

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC
HANDBOOK FOR COMPOSITION STUDENTS (v. 7/18)

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The ECU School of Music’s Composition program is devoted to helping students develop the skills necessary to pursue a professional and/or academic career in the composition of contemporary concert music.

Our faculty is dedicated to helping students develop their technical skills and compositional craft, with the ultimate goal of guiding students towards establishing their own artistic voice. Towards these ends, students are expected to explore a wide variety of musical styles, and to work on exercises designed to develop a wide variety of techniques—regardless of each student’s chosen or preferred style. In order to facilitate exposure to a broad spectrum of technical and aesthetic approaches and perspectives, ECU composers who have been accepted as composition majors at the end of their sophomore year will begin to “rotate” their study with several of our composition faculty. *Students are expected to study with at least two different faculty composers during the course of their time in the program.*

Our most successful students are highly self-motivated and show initiative by taking advantage of performance opportunities and pursuing the mentoring of a variety of faculty. We place emphasis on our students' abilities to communicate effectively to their audience in professional and academic settings, both in writing and orally.

Student composers at East Carolina University work with faculty composers who have established themselves nationally and internationally in the field of new music. Students have the opportunity to hear their compositions performed by fellow students on the three-concert Premiere Performances Series each year; The University Symphonic Wind Ensemble, Concert Band, Symphony Orchestra and concert Choirs have read and performed student compositions.

Students enroll in courses which provide access to the Center for Composition with Electronic Media allowing them to work in the medium of electronic music, and also use our MIDI lab to access computer engraving software (Finale, Sibelius) to prepare their musical scores for traditional instruments.

COMPOSITION COURSE OFFERINGS

Beginning Composition: MUSC 1326 (Fall semester)/1336 (Spring semester) (1 cr.)

All students taking composition for the first time should enroll in this class. MUSC 1326/ 1336, is open to all students who have taken MUSC 1156 and MUSC 1176, or are taking MUSC 1156 and MUSC 1176 concurrent with MUSC 1326, 1336. For students with an unusual level of experience, permission of a composition professor will allow registration in *Intermediate Composition* (MUSC 2326/2336).

Beginning Composition consists of weekly class meetings, including weekly assignments—in composition, listening, and score study—designed to develop compositional technique.

In addition to weekly class meetings, students in MUSC 1326/1336 are also required to attend weekly Composition Studio class, all Premiere Performances concerts, student composition recitals, and selected School of Music recitals.

Intermediate Composition: MUSC 2326 (Fall semester)/2336 (Spring semester) (2 cr.)

To be taken after MUSC 1326/1336 by students who have not yet declared a major, or by upper division students who are majoring in something other than composition. This class is a continuation, on an intermediate level, of MUSC 1326/1336. *Intermediate Composition* consists of weekly private sessions (50 minutes/week) that provide individual guidance and tutelage in the completion of appropriately proportioned works.

In addition to weekly class meetings, students in MUSC 2326/2336 are also required to attend weekly Composition Studio class, all Premiere Performances concerts, student composition recitals, and selected School of Music recitals.

NOTE: Any student considering a Composition Major must submit an application to the Chair of the Theory, Composition & Musicology Department. The strongest applicant for the composition major will, by the end of the sophomore year, have had at least three of their pieces performed on the Premiere Performances Concert Series.

Advanced Composition: MUSC 3326 (Fall semester)/3336 (Spring semester) (3 cr.)

This class is a continuation, **for Composition Majors** (*see note below*), or in exceptional cases for non-Composition Majors who have taken MUSC 2326/2336. *Advanced Composition* consists of weekly (1 hour/week) private composition lessons. The continuing Composition Major is expected to have at least two works performed each year, usually on the Premiere Performances concert series.

In addition to weekly class meetings, students in MUSC 3326/3336 are also required to attend weekly Composition Studio class, all Premiere Performances concerts, student composition recitals, and selected School of Music recitals. Undergraduate Composition Majors are required to offer 1 Composition Studio presentation each semester, on a topic determined in consultation with their composition professor.

Advanced Composition: MUSC 4326 (Fall semester)/4336 (Spring semester) (3 cr.)

A continuation, **for Composition Majors** (*see note below*) who have taken MUSC 3326/3336. *Advanced Composition* consists of weekly (1 hour/week) private composition lessons. The continuing Composition Major is expected to have at least two works performed each year, usually on the Premiere Performances concert series.

In addition to weekly class meetings, students in MUSC 4326/4336 are also required to attend weekly Composition Studio class, all Premiere Performances concerts, student composition recitals, and selected School of Music recitals. Undergraduate Composition Majors are required to offer 1 Composition Studio presentation each semester, on a topic determined in consultation with their composition professor.

Advanced Composition: MUSC 6326 (Fall semester)/6336 (Spring semester) (3 cr.)

This class is for **Graduate composition students**. *Advanced Composition* consists of weekly (1 hour/week) private composition lessons, as well as weekly (1 hour/week) class meetings during which all students in MUSC 3326/3336, 4326/4336 and 6326/6336 hear readings of their colleagues' works in progress. The Composition Graduate student is expected to have at least two works performed each year.

In addition to weekly class meetings, students in MUSC 6326/6336 are also required to attend weekly Composition Studio class, all Premiere Performances concerts, student composition recitals, and selected School of Music recitals. Graduate Composition students are required to offer 3 Composition Studio presentations each year, on topics determined in consultation with their composition professor.

COMPOSITION SEMINAR

Attendance at the weekly composition seminar is **REQUIRED** for ALL students enrolled in composition courses at ALL levels.

Seminar presentation requirements:

Undergraduate Composition Majors are required to offer 1 presentation each semester, on a topic determined in consultation with their composition professor;

Graduate Composition Majors are required to offer 3 presentations each year, on a topic determined in consultation with their composition professor.

PREMIERE PERFORMANCES CONCERTS & PROCEDURES

The Premiere Performances Concert Series is a forum for the performance of student composers' works, typically presented three times each year (1/fall, 2/spring). Dates of these concerts are announced at the start of each academic year. Concerts usually take place at 7:30 pm, in the Fletcher Recital Hall)

- **ONE SEMESTER PRIOR TO PREMIERE**
 1. Compose the work!
 2. Contact your musicians **well before the piece is completed!**
 3. Prepare your final score
 4. Extract and **proofread** your parts!

- **THE FIRST WEEK OF THE SEMESTER OF THE PREMIERE**
 1. Make your rehearsal schedule. This is important!
It usually takes about one hour of rehearsal time for each minute of music (sometimes more, sometimes less—depending upon the difficulty of the work and the players' abilities) in order to have a satisfactory premiere. Inadequate rehearsal—in time, or in organization and efficiency—will not lead to good results.
 2. Give your musicians **copies** of your parts. Do not, ever, under any circumstances, give them originals; they tend to get lost.
 3. Bring **extra copies** of your parts and score to **all** rehearsals.
 4. **After a few hours of rehearsals, bring in a faculty coach** for remaining rehearsals. A good coach will be the teacher of one of the instruments in your piece and/or any of the composition teachers. Make sure that your faculty coach has a **score** to read from!

- **ONE MONTH PRIOR TO THE PREMIERE**
 1. ***SUBMIT YOUR PROGRAM INFORMATION*** to faculty coordinator; including:
 - Title of work; Movement titles (in any)
 - Composer's name
 - Performing roster (name, instrument; name instrument, etc.)
 - Duration of piece.
 - **You must include *Program notes*:** Program notes should be 1-2 paragraphs long, and should give the audience something "to hold on to" as they hear your piece for the first time.

- **ONE WEEK PRIOR TO PREMIERE**
 1. Sign up for a brief run-through time slot (5-7:00, evening of concert)
 2. Submit a seating plan for the recital hall stage. This information should include:
 - the number and arrangement of chairs and stands needed
 - placement of piano, if used
 - whether electronic or computer equipment is needed
 - what, if any, percussion equipment is needed

- **THE PREMIERE**
 1. The attire is **CONCERT BLACK**.
 2. Thank your musicians; and be gracious to those who compliment your work—regardless of how you feel the performance went!
 3. **Attendance is required**—support your fellow composers!

END OF SEMESTER CONFERENCE

At the end of each semester, student-faculty conferences will be scheduled for each student currently enrolled in private composition study (2326/2336, 3236/3336, 4326/4336, 6326/6336). Graduate students and graduating seniors are to sign up for a 30-minute time slot; non-graduating undergraduates for 15-minute slots.

These conferences are an opportunity for students to discuss the compositional goals proposed earlier in the semester, and progress towards (or diversions from) those goals. This will also provide a forum for reflection on the semester challenges, growth, development, expectations going forward, concerns, or other related matters.

Prior to these conferences, students submit a written statement (list, prose, or other appropriate format) that articulates the semester's composition-related activities.

Faculty during these conferences will include the composition faculty.

APPLICATION TO THE UNDERGRAD. COMPOSITION MAJOR

Students *typically* submit application to the Composition major in their fourth semester of music study, by the first Friday in April. In unusual circumstances arrangements can be made to apply in the fall semester. In order for an application to be seriously considered by the Department of Theory, Composition & Musicology, applicants are expected to consistently demonstrate substantial accomplishment in Theory, History, and Musicianship classes, as reflected by both grades and instructor recommendations.

For acceptance into the upper level theory-composition concentrations, a student **should have a minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA in music courses** at the end of the sophomore year.

Application Deadline: By the first Friday in April the prospective composition major should submit a dossier to the Chairperson of the Theory, Composition & Musicology Department.

Acceptance to the composition major is contingent upon students' successful completion of the Upper Division Qualifying Exam on their major applied instrument.

The Application Packet: The dossier submitted for application should include—**HARD COPIES OF ALL PRINTED MATERIAL** (scores, programs, declaration of intent, list of courses):

- Scores, programs and, if possible, recordings of works performed at ECU
- A “declaration of intent,” which should articulate your compositional goals, professional goals, and personal evaluation of your development since beginning composition study
- A list of courses taken, and grades received, in the Theory, Composition & Musicology Department (Basic Musicianship [Music Theory], Basic Musicianship Lab [Ear-Training], Music History, etc.).

NOTE: Any student considering a Composition Major must submit an application to the Chair of the Theory, Composition & Musicology Department. A strong applicant for the composition major will, by the end of the sophomore year, have had at least three of their pieces performed on the Premiere Performances Concert Series.

RECITAL REQUIREMENT

- **SENIOR COMPOSITION RECITAL**

All Undergraduate composition majors are required to present a full recital of original music during their final year of study. The recital must comprise a **minimum of 35 minutes** of original music, and should be **for a variety of media** (brass, winds, strings, percussion, voice, keyboard, electronic/computer-generated sound) and a variety of ensemble sizes. **With set/stage changes and intermission, the recital is not to exceed 60 minutes.**

Program content (that is, the choice of works presented on this recital) must be determined **in consultation with a student's composition professor** in the semesters preceding (and during) the semester of the recital. *At least 10-14 days prior to the recital, all works to be presented on the recital must be performed and approved by a committee of three composition faculty.* [see next section: **RECITAL JURY.**]

- **GRADUATE COMPOSITION RECITAL**

All Graduate composition students are required to present a recital of original music during their final year of study. The recital must comprise a **minimum of 45 minutes** of original music, and should be **for a variety of media** (brass, winds, strings, percussion, voice, keyboard, electronic/computer-generated sound) and a variety of ensemble sizes. **With set/stage changes and intermission, the recital is not to exceed 70 minutes.**

Program content (that is, the choice of works presented on this recital) must be determined **in consultation with the student's composition professor** in the semesters preceding (and during) the semester of the recital. *At least 10-14 days prior to the recital, all works to be presented on the recital must be performed and approved by a committee of three composition faculty.* [see next section: **RECITAL JURY.**]

RECITAL JURY

No student may present a senior, graduate, or special recital without the recommendation of his major applied instructor and a successful audition (“recital jury”) with a committee comprised of three composition faculty. The recital jury is presented at a time(s) arranged in consultation with faculty committee members, usually two weeks prior to the date of the scheduled recital. Scheduling of the jury is the responsibility of the student. **ALL PIECES TO BE PERFORMED on the recital must be heard, and their preparation approved, 10-14 days prior to the recital.**

The recital jury will begin with distribution of a written program which lists ALL pieces to be included on the recital, the performers involved, and the duration of each piece; and will then involve the performance of each piece (in whole or part, at the committee's discretion) to be on the recital. A successful recital jury will demonstrate that all music is at an appropriate level of preparation. **If a student, performer and/or ensemble is found unprepared for a recital, the recital date must be rescheduled—that recital pending another, successful recital jury.**

Students are reminded that fifteen copies of recital programs must be filed with the receptionist in the School of Music's main office for permanent binding and archiving. This should be done before the day of the recital.

MASTERS THESIS includes

- A graduate composition recital, comprising a **minimum of 45 minutes** of original music **for a variety of media** (brass, winds, strings, percussion, voice, keyboard, electronic/computer-generated sound) and a variety of ensemble sizes. **With set/stage changes and intermission, the recital is not to exceed 70 minutes.** [See previous sections regarding Graduate Composition Recital and Recital Jury.]
- Theoretical-Analytical **essay of approximately 30 pages length on a topic chosen in consultation with, and approval by** thesis advisor. These essays generally focus on music written since 1945, although **other topics may be pursued upon approval in advance** by thesis advisor. [See note below for manuscript preparation guide.]
- A score which demonstrates the level of compositional accomplishment achieved during Residence at ECU; [See below for manuscript preparation guidelines.]
- A copy of the Graduate Composition Recital Program. [See below for manuscript preparation guidelines.]

NOTE: **For specific guidelines** relating to preparation and submission of thesis manuscripts, see the Graduate School's documentation here:

<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/gradschool/ETD-Frequently-Asked-Questions.cfm>

THEORETICAL-ANALYTICAL ESSAY

- **Thesis Advisor**

MM/Composition-candidates are encouraged to identify, during the first year of residence, a Theory, Composition & Musicology (TCM) Department faculty member to serve as **thesis advisor**. Students should then make a written request to that professor, asking that they take on the responsibilities of thesis advisor, noting the proposed semester of thesis defense.

- **Thesis Topic**

In close **consultation with the Thesis Advisor**, the candidate will identify and develop a topic for the written Theoretical-Analytical Thesis essay. The topic for this essay must be approved by the Thesis Advisor, and significant work on the essay should not begin until approval is received.

- **Thesis Committee**

With consultation of the Thesis Advisor, the student should then identify two other School of Music faculty to serve on the Thesis Committee; one of whom is not TCM Department faculty. The candidate should then make a written request to those professors, asking that they take on the responsibilities of thesis committee membership, noting the proposed semester of thesis defense.

The complete Thesis Committee should be established two semesters prior to expected defense.

THESIS DEFENSE

Candidates bear responsibility for consulting committee members in order to schedule a date and time for the Thesis Defense lies with the student MM-candidate.

Candidates should be aware of Graduate School submission deadlines, and should schedule the Thesis Defense with ample time available for post-defense corrections, gathering of signatures, and timely deposit of thesis.

NOTE: For specific guidelines relating to preparation and submission of theses manuscripts, see the Graduate School's documentation here: <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/gradschool/ETD.cfm>.

A completed and advisor-approved Theoretical-Analytical essay is to be submitted to the complete Thesis Committee at least 14 days prior to the Thesis Defense date. This allows ample time for committee members to read the document, and for the candidate to incorporate committee members' suggestions for improvement, prior to the defense.

The Thesis Defense, generally lasting 60-90 minutes, includes:

1. Brief oral presentation of the Theoretical-Analytical essay Thesis;
2. Faculty examination of the candidate's Theoretical-Analytical essay;
3. Faculty committee's examination addressing topics both broad (from courses taken throughout the M.M. course of study) and specific (relating to the literature, practice and style of composers central to the development of music of the past 50 years).