

Oral Exams School of Music

Purpose

Each M.M. student must take an oral exam in his or her last semester. (The oral exam is not required for the Advanced Performers Certificate). The purpose of the oral exam is to ensure that graduates can speak intelligently about many aspects of music, relate information from different areas of music, and demonstrate comprehensive knowledge about his or her major field of study.

Exam Committee

The committee for the oral exam will be the same as that for the graduate recital or thesis, except that it must also include a Graduate Faculty member from outside the School of Music. Students who will not be presenting a recital or thesis will have a committee that is similar to a recital or thesis committee: three professors from the major area and one from outside the major area, with at least three of the professors (including the chair of the committee) being from the Graduate Faculty of the School of Music, plus the Graduate Faculty member from outside the School of Music. If assistance is needed in securing an outside Graduate Faculty member, see the Graduate Program Director or Administrative Assistant.

Scheduling the Exam

The oral exam will not be given until after all the student's degree recitals and/or thesis have been completed. The student should select a potential date and time (or several dates and times) for the exam and poll the members of the committee (including the outside Graduate Faculty member) to ensure that all are available during that period. When this has been agreed upon, the student should contact the Graduate Administrative Assistant and inform her of the date, time, and committee members. The Administrative Assistant will secure a location for the exam and communicate that to the students, whose responsibility it will be to inform the committee members of this information.

Students should allow an hour and a half for the exam: an hour and fifteen minutes for questioning and fifteen minutes for follow-up to the exam. The exam may not be scheduled to conflict with a class for which the student is registered. Oral exams for dual majors, especially those that include a thesis defense, may take longer. Please consult your advisor about how much time to allot.

The Graduate School of the University requires that official notification be given to them ten (10) working days notice before the oral exam can be given. Since it can take several days to get the paperwork done and to the Graduate School, it is imperative that the

Administrative Assistant has all the relevant information about the oral exam at least two and a half weeks prior to the exam date.

Preparation for the Exam

In order to be successful in the exam, students should be able to demonstrate the following knowledge.

- (1) basic facts of music history—period names and their dates, significant composers, major forms, important works, and more in-depth information about the period covered by their music history seminar
- (2) general music theory—melodic/rhythmic/chordal/structural analysis and contemporary analytical techniques
- (3) in-depth information about their major area—e.g., repertory, pedagogy, and technique for Performance and Conducting majors; philosophy, choral and vocal repertory, worship studies for Church Music majors; deeper knowledge of Music History, Music Theory, Composition, or Music Education for majors in those areas. Conducting majors may also be asked to assess and/or identify scores.

Faculty members may give students general guidance in preparing for the oral exam, but generally do not disclose specific questions that might be asked.

Assessment

The exam is Pass/Fail. Exceptionally strong exams may be awarded the honor of Pass With Distinction.

If a student fails the oral exam s/he must wait at least four months to retake the exam (Baylor University policy). The student also must be registered for at least one hour of graduate credit during the term that s/he retakes the exam and reapply for graduation.