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CVPA School of Music Doctoral Handbook

Please note that the information in this handbook is meant as a guide and does not replace the policies and procedures stated in the University Catalog (catalog.gmu.edu)

Placement Examinations

Prior to the beginning of the first semester of doctoral studies, students must complete placement examinations in music theory, music history, and musicianship (including aural skills and keyboard skills). Students who complete an MM degree at the George Mason University School of Music and who are immediately accepted—in their first semester after completion of their previous degree—to a DMA or PhD program may be exempt from the diagnostic exams. Dates for all placement exams are posted on the music website and music calendar of events at least one semester ahead of time and generally take place two weeks prior to the start of classes in fall and spring semesters.

Exams are evaluated by the musicology, music theory, and keyboard faculty. All students are allowed one opportunity to take the placement exams; positive scores on these exams may reduce or eliminate prerequisites for courses in music history and music theory. Recitals can be scheduled only after completion of any necessary prerequisites in music theory, music history, and musicianship. If remedial coursework is needed, it must be completed in the earliest possible semester these courses are offered (usually in the first semester of doctoral study, always within the first year of doctoral study). Credit for review courses will not be applied toward the degree. *Students who do not take diagnostic exams prior to the start of their first semester must enroll in the appropriate remedial course(s) (Graduate History Review I or II, Analytical Techniques, Graduate Keyboard Review, Aural Skills II).*

Advising

Students must schedule an advising appointment with the Director of Graduate Studies before registering for courses in each semester that they are enrolled for graduate study. Doctoral Students must come prepared for advising appointments by bringing an updated program of study and having reviewed the course offerings in the upcoming semester. Please contact Dr. Lisa Billingham at lbillin1@gmu.edu for an appointment.

Orientation and CVPA 600

The CVPA holds a Graduate Orientation prior to the first week of classes in the fall and spring semesters. This session partially fulfills the CVPA 600 0-credit course requirement, which must be met within the first year of graduate study.

An orientation for doctoral students with teaching positions is held two weeks prior to the start of classes in the fall and spring semesters. Contact the Director of Graduate Studies (lbillin1@gmu.edu) for more specific information.

Scholarships and Teaching Assistantships

Students with scholarship or teaching assistantship support are responsible for meeting the terms of their Acceptance Agreement—including enrollment at the appropriate credit-hour load and any other stipulations—and must renew their support each spring following initial acceptance of the award. Students will be notified of the renewal requirement as appropriate.

Grade Policy

Doctoral students must maintain a minimum of 3.00 GPA in courses presented on the degree plan, which may include no more than 6 credits with a grade of C. The GPA calculation excludes all transfer courses and Mason extended studies or non-degree credits not formally approved for the degree. See Graduate Academic Standing information in the course catalog for more information:

<http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=25&navoid=4848#gradacademicstanding>).

Language Requirements

Reading proficiency is required in a language appropriate to the student's major area of study. Normally, this will be German, French, or Italian. Alternate languages for DMA students will be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Alternatively, PhD students may choose to demonstrate proficiency interpreting statistical findings in quantitative-based educational research.

The Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Committee will determine the appropriate area of study. Reading proficiency may be accomplished by completing a reading examination provided by the music faculty. The reading examination will normally consist of translation (with dictionary) of appropriate technical passages relevant to the student's area of study within a two-hour period. The language reading proficiency **should be completed in the first year of coursework** of courses at the 600 level or above. Language exams will be offered at the beginning of each semester and the dates will be posted on the music website and music calendar of events. Dr. Gregory Robinson (grobins8@gmu.edu) is in charge of these examinations and will schedule these examinations each year.

Graduate Committee

The Graduate Committee will evaluate the progress of the student annually. In preparation for this evaluation, students must submit an updated program of study to the senior academic advisor (mwildman@gmu.edu) by April 1 of each academic year. Students who are in the dissertation phase must submit a dissertation progress report in lieu of the program of study. Continuation in the program is subject to the endorsement of this group. A report will be filed in the respective student's file and a student will receive an electronic copy of the evaluation.

Comprehensive Exams

After the completion of required courses (excluding dissertation credits) or during the semester when completion of those courses is anticipated, the student will take comprehensive examinations. The comprehensive exams consist of three 3-hour exams in music history, music theory, and the concentration and require both a breadth and depth of knowledge in each area. A PhD student will have two 3-hour sections to complete in the area of music education as a part of the concentration, for a total 12 hours of examination.

The written exams are followed by a one-hour oral exam to clarify issues included in the written exams. The oral exam takes place in front of a faculty panel, including, but not limited to, one faculty member from each of the three content areas (music history, music theory, the concentration). If a student does not pass any portion of the comprehensive exam, he/she must retake the given portion the next semester comprehensive exams are offered. If a student does not pass the comprehensive exams a second time, they will be terminated from the program.

Time Limit

For both full-time and part-time students enrolled in doctoral programs, the total time to degree will not exceed nine (9) calendar years from the time of first enrollment as a doctoral student. Doctoral students are expected to progress steadily toward their degree and to advance to candidacy within no more than six (6) years.

Students who do not meet published time limits because of compelling circumstances may petition their dean for a single extension of one calendar year at any point during their program. If such an extension is granted, the total time limit for completion of the degree will not exceed ten (10) years. Reenrollment following an absence from Mason does not change the student's time limit, which is based on the date of initial admission. Failure to meet the time limits or to secure approval of an extension request may result in termination from the program. Faculty and students share in the responsibility to progress toward completion of degree requirements, and faculty must be actively involved in helping students conform to the nine-year time limit.

Non-immigrant students in F-1 or J-1 status are further limited by the regulations governing their stay in the United States. The University issues visa documents (forms I-20 and DS-2019) that indicate the estimated length of the student's academic program. Students who need extensions beyond the initial period of stay must request them through the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS). Documentation of the compelling circumstances necessitating the extension request is required by federal regulations. For further information, please consult with an advisor in OIPS.

The Dissertation

The dissertation is the culmination of a student's doctoral program of study and must contribute new knowledge or a reinterpretation of existing knowledge to the area being investigated. To this end, dissertations can be theoretical in nature, employing rigorous research techniques to the investigation of questions focusing on performance or pedagogy within the discipline.

The dissertation is completed in two steps:

MUSI 998: Doctoral Dissertation Proposal

MUSI 999: Doctoral Dissertation

Regardless of the type of approach used, all dissertations must meet the following criteria:

- focus on clearly articulated questions related to the discipline;
- employ an appropriate, replicable methodology for investigating these questions;
- build upon prior work in the profession or discipline, contributing new insights or knowledge;
- result in a written report that clearly communicates the research problem, the methodology employed, the findings, and the ways in which the study contributes new insights or knowledge; and
- be defensible as scholarly contributions, with well-founded arguments justifying the need for the study, the appropriateness of the methodology employed, and the soundness of the study findings.

The nature of the dissertation is a matter to be agreed upon between the student and the chair of the dissertation committee overseeing and evaluating the study.

MUSI 998: Dissertation Proposal

In order to register for MUSI 998: Dissertation Proposal, students must complete:

- language exam, passed;
- all course work (or be in the final semester of coursework);
- comprehensive exams, passed (or be scheduled to take comprehensive exams at the conclusion of the semester in which dissertation proposal is taken);
- signed transfer of credits form (GMU extended studies courses included), if applicable;
- securing a chairperson to direct the proposal and dissertation.

Registration for MUSI 998/Proposal (3 credits): Students must register for MUSI 998 with their dissertation chairs, who will provide them with the CRN code that is required for registration. Students email the professor for the CRN, and the professor responds by email. (gmu.edu, email system only)

Writing the Proposal: Under the guidance of the Chair, the student will prepare a written proposal detailing the nature of the dissertation and specifying how it will make a contribution to theory and/or practice. The student should have a completed, signed proposal in one academic year from the first 998 registration date. This achievement facilitates timely research and writing progress. The adopted style guide for the dissertation is Turabian for the DMA and APA for the Ph.D in Music Education.

The following outline is suggested as the basic format of the DMA proposal:

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Background, literature review
- Statement of the problem
- Hypotheses and research questions, where appropriate
- Research design and methodology
- Implications for theory or practice
- Limitations
- Bibliography

The following outline is suggested as the basic format of the Ph.D. proposal:

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- Chapter One
 - Statement of the problem
 - Need for the study
 - Hypotheses and research questions
- Chapter Two
 - Review of Literature
- Chapter Three
 - Method
 - Participants
 - Procedure
 - Data Analysis
- References

Submission to Dissertation Committee: The student submits a copy of the proposal to the committee chair for approval and for distribution to the committee members. Once the chair agrees, the student distributes the dissertation proposal to the committee members for review. Students must have their proposal prepared and ready for defense *no later than* November 1 for the fall semester and no later than April 1 for the spring semester in

order for a defense to be scheduled. A completed proposal will be turned in to the Director of Graduate Studies for review on the deadlines stated above.

Proposal Defense Meeting: Students at the proposal stage must obtain approval from their chair to organize a meeting of all committee members to discuss the proposal and its components; revise the proposal according to the recommendations of the dissertation chair and committee for approval; print 2 copies of the proposal signature sheet (located at the end of this document) and bring them to the overview meeting for committee signatures. The committee has three options: to accept the proposal as is; to accept the proposal with modifications; or to require the student to rewrite the proposal and defend the revised proposal at a later date (i.e. in the following semester or summer term). The student will also be asked to orally defend the proposal before the committee. Three attempts to defend the proposal are permitted. If the proposal is rejected for a third time, the student will be ineligible to continue with the program. ***The proposal overview meeting should take place no later than two weeks prior to the end of the semester in the semester of enrollment in MUSI 998.***

Dissertation Committee

The dissertation will be guided by the Dissertation Committee consisting of at least three members of the music faculty. For students in the Ph.D., one of the committee members must be from the College of Education and Human Development. The Director of Graduate Studies of the School of Music may be part of the committee; if not, (s)he will serve ex-officio. All Dissertation Committee members must have graduate faculty status, as approved by the university provost. The Director of Graduate Studies is available for consultation in selection of the best committee, with the advisement of the Graduate Committee.

Performance, conducting and composition recitals are also subject to the approval of the Dissertation Committee. **Only a graduate faculty member with a full-time appointment at George Mason University may serve as dissertation chair.** Other Mason faculty, as well as individuals from outside the university, may be appointed as additional members to the committee. Such appointments are made where the additional member's expertise and contribution add value to the dissertation, but appointment does not require graduate faculty status.

Graduate faculty members from the School of Music that typically serve as chairs include: Dr. Lisa Billingham, Dr. Stanley Engebretson, Dr. Emily Green, Dr. Jesse Guessford, Dr. Dennis Layendecker, Dr. Linda Monson, Dr. Michael Nickens, Dr. Tom Owens, Dr. Darden Purcell, Dr. Gregory Robinson, Dr. Glenn Smith, Dr. Brian Wuttke. Additional faculty from full-time and adjunct status may be invited to join dissertation committees.

Student-initiated changes in the composition of the dissertation committee may occur only with the approval of the dean or director of the school, college, or institute or its

designee in consultation with the committee. Faculty may resign from a dissertation committee with appropriate notice by submitting a written resignation.

Proposal Completion and Advancement to Candidacy/Registration for MUSI 999: Dissertation

Advancement to Candidacy: Students who plan to Advance to Candidacy and register for MUSI 999 (min. 3 credits), must complete the following satisfactorily:

- All course work
- Language exam, passed
- Comprehensive exams, passed
- Approved proposal

Paperwork to be submitted to the Program Coordinator and to the Associate Dean for review and audit include the following:

- original proposal signature sheets;
- copy of GMU unofficial transcript;
- new, clean program of study that matches the GMU transcript **exactly**;

The Program Coordinator completes the Advancement to Candidacy Form (Registrar's website) signed by the Director of Graduate Studies of the School of Music and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies of CVPA:

<http://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/DAC.pdf>

Dissertation Registration

Only students who have had their dissertation proposal approved by their committees are eligible to register for 999. A copy of the signed proposal sheet should be sent by the department/program to the CVPA Office of Graduate Studies/Academic Affairs for inclusion in the student's file. The 999 code will not be released to a student until this document has been received with all necessary approvals of faculty.

All doctoral students send their 999 code requests to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies (**lkahn2@gmu.edu**); the email includes the following:

1. Student's full name
2. Student's G number
3. Discipline of the student
4. The name of the student's dissertation chair
5. The number of 999 credits for which the student intends to register*

**Students should be familiar with the dissertation policies listed in the university catalog.*

Students submit the request using their official George Mason e-mail address; no codes will be given out over the phone. Registration codes cannot be sent to a non-George Mason e-mail address. Requests for 999 codes should be made *at least* one week prior to the first day of classes each semester. Students registering for 999 on or after the first day of classes may be subject to a non-refundable late registration fee of up to \$125. Students are also responsible for making timely payment of tuition and fees.

Continuous Registration: Once enrolled in 999, students must maintain continuous registration in 999 each semester until graduation, excluding summers. Students who defend in the summer must be registered for at least 1 credit of 999 in the summer. Individual doctoral programs may require continuous registration beginning with 998. Graduation candidates who miss the library deadline for dissertation submission, but do submit officially before the next semester begins, do not have to register for 999 in that next semester, but must stay active to graduate.

It is the student's responsibility to complete registration for dissertation proposal (998) or research (999) prior to the first day of classes for the semester. If this date is missed, students must still enroll in these courses via Add or Late Schedule Adjustment procedures and are subject to Late Registration fees. Failing to register on time in a particular semester does not alter the requirement for continuous registration in 999.

Registering for One-Credit: Students working on dissertation research (999) must register for a minimum of 3 credits of 999 per semester (excluding summers) until they have completed the minimum number of credits of 998 and 999 required by the university and their degree program. Then, they must register for 1 credit of 999 until the dissertation is complete and has been officially submitted to the library.

PLEASE NOTE: Even though a student may have met the required dissertation hours as specified in the Program of Study, (s)he must nonetheless maintain continuous registration in 999 until final copies of the dissertation have been submitted for transmittal to the library. *In order to avoid having to register for additional dissertation credits beyond the required number, students should reserve at least 1 credit of 999 for the semester in which they plan to graduate.*

Dissertation Grading: Final grading for the dissertation is "S" (Satisfactory). A grade of "IP" (In Progress) is assigned each semester until the dissertation has been approved and submitted to the College of Visual and Performing Arts. At that time the grade for all semesters is changed to "S."

Additional Dissertation Requirements (DMA candidates only)

DMA Composition: A culminating, large-scale composition, performance encouraged but not required; One additional lecture (30 minutes) related to the dissertation topic. N.B. The dissertation is an independent research document and may or may not be directly related to the composition. Please consult the chair of your committee from the composition faculty to receive further direction regarding the content of the lecture recital.

DMA Conducting and DMA Performance: In addition to the two recitals completed during doctoral coursework, one additional lecture recital must be completed as part of the MUSI 999 credits: (min. 60 minutes) related to the dissertation topic. Lessons taken in preparation for dissertation recitals will be part of the MUSI 999 credits; no separate applied lesson registration is required.

Final Defense and Graduation

When all degree requirements have been satisfied, including completion of the doctoral dissertation, the doctoral candidate may request a doctoral defense. Approval for the defense must be obtained from the Dissertation Committee, the director of graduate studies and the director of the School of Music, and the dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. Notice of a defense must be circulated to the university community two weeks before the defense date.

All relevant rules regarding schedule, fees, and other matters as described in the catalog must be followed. All copies of the dissertation materials and fees must be paid before the doctoral degree is awarded.

Dissertation Timeline

A complete draft of the dissertation must be submitted to the dissertation chair at the *beginning* of the semester in which a student plans to graduate. In a fall semester this should be no later than **September 15**; in a spring semester no later than **February 15**. Once the complete draft is approved by the dissertation chair, it is distributed to the rest of the dissertation committee. Each committee member must give his/her approval for the dissertation to move to the next stage, Dissertation Defense (see above). It is recommended to allow committee members 5 weeks to review and comment on completed dissertation drafts. The dissertation defense should be *scheduled and completed* by November 15 for a fall graduation and April 15 for a spring graduation.

University Dissertation and Thesis Services

University Dissertation and Thesis Services (UDTS) facilitates completion and submission of dissertations, theses, and graduate-level projects. The program assists Mason students in all stages of production. The UDTS web site <http://library.gmu.edu/udts>, provides students with useful tools, including downloadable templates of necessary elements, forms required for the submission process, and links to related web sites. Students completing a thesis or dissertation are required to complete a format review. UDTS is located in Fenwick Library, Special Collections and Archives, Wing 2C. For more information, contact the university dissertation and thesis coordinator at 703-993-2222 or by e-mail at udts@gmu.edu. If you would like to meet with someone from UDTS to discuss any questions, concerns, or issues you may have about the process you must complete in order to graduate, you can

set up an appointment through the following calendar site: <http://gmu.libcal.com/appointment/6908>.

This site will prompt you to select an available date and time for a consultation.

Studies Involving Human Subjects

Any dissertation that involves human subjects as a component of the study must submit an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This includes, but is not limited to: recording vital signs, biofeedback, surveys, interviews (live, phone, email, and/or written correspondence), and video and/or audio recording of subjects. Greater details pertaining to studies involving human subjects is available through the [Office of Research Integrity and Assurance \(ORIA\)](#)

Prior to beginning any work involving human subjects, the candidate must obtain CITI certification. In addition, the candidate must also report to a faculty member who is CITI certified. Ideally this is the chair of the committee. Instructions and access to training is accessed is available through the ORIA website: [Human Subjects Training](#).

Once CITI certification in the social sciences has been attained, the candidate must submit a detailed application outlining their proposal and describing the method. All applications are submitted through the online protocol management system at IRB.net. Details regarding this process are available through the ORIA website at: [Getting Started with IRB.net](#)

Since working with human subjects requires prior approval from the university, it is a very time consuming process and therefore, candidates must plan all activities well in advance of the study. For further information regarding these processes please contact Dr. Brian Wuttke (bwuttke@gmu.edu), the Director of Music Education who has extensive experience with mentoring students in this process.

CVPA Dissertation Chair and Committee Responsibilities

The entire dissertation committee works in concert with the student and the program to determine if the doctoral candidate's dissertation demonstrates original research that contributes new knowledge or a reinterpretation of existing knowledge to the area of investigation.

Chair: The dissertation chair serves as the major professor to the doctoral candidate as he/she prepares this final requirement. Listed below are the responsibilities of the **Dissertation Chair**, all other University requirements apply:

For the Proposal (MUSI 998):

- Consult and meet with the student on a regular basis (approximately once a month);
- Advise in topic selection, appropriateness, and academic value;

- Guide the student in the proposal writing process: for example, understanding the need for a clearly defined problem statement, precise research questions, viable methodology, focused literature review, and thorough bibliography;
- Determine if the data-gathering methods are valid and reliable;
- Recommend that the student contact GMU's Human Subjects Department if surveys, interviews, or similar methods are to be used or altered;
- Encourage each committee member to participate in discussions about creating and improving the proposal;
- Call at least one meeting of the entire committee to discuss and approve the proposal;
- Remain in contact with Graduate Studies Office.

For the Dissertation (MUSI 999):

- Provide guidance and evaluation during the research and writing stages;
- Meet with the student on a regular basis, at least once a month is preferred;
- Read and review dissertation drafts in a timely manner;
- Offer substantive and concise recommendations for revisions;
- Contact committee members to update them briefly on the student's progress;
- Encourage timely disbursement of dissertation material to committee members as the candidate completes chapters
- Make qualitative judgments about the candidate's written work: substance, style, grammar, design, etc.;
- Guide the student in the writing process: for example, understanding the need for a clearly defined problem statement, precise research questions, viable approach to the methodology, focused literature review, and thorough bibliography in the proper format for the degree program;
- Serve as a mentor and consultant when the student appears discouraged;
- Approve the final draft for the dissertation defense;
- Notify the Director of Graduate Studies, Director of the School and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies that the student is ready to defend the dissertation;
- Attend and supervise the dissertation defense;
- Follow all CVPA and University dissertation procedures;
- Attend Convocation and Graduation Ceremony as possible for hooding the candidate. Should the chair be unable to attend, a substitute for the ceremony should be arranged.

Dissertation Committee Members Responsibilities:

The dissertation committee works with the chair to provide advice and consultation to the candidate throughout the processes of research and writing. The dissertation committee members should inform the candidate about any serious criticisms of the written text before the defense is scheduled. Committee members are expected to return edits of dissertation chapters in a timely fashion. CVPA encourages all defenses to be collegial conversations about the student's

contributions to scholarship in the discipline, the scholarly implications of these contributions, and the future implications of the work.

For the Proposal (MUSI 998)

- Meet with the student regularly during the semester;
- Advise in topic selection, appropriateness, and academic value;
- Offer expertise in the professor's area of study;
- Read and review the proposal in a timely manner;
- Discuss any recommendations for revision with the chair and the student;
- Attend a proposal discussion meeting with the student and entire committee;
- Support the student in scheduling a timely defense of the proposal;
- Sign the proposal.

For the Dissertation (MUSI 999):

- Provide guidance and evaluation during the research and writing stages;
- Meet with the student during the dissertation registration semesters;
- Read and review the dissertation drafts in a timely manner;
- Offer substantive and concise recommendations for revisions;
- Discuss any problematic issues about the dissertation with the chair, student, and Director of Graduate Studies;
- Make qualitative judgments about the candidate's written work;
- Approve the final draft for the dissertation defense;
- Attend the dissertation defense;
- Follow all CVPA and University dissertation procedures.

**George Mason University
College of Visual and Performing Arts
School of Music
Proposal Signature Sheet**

Student's Name:

Date:

School and Program:

Degree:

Tentative Title:

Committee:

Signature _____
Chair

Date: _____

Signature _____
Member

Date: _____

Signature: _____
Member

Date: _____

A line is added for each additional member of the dissertation

Director, Graduate Studies, Music

Date: _____

Director, School of Music

Date: _____

Associate Dean, Graduate Studies

Date: _____

