



UCCS Music Program

Department of Visual & Performing Arts

Handbook for Music Students: Lessons, Juries, and Recitals

Lessons, Juries, and Recitals Handbook

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1. Introduction

This handbook is meant to be a reference for all students, whether new to the program or nearing graduation. Private lessons are a big part of the Music B.A. degree, and we want you to get the most out of the experience.

2. Degree Programs in Music

Here are links to the Music degree plans at UCCS:

- B.A. in Music: <https://advising.uccs.edu/majors-and-minors#music>
- B.I. in Music: <https://advising.uccs.edu/majors-and-minors#vapa>
- For older VAPA Music concentrations, please see your individual audit in Portal.
- Our many flavors of Music minors: <https://advising.uccs.edu/majors-and-minors#las-minors>

B.A. students need 6 credit hours of lessons. B.I. students are *not* required to take any lessons but may take them as electives. The only Music minors who need to enroll in lessons are the Creative Performance minors.

3. Private Lessons

Private lessons include 10 hours / 600 minutes of one-on-one instruction during the semester. This may be 10 meetings of one hour each, or an instructor may choose to divide up the time in a different way (e.g. 12 lessons of 50 minutes each). In lessons, you discuss your goals and interests, while your instructor will recommend a pathway for your practice and study, which will challenge you to grow in new ways in addition to refining what you know. Lessons are 1 credit hour per semester. Regular practice throughout each week is expected!

How do I enroll in lessons?

1. Decide which kind of lessons you want to take: on an instrument (we have a wide variety offered!), voice, or composition (specifically, it can be in music composition, music production, film scoring, or audio engineering).
2. Read about the instructors who offer those lessons. Find them on this page: <https://vapa.uccs.edu/academics/music/faculty>
3. Write to the faculty member you want to study with to see if they have room in their studio that semester. If you have scheduling restrictions, mention those up front.
4. Once you are confirmed with a teacher, you'll need to get a permission number to enroll. Write to the relevant faculty member. Include the number of lessons you have taken, your year, and what level you need to enroll in (1000-level, 2000-level, etc.)
 - If registering for an instrument, write to Colin McAllister to get a permission number to enroll.
 - If registering for voice lessons, write to Solveig Olsen.
 - If registering for composition lessons, complete this [form](#). Write to Yvonne Wu with any questions.
5. You will be sent a permission number to enroll, which you'll do manually on Portal.

How will I be graded in my lesson?

- 70% Grade given by instructor. (Each instructor will share in writing at the beginning of the semester how this portion of the grade will be determined.)
- 20% Composite Jury Grade
- 10% First Fridays attendance (First Fridays of each month)

4. Juries

What are juries for?

If you are taking private lessons, juries happen at the end of the semester. You perform 2-3 pieces that demonstrate the work you've been doing over the semester. A small group of faculty will hear you and share written feedback (and grades).

What should I expect to do at juries?

Aim to perform your best, showing your skills and artistry. This will be a private performance—only for the small group of faculty and not for other classmates or the public. While it's understandable that you'd be nervous performing in front of those grading you, remember that faculty are most interested in seeing your growth and commitment.

If I'm a composer/songwriter/producer/audio engineer, what do I present at Juries?

If a conventional "composer" or songwriter: prepare the performance of one new original piece, completed, and mostly written, in the given semester. You will be the "Producer" of the performance of your work. That means, you may perform it yourself, recruit other students to perform, or both. You will also schedule and manage rehearsals, give the score and parts to musicians in a timely fashion (if applicable), and communicate with musicians on scheduling and expectations for rehearsals and juries.

If you are an electronic musician: prepare to play (audio playback is fine) 2-3 pieces written/produced in the given semester, or work with your instructor to decide the appropriate amount of work that represents your semester. While you may not have scores, consider if there are any visuals or discussion of your process that you want to share with the jurors.

How will I be graded?

Vocal juries: Body alignment and breathing; vocal technique and tone quality; musicianship skills and accuracy; Diction; Interpretation, stage presence, and artistry. See Jury form below.

Instrumental juries: technique (e.g., body alignment, hand position, breathing, embouchure, intonation, tone quality); musicianship (rhythmic accuracy, articulation and phrasing); interpretation, stage presence and comportment; range of repertoire.

Composition juries: See Section 6.

When are juries held?

On the **Monday and Tuesday of Finals Week** each semester. You will be contacted to confirm your schedule. Please check your syllabi for all your courses and [this page](#) for the final exam schedules.

Jury Grading Forms

Students are responsible for preparing and bringing grading forms to their jury performances.

Please find and download the relevant form here (you must be signed into your UCCS account in order to view):

- [Vocal Jury Form](#)
- [Instrumental Jury Form](#)
- [Composition/Music Production/Film Scoring/Audio Engineering Jury Form](#). See Section 6 of this Handbook or details on the student-defined criteria.

5. Junior and Senior Recitals

Who has to give junior and senior recitals?

Music majors who are in the Music B.A. program and older VAPA degree tracks in performance and composition. Music B.I. students are *not* required to give recitals.

What are junior and senior recitals?

These are opportunities to showcase you as a musical artist. These concerts should demonstrate your technical skills, musicality and artistry, and musical personality. You are encouraged to curate programs that reflect your artistic vision. These can be “straightforward” recitals or they can be more ambitious productions.

When will I do my recitals?

Counting backwards: Your senior recital will take place in your last semester, just before you graduate. Your junior recital should be one year before that. For example: Junior Recital in Spring 2026; Senior Recital in Spring 2027.

What do I enroll in when I give a recital?

Enroll in lessons like you normally would! 3000-level lessons go with junior recitals, and 4000-level for senior recitals. Your lessons, under the careful guidance of your instructor(s), provide the structured space in which you prepare for the recital.

In a semester when you give a recital, you do not need to also perform in the juries that semester. Composition students, however, will attend composition juries for the Discussion portion only (not the showcase). See section 6 on composition juries/recitals.

What are the expectations for the recitals?

Recital Length

Junior recitals should include 25-30 minutes of music. For composition students featuring all original work, it can be 20-25 minutes. Total running time (including stage changes, bows) should not exceed 30 minutes.

Senior recitals should include about 50-55 minutes of music. For composition students featuring all original work, it can be 45-50 minutes. Total running time (including stage changes, bows) not exceed 60 minutes, as we encourage students to focus on and polish the content that they choose.

Curating the Recital Program

In terms of what to include on your recital program, this will vary by area, and you should consult with your instructor(s) on the range and standards that are most appropriate for your skill and experience level.

Top priorities across all areas:

- Show **breadth and versatility** in your range of skills. Try to avoid working only within a single style of music, as we encourage all students to develop artistic agility. If you do work within a

single genre (e.g., as composer or music producers), then be sure to include different mediums, a range of tools, technologies, instrumentation, etc.

- Choose a **challenging** but achievable level. The recital is your chance to stretch yourself. Working closely with your primary lessons instructor, you should choose repertoire/projects that are new and challenge you in new directions. At the same time, build on the foundation that you have, and make the program achievable within the time frame you have.

Below are some rules of thumb:

Voice Recitals: Ideally, the repertoire that includes at least 3 languages and multiple musical styles (e.g., classical arias in French and Italian, plus musicals, and a rock song.)

Instrumental Recitals: a variety of styles and chronological periods. Most material should be performed from memory.

Composition Recitals: see Section 6 on Composition below.

Written Program and Program Notes

You are expected to write and create your own written program, which should include all the pieces performed, musicians performing, **program notes**, and other concert information.

Program notes for vocalists and instrumentalists should include relevant information about the piece, history, musical style, and/or composer. Consider yourself like a museum curator—what is interesting about the context around the piece?—but connect that with your perspective as the performing artist—how do this inform your interpretation? Which features of the piece have engaged you the most and why? As a listener, what do you find most intriguing? These are some possible paths to take when writing.

See this [sample program](#). You should be able to download it and use it as a template.

Can I play multiple instruments on my recital?

Yes! You can do a “hybrid” recital, performing multiple instruments or combining performance with composition. We encourage you to represent yourself as fully as possible. Be mindful, though, of how you prioritize your time and energies for the recital program and over your semesters and years at UCCS. Work closely with your instructors and music advisors on how to balance your practices, and avoid spreading yourself too thin.

How do I schedule my recital?

Start planning early! Work with Co-Director **Solveig Olsen** to book your date—the earlier the better, like the semester before! **The deadline to book your recital is the second Friday of the semester in which it will take place** (though this is not ideal; better to plan earlier!).

Note that your recital date will be shared with other students: possibly 3 junior recitals on a night, or 2 senior recitals. You do not need to coordinate with the other students aside from deciding your order and making concert posters together.

Recital Checklist

Scheduling:

- If you need to **schedule** a recital or concert, contact Solveig Olsen (solsen@uccs.edu) to schedule the venue and date at the Ent Center. Booking early is always advised.

Posters

- If you would like posters made for your concert, please contact work-study student Mekdes Moudjeh (mmoudjeh@uccs.edu) no later than 2 weeks prior to your concert. Please include ALL information you would like on the poster including title, location, times, photos, etc. After receiving your information, Mekdes will send you a mock-up for printing approval. Recital posters will be created on 8 x 11 paper unless otherwise requested. Ensemble and professional concert posters will be 11 x 17.
- Posters will be posted around the Ent Center and throughout main campus.

Programs:

- See this [sample program](#). You should be able to download it and use it as a template.
- Programs are made by our work-study Mekdes Moudjeh (mmoudjeh@uccs.edu). Please send programs fully formatted as you would like them to appear in printing.
- Programs should include your list of pieces, composer birth and death dates, program notes (to be discussed with and approved by your individual instructor), and any acknowledgments you would like to make or photos you would like to include. Singers may include translations with their programs or bring them to their recitals separately.
- Programs may have color covers, but all subsequent pages should be black and white. (Please avoid colored backgrounds on all pages.)
- Mekdes will print roughly 20-30 programs per event unless more are requested by the performer or ensemble faculty member. Most recitals have under thirty attendees, while ensemble performances and larger concerts can have up to 200. Mekdes will also create individual QR codes for each performance, so audience members can access the program electronically as well.
- Please submit programs as early as you are able, preferably no later than 2 weeks prior to your recital.

Technical Needs:

- The Ent Center staff handles all of your technical needs (pianos, keyboards, mics, etc.) There is a QR Code on the music bulletin board located in the music hallway. Scan this QR Code and it will lead you to an online form to fill out your needs. The Ent Center Staff prefers this to be in at least 2 weeks before your concert date but will happily accept your submission earlier.

Recordings

- Video recordings and editing are done by a work-study student. These video recordings are mandatory, and unless otherwise requested, will be posted on the UCCS Music YouTube page.
- Audio recordings can be made by Ent Center staff by bringing a thumb drive to your concert and giving it to one of the staff running the audio and light boards.

Advertising

- Concerts booked prior to the start of the semester will be posted on the VAPA Website and Ent Center calendar at the start of the semester. Any late booking or additional performances will be posted as scheduled.

Recital Grading Forms

Students are responsible for preparing and bringing grading forms to their recitals.

Please find the relevant form here:

- Vocal: Please ask Solveig Olsen for details
- Instrumental: Please ask Colin McAllister for details
- Composition/Music Production/Film Scoring/Audio Engineering. See Section 6 of this Handbook or details on the student-defined criteria.
 - [junior recital form](#)
 - [senior recital form](#)

6. Composition Students: Preparing for Juries and Recitals

(for composers/songwriters/producers/film scorers/audio engineers)

Why do composers get their own section in this handbook? Composition students have a unique opportunity to contribute to the evaluation process of the juries and recitals. (Other students don't have this!)

Composition Jury Showcase and Discussion

WHAT:

- **Jury Showcase:** Student composers arrange for a live performance of a new, original piece completed that semester. Showcases include the performances of 3-5 students, arranged like a mini-concert, open to students and faculty.
- **Jury Discussion:** The showcase is followed immediately by discussion between each composer and a small group of Music faculty.

WHO:

- **If you are not giving a recital in a given semester**, you will participate in the “regular” jury process: showcase and discussion.
- **If you are giving a junior or senior recital in the semester**, you do *NOT* need to have a piece performed on the jury showcase, but you will be part of the jury discussion, when we reflect together on your recital as a whole.

WHEN: Composition Juries take place usually on the **Tuesday of Finals Week**. Check your syllabi and the [final exam schedule](#) for conflicts.

HOW: **A major component of this process is each student's development and articulation of their OWN artistic intentions and goals.** Instead of the jurors imposing their own musical/compositional values, each student has the opportunity to share the processes, goals, and experiences that most interest them and inform their work. Students convey this in written statements in about a page or less. They also have the opportunity to preface the performance orally. Clear communication of artistic intentions makes it possible for jurors to evaluate the work on the students' terms while still giving feedback in areas that may need development.

WHY:

- Taking musical ideas from conception to realization provides invaluable and necessary experience for composition students of all styles.
- The articulation of artistic vision is essential for the professional development of all creative people. This is directly useful in grant-writing, networking, marketing, and career development.

Writing your Own Grading Criteria

Discuss with your lessons instructor the features that are most important in both your musical work and in your creative process. Please indicate about **4 to 6 parameters with which you'd like to be evaluated**. Which areas are most relevant to your artistic output? Below are some examples. Feel free to propose other parameters.

Consider carefully what each parameter means for you. **Add one or two sentences that elaborate on each chosen parameter**. Examples:

- “Songwriting: Lyrics—Do the lyrics effectively tell a story and are the moods effectively supported by the musical accompaniment?”
- “Composition: Orchestration—Does the orchestration (instrumentation, instrumental techniques, texture) contribute color and variation and speak to the overall form of the piece in a meaningful way?”

Below are samples. They are not all relevant to all artists!

1. Composition/Songwriting: Originality and/or Effectiveness of Form
2. Composition/Songwriting: Instrumentation/Orchestration
3. Composition/Songwriting: Effectiveness of Harmonic Language
4. Composition/Songwriting: Effectiveness of Melodic Language
5. Composition/Songwriting: Originality/Artistic Voice/Experimentation
6. Composition/Songwriting: Lyrics
7. Notation/Score: Professionalism and Clarity
8. Notation/Score: Creativity and Artistry
9. Notation/Score: Efficacy of Communication
10. Film Scoring: Efficacy in Storytelling, Character-Building, Mood
11. Film Scoring: Image-Sound Relationship
12. Composition/Songwriting/Film-Scoring: Humor
13. Production: Performance quality
14. Production: Recording quality
15. Production: Arrangement and artistic refinement
16. Production: Mixing quality
17. Program Notes: Clarity of artistic intention and/or process.
18. Songwriting/Performance: Performance and Persona
19. Live Performance: Quality of performance
20. Live Performance: Professionalism and Stage Presence
21. Live Performance: Originality/Experimentation/Uniqueness of Experience
22. Live Performance: Audience Engagement
23. Staging/Interdisciplinary Work: Interdisciplinary Expression
24. Staging/Interdisciplinary Work: Effective Use of Lighting, Set, Staging
25. Collaboration: Depth of Creative Exchange
26. Collaboration: Professionalism & Quality of Engagement with Peers

Deadline for Draft of Grading Criteria: Third Friday of the semester. Draft your grading criteria, and add it to the relevant grading form ([jury form](#), [junior recital form](#), [senior recital form](#)). Prof. Wu will give

feedback and may ask for multiple drafts as you refine your ideas and wording. Considering how you want others to view you is complex! Be patient through this process, and discuss with your instructor.

Timeline and Checklist for Composition Juries/Recitals

1. **Third Friday of the semester:** Draft of relevant grading form ([jury](#), [junior recital](#), [senior recital](#)).
2. **THREE weeks** before jury/recital date: **Completed score and parts** due to musicians. If no score is used, then share demo audio with parts.
3. **TWO weeks** before jury/recital date: **Written components** due to Yvonne Wu. To submit, copy and paste your **Program Note and Artist Statement** directly onto [this document](#).
 - a. A **Program Note(s)** for the jury piece or for *all pieces* on your recital. One solid paragraph for each piece, about **100-200 words**. This is a note about your piece that will be shared with the audience at the performance. It also will help jurors understand your intentions for the piece. Use your answers to the following questions to help you craft your paragraph.
 - i. What were your main artistic goals in the piece and how did you work towards that? Be specific about what you put into the music or the compositional process in relation to these goals.
 - ii. Are there aspects of the compositional process that you want listeners to know? Feel free to be personal, anecdotal, or humorous if it feels relevant and desirable.
 - iii. Is there anything else you want listeners to know? Or ways you want to guide their listening?
 - b. **Written Artist Statement.** Note that the jurors will use the Artist Statement to better understand your vision, process, and priorities. The more clarity you have, the more effectively they can evaluate your work on your terms. About **200-300 words**. Weave the following elements into a cohesive paragraph, written in a formal style. Use the prompts below as a guide; you choose how much or little you address each. For additional guidance and examples, see [this document](#).
 - i. Your current artistic interests: what you are doing and why.
 - ii. Your primary artistic and technical goals (of this semester)
 - iii. Briefly, how your current goals are contextualized by earlier stages in your development.
 - iv. What your compositional process has been like this semester (how you worked) and if there were any surprises or challenges.
 - v. What aspect of your compositional work you are most proud of this semester.
 - vi. What areas you would like to continue developing.
 - c. **Juries Evaluation Criteria.** Your finalized list of 4 to 6 criteria for evaluation .
 - i. Bullet point about 4-5 parameters and give a brief description of each.
 - ii. In your brief explanation of each criterion, be specific about what you want jurors to look for. Remember that this is your opportunity to express *what YOU care about* in your music.
 - iii. Submit your finalized grading form to the indicated folder.
4. **Bring to Juries:** Scores

- a. Please bring 2 or 3 physical copies of your scores to the jury discussion.
- b. Also add pdfs of your scores to this folder: [All Composition Jury and Recital Materials 2023-24](#)
- c. Be sure that all files are titled **YourName_TitleOfPiece.pdf**