

Oklahoma Baptist University

**Division of Music**

**2025-2026**  
**Composition Student**  
**Handbook**

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## INTRODUCTION

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This handbook is designed for students majoring or minoring in music composition at Oklahoma Baptist University. It contains information about the degrees, the courses of study, expectations of the student, and other pertinent information. Music composition majors should make themselves conversant with the material found in this handbook.

Many undergraduate schools offer degrees in music composition. OBU has offered them since the 1960's and can boast many successful composers who still are honing their craft since those days. OBU composition graduates have gone on to successful careers in church music, teaching in undergraduate and graduate education, songwriting, film music, audio and video production, and many other related careers. Many others still compose and arrange music while primarily serving in other careers as diverse as business, education, ministry, arts management, and other fields. It is a degree that seeks to engage the student in *creativity* that can be used for life-long learning and practical use.

Successful students in these degrees have traditionally had:

- Earlier experiences with music composition and/or songwriting
- Basic piano skills
- A good understanding of music theory
- An interest in all the creative arts – visual art, theater, literature, music
- Facility with basic music technology such as music notation software

Some students are successful without some of these traits – it is dependent on the student to succeed and thrive through working hard to bridge the gaps in pre-college training and interests.

The three primary methods of composition study will consist of:

- *Imitation*
- *Assimilation*
- *Innovation*

These methods will be explained more as you study composition, but as an introduction here are some attributes of each:

- *Imitation*
  - You learned to speak by imitating the sounds you heard. Why should composition study be any different?
- *Assimilation*
  - You take all the various items you hear and see (and perhaps smell and touch) and transfer them into your available palette of materials you will use to compose music.
- *Innovation*
  - You then make new music – music no one else could make – by creatively using all the things you have learned through the first two processes.

Good luck!

## **Faculty**

The area of Music Theory and Composition houses the Composition Program at OBU. Cameron Duncan is the current coordinator of Composition Studies.

### **Cameron Duncan**

Visiting Professor of Theory and Composition

B.M., Oklahoma City University

M.M., Oklahoma City University

D.M.A, in progress, University of Oklahoma

Courses taught:

Applied Composition

Composition Seminar  
Music Composition and Instrumentation  
Theory

## THE DEGREE PROGRAM

OBU offers one undergraduate degree in music composition:

### **The Bachelor of Music in Composition**

This degree is, like all Bachelor of Music degrees, designed to prepare students for professional work in their field of study, as well as be a preparation for graduate study in music composition, music theory, or related fields. Emphasis in this degree is placed on preparing the student for a variety of style considerations, genres, and eventualities. This degree also is primarily for those studying more ‘classical’ composition, as the four years of study lead students to a senior recital that would be acceptable as an entrance recital for graduate study in composition.

The Composition degree at OBU is designed to be both a professional music degree and a deep dive into the creativity and flexibility of the Liberal Arts, a key component of education at OBU. As part of this, students complete a rigorous study of musicianship, music composition, and music performance, as well as embarking on a 9-hour Cognate area outside of music.

You may find the sequence sheet for the Composition Major using this link:

[Program: Music Composition, BM - Oklahoma Baptist University Academic Deans - Modern Campus Catalog™](#)

The requirements for the Composition Minor are at this link:

[Program: Music Composition Minor - Oklahoma Baptist University Academic Deans - Modern Campus Catalog™](#)

### **Requirements**

#### **Entrance into Programs**

All students wishing to be majors in music composition must audition for the composition faculty prior to entrance. An audition consists of at least two representative, original, and written compositions. Audio recordings of these compositions are not required, but certainly are suggested. In addition, student's ACT/SAT scores, piano skills, and prior music theory and performance experiences are considered.

### **Sophomore Barrier**

Students desiring to complete the BM Composition degree are expected to pass a Sophomore Barrier, which will occur at the end of the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) semester of music study. The Composition Jury for that semester will serve as the Sophomore Barrier. Students who do not pass the Barrier due to lack of compositional output, deficient quality of compositions, or inadequate submission of required compositions will have one additional semester to pass the Barrier. If the Barrier is not successfully completed by the end of the Junior-Fall semester, the student will be advised to complete work on a different degree.

### **Composition Seminar**

Students must enroll in and attend Composition Seminar each semester they are a composition major.

### **Composition Juries**

Students are required to submit completed compositions to the Theory and Composition faculty as a mock portfolio, along with any recordings, as part of a semester-ending jury. Students are required to take juries each of the semesters they are enrolled in Private Composition, with the exception of the semester in which they have their Senior Recital.

### **Junior Recital**

## Composition Major Junior Lecture Recital Proposal Draft

- For the Junior Recital, students should prepare a lecture recital detailing the compositional process tailored to a general audience.
- The 30-minute recital will be comprised of a performance of a single work in addition to the lecture components. The work should be no less than 5 minutes, and no longer than 15 minutes. It may be, but need not be multi-movement.
- The recital should include, but is not limited to:
  - o Description of the general compositional process. (5-10 minutes)
    - ♣ How did you gather ideas?
    - ♣ How did you decide what combinations of instruments or techniques to utilize?
    - ♣ Who do you know that plays the instrument(s) that aided your research? What pieces/techniques/repertoire gaps did they recommend?
    - ♣ Elaborate on choices of style, rhythm and meter, tonal plan, and form, and how these choices influence the composition.
    - ♣ Is there a pedagogical or educational application to this work?
    - ♣ What other influences guided your decisions?
  - o Description of the intended reception for the listener. (2-5 minutes)
    - ♣ Is there a narrative?
    - ♣ Is there a process to listen to?
    - ♣ Are there specific structural elements to attend to as musically meaningful or interesting?
    - ♣ Should the listener merely listen and form their own opinions?



- ♣ Are you interested in accepting feedback from the audience or questions following the performance? (Optional)
- o Description of the performer gathering/rehearsing process. (1-2 minutes)
  - ♣ How did you contact performers and negotiate rehearsals?
  - ♣ Will you conduct the ensemble?
  - ♣ Will you include dialogue with the performers in the recital concerning this part (or any relevant part) of the process? (Optional)
- o Description of the role of technology. (1-2 minutes)
  - ♣ Does the piece utilize technology beyond acoustic instruments?
  - ♣ Did you use notation software, DAW, etc.?
- o Description of the work's impact on your composition career moving forward. (2-5 minutes)
  - ♣ What new experiences have you gained from this process?
    - Detail experiences with any of the above parameters for the first time.
  - ♣ What plans do you have for this piece for the future?
    - Will you publish it?
    - Will there be other performances in the future?
    - Will you use similar features in future works?
  - ♣ Has this work and/or recital inspired new works or projects?

- o Anything else relevant to the performance or description of the work.
- Students should prepare a typed script for approval two weeks prior to the recital date.
- Students may utilize a presentation tool such as PowerPoint or the like to provide visual aids as necessary, but the presentation in its entirety must be pre-approved along with the typed script. (Optional)
  - o Slides may include research on instruments or ensembles, sketches of ideas, scores, accompanying media for the work, or anything else relevant to the piece's creation and performance.
- Students may distribute handouts and/or program notes to accompany the lecture/performance. These will also need to be submitted alongside the script. (Optional)
  - o Though handouts are optional, programs will be distributed with the standard program format for the School of Music. Program notes or handout notes can be integrated into the standard program.

## **Senior Recital**

The culmination of the program is the senior recital. Students in the program are expected to compose music, secure performers, create program notes, and otherwise manage the senior recital logistics. Students in the BM Composition degree are expected to present at least 30 minutes of music on the recital – apart from any other time (performers moving on and off, applause, stage movements, etc.). The student will work with the major professor to develop a varied program of representative works to present. The recital takes place in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> semester of study (4<sup>th</sup> academic year) – students should enroll in MUTC 4981 for the semester of their Senior Recital.

## **Recital Hearing**

Students in the BM Composition program will have a deadline of one month before their scheduled Senior Recital to submit names of performers, program information, and program notes to the Composition Studies coordinator. This submission will serve as a recital hearing for Composition. Any submission after 30 days prior to the Senior Recital will result in a delay of the Senior Recital.

## **Bachelor of Music Composition Program Academic Assessment Plan**

### **Program Mission Statement**

The mission of the Bachelor of Musical Composition is to equip and inspire artists to fulfill the Great Commission through music and a minor in another area. OBU's Music Composition will equip the student to become a skilled composer and musician while nurturing the artistic vision and passion for music.

### **Student Learning Objective #1: Foundational Knowledge**

Graduates will be able to apply and explain foundational aspects of music theory, aural skills and music history.

### **Measure #1: Final Exams Theory IV and Aural Skills IV**

#### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of students must receive an average of 70% on the finals of MUCL 2132 and MUCL 2142, Theory IV and Aural Skills IV.

#### **Where/When Assessed**

Theory IV and Aural Skills IV are the final courses in the sequence of foundational theory courses for all music students. Receiving a 70% average on the finals of the Theory IV and Aural Skills IV shows content knowledge and the ability to move forward successfully in Music History, Conducting

and Theory Seminar courses. Scores will be taken from Canvas.

## **Measure #2: Final Exams Music History**

### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of all students in Music History I, II, and III will receive a 70% average on the final exams in Music History I, II, and III.

### **Where/When Assessed**

Music History is required of all music majors. Receiving an average of a 70% on their finals shows content knowledge of music history from Medieval through modern music history and world musics. Scores will be taken from Canvas

## **Student Learning Objective #2: Performance Demonstration**

Students will demonstrate competency in performance in semester juries, sophomore barriers and required recitals

## **Measure #1: Jury**

### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of students will fulfill the requirements of the handbook for their instrument and degree.

### **Where/When Assessed**

Measured through Jury reports for each student as per the handbook for the student's degree and instrument.

## **Measure #2: Sophomore Barrier**

### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of students will pass the sophomore barrier on the first try

### **Where/When Assessed**

Measured through an evaluation process as per the requirements in the appropriate handbook for the student's degree and instrument

## **Measure #2: Sophomore Barrier**

### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of students will pass the sophomore barrier on the first try

### **Where/When Assessed**

Measured through an evaluation process as per the requirements in the appropriate handbook for the student's degree and instrument

## **Measure #3: Recital Hearing**

### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of students will pass the hearing on the first try. 100% of students must pass the hearing to be graduated.

### **Where/When Assessed**

Measured through an official recital hearing, a panel assessment which includes a written evaluation of the student's projected recital.

### **Measure #4: Ensemble Proficiency**

#### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of students will pass all ensembles they are enrolled in. Grades will be gathered from Canvas

### **Where/When Assessed**

Ensemble participation is a vital part of being a musician. Ensemble participation helps students to hone skills learned in private lessons and solo performances such as technical proficiency, performing music of various styles and genres, and interpreting the works of various composers. It encourages collaboration between performers within both the large and small ensemble to achieve a cohesive performance while allowing for the application of feedback given by the conductor and peers within the ensemble.

### **Student Learning Objective #3: Keyboard Competency**

Students will pass the piano proficiency required for their major as required in the keyboard handbook. Non-piano majors will take their proficiency in Class Piano IV. Piano

majors will be given their proficiencies in their juries finishing in their sophomore barrier.

### **Measure #1: Piano Proficiency**

#### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of students will pass the piano proficiency requirement as per the requirements listed in the piano handbook.

#### **Where/When Assessed**

Requirements for piano majors and for non-piano majors are listed in the

keyboard handbook. Non-piano majors will be given their proficiency during Piano Class IV. Piano majors will be given their proficiency in their juries leading up to their sophomore barrier.

### **Student Learning Objective #4: Collaborative Skills**

Graduates will have the collaborative experience of learning, rehearsing and performing music in an ensemble setting.

### **Measure #1: Ensemble Competency**

#### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of students will pass their large and/or small ensembles each semester with a 70% or higher.

#### **Where/When Assessed**



All students will have the collaborative experience of learning, rehearsing, and performing music in an ensemble setting. Grades will be pulled from Canvas

## **Measure #2: Conducting Competency**

### **Target/Requirement for Success**

70% of students will pass Conducting I and II a 70% or higher..

### **Where/When Assessed**

All students will have the collaborative experience of leading and rehearsing music in an ensemble setting.

## **Student Learning Objective #5: Instrumental Skills**

Graduates will have the collaborative experience of learning, rehearsing and performing music in an ensemble setting.

## **Measure #1: Instrumental Class Completion**

### **Target/Requirement for Success**

Students must accomplish a final grade of C or higher in the pedagogy and technique classes and in the classes in their chosen cognate track.

### **Where/When Assessed**

Students pass two pedagogy and technique classes discussing the functions of at least two instruments other than piano. Students must also

pass the cognate track: media, creative writing, or literature.

The final grade of the three courses will be determined at the end of the semester in which it was taken.

## **Health and Safety**

The Division of Music is committed to the health and safety of all musicians involved in its activities. Every effort will be made to protect the body, mind, and souls of the students, staff, faculty, and guests. This includes:

- Healthy approaches to private lessons and group rehearsals that include appropriate technical exercises and clear information regarding the safe utilization of the muscles and bones associated with specific music production.
- Facilities and equipment that are safe and instruction on proper handling of all equipment is taught in lessons and classes.
- Consideration of volume levels in practice and performance spaces. An additional resource concerning hearing health can be found at: <https://nafme.org/resource/health-in-music-education/>
- Rigorous academic work and musical expectations within an affirming environment.
- Genuine concern for the well-being of each individual rooted in the belief that all are created unique and loved by God.

While the Division of Music will strive to foster healthy practices and environments, the faculty and staff are not trained medical professionals. When appropriate, referrals will be made to physical and mental health help provided by the university. In special cases, music-related concerns may be referred to an off-campus medical specialist.

In the aftermath of the April 19, 2023 tornado, Raley Chapel has been closed to students and Ford Hall is checked regularly for health and safety issues. Classes and lessons are now being held in Ford Hall, University Baptist Church and other building on the OBU campus as needed. Students are encouraged to follow all signs concerning off-limits areas during reconstruction. The Division of Music is not responsible for injuries incurred when students disregard posted signage.

## **Hearing Health**

OBU is concerned for the hearing health of our students and encourages all students to visit these websites to learn more about being careful with their hearing health: <https://nafme.org/resource/health-in-music-education/> , [https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/5a\\_NASM\\_PAMA-Student\\_Information\\_Sheet-Standard.pdf](https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/5a_NASM_PAMA-Student_Information_Sheet-Standard.pdf)

## **Musculoskeletal Health**

OBU is concerned for the musculoskeletal health of our students as well and encourages all students to visit this websites to learn more about being careful with their health: [https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/5a\\_NASM\\_PAMA\\_NMH-Student\\_Information\\_Sheet-Standard-NMH\\_June-2014.pdf](https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/5a_NASM_PAMA_NMH-Student_Information_Sheet-Standard-NMH_June-2014.pdf)

## **Campus Health Care Services**

The campus nurse consults with students concerning health needs and practices. The nurse is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. The nurse advises students concerning health problems, assists in contacting a physician, and plans/promotes health education programs campus wide. The nurse does not prescribe medication and does not give injections/inoculations. The student is financially responsible for additional medical treatment. The nurse can be reached by phone at 405.585.5263 or in person in the Student Services office located on the first floor of the Geiger Center.

For your convenience, the following information is being provided:

- St. Anthony's Physicians, 3315 Kethley Blvd.  
405.273.5801
- St Anthony's Urgent Care, 3200 Medical Park  
Dr. 405.878.7160
- Xpress Wellness Urgent Care, 12 E. MacArthur St..  
405.275.1001

## **Counseling Services**

OBU's Kemp Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic provides high quality therapeutic services to individuals, couples, and families of the OBU community. Clinic services are provided by graduate-level therapists in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program with MFT faculty supervision. Our therapists work with you to encourage a strengths-based approach to healthy living that incorporates mind, body, faith, and community.

### **OBU Marriage and Family Clinic**

2206 N. Kickapoo

Shawnee, Oklahoma

(just south of the Art Building and Art Annex on campus)

405.585.4530

Dr. LaShane Hill, MFT Clinic Director, 405-585-5264