold current Guild membership will pay an additional fee. The candidate shall contact National Headquarters for copies of the pertinent application forms and a list of examination centers.

1.2 The candidate should obtain all the scores, books, past examinations, and solution booklets he/she requires.

1.3 The candidate is encouraged to contact the local chapter dean and deans of nearby chapters to ascertain whether any certification preparation courses will be offered during the coming year.

APRIL 1 (Deadline for receipt of application at Headquarters and Exam Center)

2.1 The candidate shall send one copy of the completed application form, together with the appropriate fee, to National Headquarters no later than the application deadline for the examination in question. At the same time, the second application copy shall be mailed to the dean of the chapter or the examination coordinator of the examination center where he/she wishes to take the test. With both forms, the candidate shall include all pertinent information, especially the editions to be used for anthems where none is specified in the requirements. The candidate shall also specify whether he/she wishes to have an accompanist for the examination.

2.2 The candidate should note that there is a non-refundable portion of the examination fee, as stated in the Professional Certification Requirements sheet. Requests for cancellation of an examination must be received by National Headquarters and the examination center by May 1 in order for a refund to be issued. There is a \$20.00 processing fee that is non-refundable and non-transferrable. After the stated deadline for cancellation, requests for refunds will be considered by National Headquarters only in cases of extreme emergency.

2.3 Both sections of the Choir Master examination, or either section alone may be taken in a given year. When only one section is passed, the remaining section must be passed within the five succeeding years (for example, by 2014 if the other section was passed in 2009). This restriction does not apply to persons who passed one section prior to 1969; for them there is no time limit. Both sections must be passed in order to gain a certificate.

2.4 Candidates taking only section 2 (paperwork) may elect to do so at any local chapter; they do not have to go to an examination center. The candidate who desires to exercise this option, should contact the dean of the local chapter, as well as National Headquarters.

Receiving
confirmation



Rehearsal time

Know the manual
of procedure



Arrival time

Who may be
present at the
examination



Proctor
signals that
time is up
for question Ch 1

Proctor places
keyboard test in
front of candidate

EARLY MAY

3.1 The candidate shall receive from the coordinator an examination schedule similar to that shown in Appendix A, giving the exact times and places of the two parts of the examination. If there is any error in the information concerning the examination, the candidate shall contact the coordinator immediately. *Should there be any practice time available in the rehearsal room and should the candidate wish to take advantage of this time (a period of one-half hour is permitted), the candidate shall be responsible for making these arrangements. The coordinator shall include on the examination schedule the instructions concerning whom to contact about such practice time. Any questions concerning practice and examination arrangements not covered in the posted schedule should be directed to the examination coordinator.*

3.2 *The candidate shall read thoroughly all parts of this manual. The candidate shall be particularly careful to observe the injunction against communication of any kind between the examiners and the candidate. The candidate shall also refrain from discussing with other candidates any portion of the examination while it is still in progress.*

EXAMINATION DAY - Practical Work

4.1 *The candidate shall arrive at the waiting room at least fifteen minutes in advance of the examination. Ten minutes in advance of the examination, the proctor shall escort the candidate from the waiting room to the rehearsal room and shall assist in making any last-minute changes in the physical arrangements of the rehearsal space. No one shall be present at the examination except the candidate, the proctor, the singers, two examiners, an accompanist if requested, and, at his/her discretion, the examination coordinator.*

4.2 At the end of forty minutes, the proctor shall signal the candidate and the examiners that the time is up for question Ch 1, and shall excuse the singers and the accompanist, unless other Choir Master examinations are to follow. The proctor shall then place the keyboard tests in front of the candidate, who shall be seated at the piano (or organ, if there is one in the rehearsal room and if the candidate prefers to use it). *After the candidate has scanned each test in question Ch 2 for no more than sixty seconds, the proctor shall give the signal to begin playing that test. The tests will include one or more of the following: harmonizing a melody using primary chords, reading a four-part hymn tune from the Examination Hymn Booklet, 2007 Revised Edition only, and playing cadences. The hymn tune will be specified by the Certification Committee, and the booklet may be requested from National Headquarters at no charge. At the completion of the keyboard tests the candidate shall be excused. The candidate may retain this portion of the examination.*

Candidate reviews instructions to examiners



Candidate rehearses portions requested; performs sections requested

Any work may be rehearsed with accompaniment

Criteria for evaluation



Coping with singers' inaccuracies

Candidate may not provide own accompanist

Rehearse and perform portions of each anthem

Candidate is authoritative

Demonstrate mastery of rehearsal techniques

4.3 The candidate should review thoroughly and carefully the examination day instructions to the examiners, set forth above, in the examiners' section of this manual, paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 (pp.10-11). The candidate should take particular note of the following:

- a. *Part or all of each of the required anthems is to be rehearsed and/or performed. The examiners are asked to give clear directions as to which anthems, or portions of anthems, they wish to have rehearsed or performed. In rehearsing the pieces, the candidate should demonstrate a thorough command of rehearsal techniques as well as a command of the different aspects of good choral sound and interpretation, for all the styles represented in the specified anthems. In performing, the candidate should actually conduct the portions requested by the examiners, directing either from the piano or at the conductor's stand, as he/she chooses.*
- b. *For stylistic reasons, some works ought to be performed unaccompanied; but any work may be rehearsed with accompaniment, entirely or in part.*
- c. *The examiners are instructed to evaluate how well the candidate accomplishes what he/she apparently has set out to demonstrate, and how thoroughly all of the expectations listed in the certification requirements and categorized on the examiners' mark sheets (see Appendix B) are met.*

4.4 In addition to these considerations, the candidate should bear in mind the following:

- a. *He/she should be prepared to cope with unplanned inaccuracies and insecurities on the part of the singers and the accompanist, just as might occur in any rehearsal. The candidate may request that the examination center provide an accompanist, to be used at the candidate's discretion and direction. The candidate is not permitted to provide his/her own accompanist.*
- b. *It is possible that the examiners may give no specific directions as to how the rehearsal and performance time is to be divided up. In that case, the candidate should be certain to include both rehearsal and performance of some portion of each of the specified anthems.*
- c. *It shall be the candidates responsibility to convince the examiners that he/she has a thorough command of the situation, has organized the physical space and the time to maximum advantage, and has controlled the forces (singers and accompanist, if any) with maximum authority and understanding.*
- d. *While rehearsing the pieces, mastery of rehearsal techniques, as well as mastery of methods of breathing, tone production, purity of vowels, and clear enunciation must be demonstrated as thoroughly as possible. It is generally more successful to show a*



Show competent
conducting technique

State stylistic choices



Arrival time



Proctor
plays
the ear
test according to
specifications



Writing
the ear
test

No books or study
aids allowed

detailed and completely convincing grasp of a single approach to choral/vocal technique than to wander aimlessly from one tradition to another.

*e. The candidate should demonstrate a competent conducting technique, and should also demonstrate the ability to communicate to the singers an acceptable approach to the chief stylistic features of each anthem. Where there is controversy over an acceptable performance practice (e.g., whether to sing 17th century **stile antico** motets with continuo accompaniment), the candidate is advised to make a brief statement concerning his/her choice in the matter.*

EXAMINATION DAY - Paperwork

5.1 *The candidate shall arrive at the appointed quiet room no later than five minutes in advance of the examination. Paper will be provided, but candidates are advised to bring their own pencils, even though the proctor shall have been instructed to provide these as well. When all the candidates have arrived and are in their places, the proctor shall distribute the examination.*

5.2 *At the beginning of the paperwork session, the proctor shall play the ear tests on the piano. The proctor will begin each test by playing a four-note tonic chord in the range of the test to follow, and shall announce the clefs, the key, and the time signature. The proctor will play the tests at the prescribed tempo, usually one beat = ca. 60, and shall allow thirty seconds between each playing of a test. Exactly three minutes shall be allowed after the fourth playing, so that the candidate may complete the writing of the test.*

5.3 *In taking down the ear tests, the candidate is encouraged to write the first test on the work sheet provided, and then transfer it to the staff on the examination sheet. In the second test, the candidate has one version of a passage in hymn style and the proctor has a different version, in which chord voicing, chord positions, nonharmonic tones, tied notes, etc., may be different from the candidate's version. The candidate is to circle on his/her copy the note or notes which are different from those played by the proctor, and/or the spaces which would be occupied by any additional notes played by the proctor.*

5.4 *At the conclusion of the ear tests, the candidate shall proceed with the remainder of the paperwork section. The proctor shall make certain that candidates bring no books or other study aids into the quiet room, and the candidates must not communicate with or assist one another in any way. The proctor shall remain in the examination room. Candidates who find it necessary to leave the examination room may do so one at a time, and then only when absolutely necessary. No candidate is allowed to use a keyboard instrument in the completion of the paperwork.*

Papers
collected at
end of
allotted time



Test results



Examiners'
comments
available

Certificates upon
completion of both
sections 1 and 2

Success!

5.5 At the end of the paperwork, the proctor shall collect the papers and place them in the envelope provided. All work sheets must be included with the returned examination. *Candidates may, at their discretion, retain duplicate copies of work sheets, as well as copies of the examination text, including the proctor's version of the ear tests.*

AFTER THE EXAMINATION

6.1 The candidate shall be notified within approximately two months concerning the results of the examination. The paperwork is graded at National Headquarters by members of the Committee on Professional Certification, with the assistance of other qualified examiners. According to the same procedure as that used by the two local examiners for the practical section, two national examiners working independently of each other grade each paperwork section. For each section of the examination, the marks on the two mark sheets are averaged in order to obtain the number of points awarded on each item (see Appendix B for a definition of an "item"). *The candidate must secure at least 50% of each item and a total of 70 points on the entire section of the examination.* A copy of the mark sheet showing the average of the examiners' marks for each section of the examination will be enclosed with the candidate's letter of notification. The examiners' original mark sheets, their written comments, and the candidate's original paperwork with any marginal comments by the examiners shall be retained on file at National Headquarters for a period of five years. Photocopies of the examiners' comments and copies of the marked paperwork section will be available to any candidate who requests them.

6.2 Successful candidates will receive their certificates once examiners' signatures have been secured. A list of successful candidates will be printed in *THE AMERICAN ORGANIST*, and chapters are encouraged to schedule some suitable recognition of this achievement.

6.3 Successful candidates shall be entitled and encouraged to use the letters ChM after their names.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR THE CHOIR MASTER EXAMINATIONS

This is only a sample schedule. Actual circumstances at a given center may dictate differences in the hours at which examinations are scheduled or even, in extreme cases, in the days.

Date and place of the examination(s):

Location of the rehearsal room, the waiting room, and the quiet room:

How to arrange one-half hour rehearsal room time, if desired - person to contact; available days and times:

EXAMINATION DAY - Practical section in the morning in a rehearsal room; candidates are scheduled one hour apart.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 8:30 a.m. | Proctor arrives and prepares the room for the examination, setting the location of the piano, the conductor's stand, chairs for the singers, and a table and chairs for the examiners. |
| 8:45 a.m. | Examiners, singers, and the accompanist, if there is one, arrive and go to the rehearsal room. Examiners receive their copies of the examination, mark sheets, and comment sheets, and review the contents of these. |
| 8:45 a.m. | Choirmaster Candidate No. 1 arrives and goes to the waiting room (name penciled in on proctor's copy and on copy for the contact person). |
| 8:50 a.m. | Proctor escorts Choir Master Candidate No. 1 from the waiting room and assists candidate in making final arrangements of the rehearsal room and its equipment. |
| 9:00-9:45 | Choir Master Candidate No. 1 takes the examination. |
| 9:45 a.m. | Choirmaster Candidate No. 2 arrives and goes to the waiting room (name penciled in on proctor's and contact person's copies). |
| 9:50 a.m. | Proctor escorts Candidate No. 2 from the waiting room to the rehearsal room and assists the candidate in arranging the room and the equipment. |
| 10:00-10:45 | Candidate No. 2 takes the examination. . . etc. |

EXAMINATION DAY CONTINUES -Paperwork section in the afternoon in the quiet room; all Choir Master candidates take the examination together.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 12:30 p.m. | Proctor arrives and prepares the room for the examination, with the writing desks placed well apart. Proctor practices ear tests on the piano. |
| 12:55 p.m. | Candidates arrive in the quiet room. |
| 1:00-4:00 | Candidates take the examination. |
| 4:00 p.m. | Proctor collects all examination papers, encloses them in the appropriate envelope, and returns all of the material to the examination coordinator, who prepares it for mailing. The material includes answer sheets, work sheets, examiners' mark sheets and comment sheets, and sheets with the signatures of the examiners. |

This schedule is sent to the church or school contact person, the proctor, the examiners, the singers, the accompanist if any, and the candidates. Candidates' names are penciled in only on the copies for the proctors and the contact person. The copy sent to each candidate should bear that person's examination candidate number, together with a mark by the candidate's arrival and examination times.

Examination coordinator's name, address, and phone number:

**AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS
CHOIR MASTER EXAM
EXAMINER'S MARK SHEET**

SECTION 1 – PRACTICAL WORK

CANDIDATE CODE _____

	Maximum Marks Obtainable	Marks Awarded (No fractional grades)
Ch-1 Conducting Anthems (prepared)		
Conducting techniques.....	20	_____
Communication with choir.....	15	_____
Knowledge of the music.....	15	_____
Stylistic sensitivity and interpretation.....	25	_____

	Sub-total.....	_____
	75	
Ch-2 Harmonization at the keyboard.....	25	_____

Total	100	Total: _____

Date _____ Signature: _____

Examiner in Practical Work

CANDIDATES MUST SECURE AT LEAST 50% OF EACH ITEM AND 70% OF THE TOTAL MAXIMUM MARKS OBTAINABLE
(N.B. Ch-1 counts as one item; i.e., the 50% rule applies only to the sum of the seven grades given.)

Examiners may use the accompanying sheet for critical remarks.

Appendix B, page 2
AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS
CHOIR MASTER EXAM
EXAMINER'S MARK SHEET

SECTION 2 – PAPERWORK

CANDIDATE CODE _____

	Maximum Marks Obtainable	Marks Awarded (No fractional grades)
Ch-3 Ear Tests.....	15	_____
Ch-4 Analysis.....	15	_____
Ch-5 Gregorian Chant.....	10	_____
Ch-6 Hymnody.....	15	_____
Ch-7 Liturgy.....	10	_____
Ch-8 Choir Training.....	10	_____
Ch-9 Choral Repertoire.....	15	_____
Ch-10 General Music Knowledge.....	10	_____
Total	100	Total: _____

Date _____ Signature: _____
Examiner in Paperwork

CANDIDATES MUST SECURE AT LEAST 50% OF EACH ITEM AND 70% OF THE TOTAL MAXIMUM MARKS OBTAINABLE.

Examiners may use the accompanying sheet for critical remarks.

