

Oklahoma Baptist University

**Division of Music**

**2024-2025**  
**Composition Student**  
**Handbook**

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*Copies of this Handbook and the Applied Area Handbooks as well as  
Division of Music Forms are available only online at:  
[www.okbu.edu/music](http://www.okbu.edu/music)*

## 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**

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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.

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### **Requirements**

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## **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, 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.



## **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 8<sup>th</sup> semester of study – 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.