

UNLV MUSIC

COMPOSITION MAJOR HANDBOOK

2020-2021

DISCLAIMER AND LIMITATIONS

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Contents

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Contents | 2 |
| Welcome! | 4 |
| COMPOSITION/THEORY FACULTY | 6 |
| PART I: BACHELOR OF MUSIC, COMPOSITION - DEGREE CONCENTRATION | 7 |
| GENERAL ADMISSION POLICIES: | 7 |
| UNDERGRADUATE PLACEMENT EXAM | 7 |
| DEGREE REQUIREMENTS | 8 |
| ADVISEMENT | 8 |
| SATISFACTORY PROGRESS | 8 |
| MUSA 451 PRIVATE COMPOSITION | 9 |
| Composition Lessons Expectations | 9 |
| Minimum Requirements for Freshmen and Sophomores | 9 |
| Minimum Requirements for Juniors and Seniors | 9 |
| RECITAL POLICIES | 11 |
| COMPOSITION JURY | 11 |
| ATTENDANCE TO COMPOSITION EVENTS | 12 |
| COMPOSITION SEMINAR | 12 |
| NEXTET CONCERTS | 12 |
| MUSE 495 NEXTET | Error! Bookmark not defined. 3 |
| LESSONS WITH GUEST COMPOSERS | Error! Bookmark not defined. 3 |
| APPLIED INSTRUMENTAL/PIANO/VOICE LESSONS | 14 |
| ENSEMBLES | 14 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| PART II – GRADUATE | Error! Bookmark not defined.5 |
| ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS | 155 |
| PLACEMENT EXAMS | 155 |
| Graduate Theory Placement Exam | 156 |
| DEGREE REQUIREMENTS | 177 |
| MUSA 661W or 661V PRIVATE COMPOSITION | 177 |
| ATTENDANCE TO COMPOSITION EVENTS | Error! Bookmark not defined.8 |
| COMPOSITION SEMINAR | Error! Bookmark not defined.8 |
| NEXTET CONCERTS | 179 |
| MUSE 595 CHAMBER PLAYERS | 179 |
| LESSONS WITH GUEST COMPOSERS | 20 |
| GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE | 20 |
| PROPOSED DEGREE PROGRAM FORM | 20 |
| RECITAL | 20 |
| COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS | 21 |
| APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION | 21 |
| COMPOSITION JURY | 21 |

Welcome!

The composition program at the UNLV School of Music is Las Vegas' main source for new music, a vibrant center of creativity and artistic exploration of new and traditional music writing techniques for a wide variety of ensembles and media. The program provides students with the most comprehensive academic and artistic experience in composition, supported by rigorous technical training, opportunities to interact and collaborate with other musicians, artists, and professionals in different fields, as well as a hands-on approach to writing.

Student composers benefit from a variety of opportunities to hear their works performed and receive feedback from faculty, guests, and fellow students.

During times of remote learning, performance and listening opportunities may be modified to follow public health policies at the University. These may include collaborations with the Music Technology Area and other departments at the College of Fine Arts. Our faculty strongly encourages the integration of students' creative activity with technology and media that makes these works available to a wider audience when recitals are not possible.

When recitals and in-person collaborations are possible, opportunities include:

UNLV Student Composers Concerts

Student Composers Concerts feature student compositions and unique collaborations that have included music with art at the UNLV Marjorie Barrick Museum, music with film, music to poetry featuring faculty poet Dr. Eryn Green, music with improvisation featuring the UNLV Contemporary Jazz ensemble, Music Tech collaboration, among others. There are approximately two composer concerts each semester to give the students an opportunity to have their music performed either in a live or in a virtual environment.

Ensemble Readings for Composers

The composers have opportunities to write large ensemble pieces (orchestra, wind ensemble, chorus) for the annual reading by the UNLV Symphony Orchestra, Wind Orchestra and Chamber Chorale. Additionally, they have an opportunity to write music for readings by any professional ensemble that is in residence with the Composition division.

UNLV Nextet New Music Series

Each year, the UNLV Composition Division features professional, internationally-renowned composers, musicians and artists on the contemporary music concert series Nextet.

Currently directed by composer Jennifer Bellor, the Nextet new music series highlights performances of contemporary classical and crossover music composed within the last ten to fifteen years. Distinguished student and faculty performers and composers are featured on the series, along with Nextet guest composers and artists who are in residence.

Past guest composers have included Samuel Adler, Paul Chihara, Richard Danielpour, Carlos Sanchez Gutierrez, John Harbison, Michael Hersch, Libby Larsen, Marc Mellits, Marc Neikrug, Shulamit Ran, Bernard Rands, Roger Reynolds, Augusta Read Thomas, Michael Torke, Chen Yi, among others. Visiting composers work directly with students, giving seminar presentations, masterclasses, and individual private lessons.

Guest performers and ensembles have also been invited to work directly with the students by giving workshops and reading sessions — among them stand Alan Theisen & Megan Ihnen present, the Hocket piano duo, Amernet Quartet, Mivos Quartet, Fireworks Ensemble, soprano Lucy Shelton, mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley, Transient Canvas, and saxophonist Rhonda Taylor, among many others.

Students who enroll in Nextet (MUSE 495/595) not only have the opportunity to perform new music on the series, but also to work with Dr. Jennifer Bellor behind the scenes to produce the series and build the skills necessary for concert production and collaboration. Roles include but are not limited to: social media coordinator, video editor, community outreach, podcast host personality, and other music business-related positions.

Any students majoring in marketing and communications who may want to focus on the music business side of Nextet are invited to join.

COMPOSITION FACULTY

Dr. Jennifer Bellor, Assistant Faculty in Residence/Composition Coordinator

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PART I: BACHELOR OF MUSIC IN COMPOSITION - DEGREE CONCENTRATION

GENERAL ADMISSION POLICIES

See <https://www.unlv.edu/music/admissions/undergrad> for School of Music policies for incoming Freshmen and Transfer students.

Although auditions are not required for students intending to major in composition, students are encouraged to submit work samples to the Composition faculty.

UNDERGRADUATE PLACEMENT EXAM

All entering music majors, including transfer students, must take a Theory Placement Exam, given online during the *first Musicianship class of the semester*. Students may not retake the Exam or take it later than the first semester of matriculation. Students who miss this Exam need to register for MUS 102 Beginning Music Theory.

To prepare for this test, it is recommended that students can:

1. Quickly recognize, aurally distinguish, and/or write in treble and bass clef
 - a. Major and minor scales
 - b. Intervals
 - c. Triads in root position and inversions
 - d. Key signatures of all major and minor keys
2. Sight-sing and dictate
 - a. Basic music notation in treble and bass clef
 - b. Basic rhythmic notation in simple meter

Suggested bibliography:

- Clendinning, Jane and Elizabeth Marvin. *The Musician's Guide to Fundamentals*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.
- Ottman, Robert W., and Nancy Rogers. *Music for Sight Singing*. Boston: Prentice Hall, 2011.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

B.M. composition candidates must declare an area of performance concentration:

- A. Instrumental
- B. Piano
- C. Vocal
- D. A jazz option of an additional 20 credits is also available.

Please refer to the Degrees Directory

<https://www.unlv.edu/academics/degrees> for Bachelor of Music in Composition requirements or visit:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zPHvB7UMLfQZb6yQjre25HuPW-gCul33?usp=sharing>.

ADVISEMENT

Freshman and Sophomore students must also make an appointment to meet with an advisor at the College of Fine Arts Advising Center before registering for classes: <https://www.unlv.edu/finearts/advising>

It is the student's responsibility to meet in person or through video conference with his/her advisor once per semester, at which time an advising Degree Worksheet will be completed with the recommended course schedule for the following semester.

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

To ensure satisfactory progress, students are required to complete the following:

1. Basic/ Advanced Musicianship MUS 201, 202, 303, 304, 404 and
2. Functional Piano MUS 109, 110, 209, 210 (Note: Private piano study can be taken in lieu of Functional Piano.)

Composition majors must pass all Musicianship and Functional Piano courses with a grade no lower than a B.

MUSA 451 PRIVATE COMPOSITION

In order to be considered for MUSA 451 Private Composition lessons, students must complete with at least a B grade:

1. All semesters of MUS 201, 202, 303, 304 Basic/ Advanced Musicianship

2. At least one semester of MUS 213: "Composition Workshop," or as many as necessary to be admitted to upper division composition lessons.
3. MUS 131

Alternatively and only with permission of the Composition Division, students may fill out a request to register for MUSA 451. The student will then be assigned a teacher based on his/her needs and teacher availability..

Composition Lessons Expectations

Composition: A minimum of work is expected each week, including:

1. Coherent sketches of musical ideas composed or developed during the previous week
2. Thorough exploration of developmental possibilities of musical ideas
3. Adherence to a compositional plan for each piece or set of pieces
4. References to repertoire from the 20th and 21st centuries
5. Weekly progress towards the completion of their compositions for the semester

Notation: The students should be able to notate their music proficiently and accurately by hand and to transcribe it to the computer with all performance and expression details using notation software (Sibelius, Finale, MuseScore). When the music is already transcribed in the notation software, the student should bring a printed hard copy of the score to each lesson.

Performance: The students should be able to play on an instrument, conduct, or sing gestures, motives, lines, textures or phrases from their weekly work. In addition, MIDI performances or recordings are useful to get an idea of the music composed as a whole.

Talk about the music: The students should be able to talk about the structure, the content, and the technical and expressive aspects of their music in an articulate manner.

Repertoire: In agreement with their instructor, the students should establish a reference repertoire that will serve as a model for certain aspects of their composition. The students should be well acquainted with this repertoire both aurally and analytically.

Minimum requirements for Freshmen and Sophomores:

By the end of the 4th semester, the student must have mastered the

following forms and have a portfolio of the following examples:

1. A short cycle of miniatures for piano, exploring simple forms (binary, ternary, dance forms, aria da capo, ritornello forms, etc).
2. Excerpts or exercises of 2- or 3-voice contrapuntal composition, along the lines of Bach's Inventions and Bartok's polyphonic pieces in Mikrokosmos.
3. At least one vocal piece (voice and piano or voice and a small group of instruments).
4. At least one example of theme and variations: for piano or small ensemble.

Note: All compositions should demonstrate appropriate use of different techniques of pitch, melodic, and rhythmic organization as well as good understanding of idiomatic writing.

Minimum requirements for Juniors and Seniors:

Each semester the student must complete a minimum of 10-15 minutes of music that has been approved by the teacher. Techniques and instrumentation should demonstrate an evolution with respect to the previous years of work.

In addition, juniors must present a half recital (20 min.) consisting of:

1. Music in their area of performance concentration (instrumental, piano, or vocal), in agreement with their instrument instructor, and
2. Original music, upon approval of the Composition Division

Seniors must present a full recital (40 min.) of original music.

RECITAL POLICIES

Doc Rando Hall must be booked for the student's senior recital **at the beginning of the semester in which the recital will take place**. Please be advised that Rando Hall's availability is limited, so plan accordingly.

Four weeks before the planned recital date (at the latest), the student must submit the **Request for Recital Approval Form** containing:

1. Detailed information about the pieces to be presented (title, instrumentation, and duration)
2. Names of all performers involved
3. A list of all logistic needs

In addition to this form, the student must submit scores of all music to be performed during the composition recital. In no case shall the student distribute scores/parts to the performers before receiving approval from his/her Composition teacher. The teacher will attend at least one rehearsal for each of the compositions to ensure acceptable quality of performances. The student's teacher reserves the right to cancel pieces in which the preparation is not adequate or to postpone the entire recital.

COMPOSITION JURY

Composition juries will take place during Finals week and are required of all composition students enrolled in MUSA 451. Only students who have given a junior or senior recital are excused from their jury in the semester of their recital.

One week before the jury, all scores with recordings (MIDI acceptable) of pieces composed during the semester should be submitted (digitally or physically) to the Composition Division. Scores should be engraved using any professional music notation software.

Compositions in juries as well as in junior / senior recitals are evaluated in the following aspects:

- Formal organization
- Melodic construction
- Pitch organization
- Rhythmic organization
- Texture and instrumental writing
- Unity, character, and expression
- Notation

Students are also expected to attend their jury and talk about their music in a clear and articulate manner. Additionally, they will be asked to demonstrate basic keyboard skills, specifically a short excerpt (8-16 measures) of a piano piece

from the repertoire or from their own music, at the discretion of their Composition instructor.

ATTENDANCE TO COMPOSITION EVENTS

Composition majors enrolled in MUSA 451, Private Composition, MUS 213, Composition Workshop are required to attend all Composition Division events, including but not limited to:

1. Composition Seminar
2. Nextet concerts
3. Student Composers Concerts, and
4. Guest artist presentations

Unexcused absences will negatively affect the final MUSA 451 or MUS 213 grade at the instructor's discretion and/or as stated in the course syllabus.

COMPOSITION SEMINAR

All students registered for MUSA 451 or recital credits must attend the Composition Seminar, taking place on Wednesdays at 5:30 PM (or otherwise stated).

Students are expected to:

- Attend all seminar sessions
- Be prepared to ask questions or to comment on what is being presented
- Prepare their own presentations: Select, in agreement with your instructor, any topics on: music analysis, aesthetics, technique, etc.
- Be prepared to report in the seminar about their progress in their composition. The use of MIDI performances, recordings, and scores is encouraged.

NEXTET CONCERTS

Students can submit pieces to be considered for performance in a Nextet concert. Submissions need to be made during the semester prior to the one in which the concert will take place. The Composition faculty will make final decisions on which works will be programmed.

MUSE 495 NEXTET / MUSE 595

MUSE 495/MUSE 595 Nextet is open to all student composers enrolled in composition classes, to advanced undergraduate and graduate student performers

passionate about performing contemporary music, and any communications and marketing majors interested in music business. All students must receive permission from their primary teacher, and the current director of Nextet to enroll.

All students will:

1. Contribute their skills and interests in the production of all Nextet new music series events. The student may assist with aspects of the production process that interest them. They can choose among the following: social media coordinating, marketing/PR, musician recruitment, community outreach, audio and video production, concert programming, recruitment, graphic design, among others.
2. Perform contemporary music on the concerts and/or podcast episodes, if the student is a performer enrolled with Nextet.
3. Attend all Nextet concerts, Nextet team meetings, and the majority of any other Nextet-related events.

LESSONS WITH GUEST COMPOSERS

Several guest composers visit UNLV every year. Selected students will be given the opportunity to have private lessons with guest composers. After a student has agreed to receive a lesson with the guest composer and dates and times have been arranged, attendance is mandatory. An unexcused absence will incur in a 1/2 of a letter grade reduction from the MUSA 451 grade.

APPLIED INSTRUMENTAL/PIANO/VOICE LESSONS

Each composition major, while taking applied lessons in his/her instrument or voice, must perform regularly in a studio or repertory class.

Each composition major, while taking Applied Music for Majors, must appear before a departmental jury at the end of each semester for performance examination and grading recommendations.

ENSEMBLES

All music majors will be required to take Ensemble courses appropriate to their area of performance every semester throughout the first eight semesters of the degree program. All students electing additional Ensembles will be required to audition and receive permission from the appropriate Division. Times and places of auditions will be announced.

PART II – GRADUATE

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas offers the degree of Master of Music in Composition.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Please refer to <https://www.unlv.edu/music/admissions/grad> for admissions to the Graduate College.

In addition to submitting an application and transcripts of all college-level work to the Graduate College, students applying to the Composition program must submit to the School of Music:

1. Two confidential letters of recommendation from former instructors attesting that the student is capable of doing graduate work at an acceptable level of performance. These letters are to be sent to the School of Music or scanned and sent via email to the Composition Division Coordinator.
2. A portfolio of compositions including at least one work from three of the following categories:
 - a. Orchestra, band or chorus
 - b. Solo instrument and piano or for solo piano
 - c. String quartet, brass quintet, woodwind quintet, or other small ensemble
 - d. Set of songs for solo voice and piano
 - e. Original composition scored for jazz ensemble. Additional works may be included.
3. A 500-word essay defining career goals and explaining how graduate studies in music will advance the applicant toward these goals.
4. Official transcripts of all college-level work must also be sent to the Composition Division.

PLACEMENT EXAMS

Prior to registration, all graduate students must take Placement Exams in history, theory, and sight-singing. The student must pass History and Theory Placement Exams (or complete MUS 602, MUS 603, and/or MUS 604 review courses) before registering for courses in these areas. All exams are offered online and should be completed before the beginning of the semester.

Theory Placement Exam

The Theory Placement Exam determines if incoming graduate students need to

take MUS 602 Ear Training and/or MUS 604 Music Theory Review before beginning their graduate theory coursework.

The following regulations about the Graduate Placement test can be found in the Graduate Handbook:

- Prior to registration, all graduate students must take placement examinations in music theory, and aural skills/sight-singing, regardless of their area of concentration.
- Passing scores on these exams, or passing grades in the appropriate review courses ('B' or higher) are required before students may enroll in graduate level theory courses.
- Course credit associated with review courses will not be applied towards the degree.
- Students who show deficiencies in the test will be required to register for the appropriate review course (MUS 602, 604).
- Students may not retake placement exams or take them later than the first semester of matriculation.
- UNLV students are not exempt from taking the exams.
- Students must take the exam at the designated time; no make-up examinations will be given. Students who do not take the exam at the scheduled time must complete the review courses before enrolling in any other music history or music theory courses.

The Graduate Music Theory Placement Examination may include:

1. 4-part writing: harmonization of soprano or bass cantus firmus including the use of secondary dominants, diatonic modulation, augmented sixths, and Neapolitan sixth.
2. Figured bass realization including the use of secondary dominants, diatonic modulation, augmented sixths, and Neapolitan sixth.
3. Harmonic analysis of Bach chorales
4. Harmonic and formal analysis of music from the 18th and 19th Century
5. Recognition of scales, intervals, triads in root position and inversions, and seventh chords in root position and inversions.
6. Melodic dictation (1 or 2 voices) of diatonic and chromatic melodies, and rhythmic dictation (1 or 2 voices) in simple, compound and irregular meters, including syncopation and tuplets.
7. Aural analysis of harmonic progressions, including secondary dominants, diatonic modulations, augmented sixths, and Neapolitan sixths
8. Sight-singing of diatonic, chromatic, or atonal melodies in treble, alto, tenor, or bass clef

Suggested bibliography:

- Burkhardt, Charles. *Anthology for Musical Analysis*. Belmont, CA: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2008.

- Hall, Anne Carothers, *Studying Rhythm*. New Jersey: Pearson, 2011.
- Green, Douglas M. *Form in Tonal Music: An Introduction to Analysis*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979.
- Clendinning, Jane and Elizabeth Marvin. *The Musician's Guide to Fundamentals*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.
- Ottman, Robert W., and Nancy Rogers. *Music for Sight Singing*. Boston: Prentice Hall, 2011.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The minimum number of credits required for the Master of Music in Composition is 33. Please refer to the Degrees Directory <https://www.unlv.edu/academics/degrees> for Master of Music in Composition requirements or visit: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zPHvB7UMLfQZb6yQjre25HuPW-gCul33?usp=sharing>.

Throughout work for the degree, the student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.00, with no more than two grades of C (2.00), and no grade lower than B (3.00) in the major area of concentration. A thesis is optional and may, with approval, be used in lieu of six credits in the student's program. Participation in large ensembles is required throughout the student's residency.

MUSA 661W OR 661V PRIVATE COMPOSITION

Composition majors must fill out a request form before registering for MUSA 661W (for Classical concentration) or MUSA 661V (for Jazz concentration). The Composition faculty will assign a composition instructor for the student based on his/her needs and availability of the faculty.

Minimum requirements for Graduate Students (MUSA 661W or 661V):

- Each semester graduate students must complete a minimum of 20 minutes of music approved by their instructor.
- These works should demonstrate understanding and high quality writing of different genres and ensemble combinations.
- Each student must complete at least one work for orchestra or wind orchestra at some point during their degree.
- The graduate recital must include a minimum of 60 minutes of music approved by their instructor.

ATTENDANCE TO COMPOSITION EVENTS

Composition majors enrolled in MUSA 661 Private Composition are required to attend all Composition Division events, including but not limited to:

5. Composition Seminar
6. Nextet concerts
7. Student Composers Concerts, and
8. Guest artist presentations

Unexcused absences will negatively affect the final MUSA 661 grade at the instructor's discretion and/or as stated in the course syllabus.

COMPOSITION SEMINAR

All students registered for MUSA 661 or recital credits must attend the Composition Seminar, taking place on Wednesdays at 5:30 PM (or otherwise stated).

Students are expected to:

- Attend all seminar sessions
- Be prepared to ask questions or to comment on what is being presented
- Prepare their own presentations: Select, in agreement with your instructor, any topics on: music analysis, aesthetics, technique, etc.
- Be prepared to report in the seminar about their progress in their composition. The use of MIDI performances, recordings, and scores is encouraged.

NEXTET CONCERTS

Students can submit pieces to be considered for performance in a Nextet concert. Submissions need to be made during the semester prior to the one in which the concert will take place. The Composition faculty will make final decisions on which works will be programmed.

MUSE 595 CHAMBER PLAYERS

MUSE 595 Chamber Players is open to all student composers enrolled in composition classes and to graduate student performers (and highly qualified undergraduates) passionate about performing contemporary music. All students must receive permission from their studio instructor and the current director of Nextet to enroll.

For all student composers and performers who are enrolled and not performing on a Nextet concert: all meeting times/communication are on an ad hoc basis, either via email or in person.

All student composers will:

4. Learn more about the process of producing a concert by assisting with aspects including: social media marketing/PR, concert program assistance (collecting info), any small items associated with Nextet concerts that semester
5. Produce a mock concert (final project could consist of a mock program and a timeline/plan for putting it together: If a student composer has a recital that semester or is producing a concert under the umbrella of the Collective, this will also count.
6. Attend all Nextet concerts and any other composition-related events in the division (this is not only mandatory for all composition majors, but also necessary to fulfill these requirements).

Student performers:

1. The performance(s) on Nextet concerts that semester will fulfill the requirement.
2. If the performer is not involved in the program(s) for that specific semester, then they can be involved with rehearsals for the concerts the following semester.
3. If the student performer wants to enroll, but does not or cannot be involved in any future concerts, the student will partake in the same activities as the composers enrolled (see the various activities above). This could also be a great way for those students interested in new music, but maybe not technically up to standards yet as a performer.

LESSONS WITH GUEST COMPOSERS

Several guest composers visit UNLV every year. Selected students will be given the opportunity to have private lessons with guest composers. After a student has agreed to receive a lesson with the guest composer and dates and times have been arranged, attendance is mandatory. An unexcused absence will incur in a 1/2 of a letter grade reduction from the MUSA 661 final grade.

GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE

M.M. Composition candidates require an Advisory Committee. Students must elect this committee after completing 12-16 credit hours and prior to establishing and submitting your proposed degree program. Advisory committee chairs and Graduate College representatives on advisory committees must have full graduate faculty status. Graduate advisory committee members must hold full or associate graduate faculty status.

PROPOSED DEGREE PROGRAM FORM

Part 1 and Part 2 of the Proposed Degree Program Form must be submitted to the Graduate College before completing 16 credit hours.

Alternatively, if prior to admissions, 12+ credit hours will be counted toward your degree program, Part 1 and Part 2 of the Proposed Degree Program Form must be submitted by the 6th week of the 1st semester of admission.

RECITAL

Master's students are required to present a full-length composition recital (45 minutes minimum) during their last semester of studies.

Doc Rando Hall must be booked for the recital **at the beginning of the semester in which the recital will take place**. Please be advised that Rando Hall's availability is limited, so plan accordingly.

Four weeks before the planned recital date (at the latest), the student must submit the **Request for Recital Approval Form** containing:

1. Detailed information about the pieces to be presented (title, instrumentation, and duration)
2. Names of all performers involved
3. A list of all logistic needs

In addition to this form, the student must submit scores of all music to be performed during the composition recital. In no case shall the student distribute scores/parts to the performers before receiving approval from his/her Composition teacher. The teacher can attend any rehearsals for each of the

compositions to ensure acceptable quality of performances. The student's teacher reserves the right to cancel pieces in which the preparation is not adequate or to postpone the entire recital.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

After the Master's recital is successfully completed, the candidate may schedule the written portion of the Master of Music Comprehensive Examination. If approved, the candidate may schedule the oral portion of the Master of Music Comprehensive Examination, within **one week** of completing the written portion. Results of the Master of Music Comprehensive Examinations must be submitted to the Graduate College **two weeks prior to the last day of instruction**.

APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION

Please check the Graduate College website <http://graduatecollege.unlv.edu> for the exact deadlines to apply for graduation. All deadlines normally take place at the **beginning** of the semester in which the candidate expects to graduate.

COMPOSITION JURY

Composition juries will take place during Finals week and are required of all composition students enrolled in MUSA 661. Only students who have given a graduate composition recital are excused from their jury in the semester of their recital.

One week before the jury, two hard copies of all scores with recordings (MIDI acceptable) of pieces composed during the semester should be submitted to the Composition Division. Scores should be engraved using any professional music notation software. Recordings can be submitted as sound files on a memory stick or via email.

Compositions in juries as well as in junior / senior recitals are evaluated in the following aspects:

- Formal organization
- Melodic construction
- Pitch organization
- Rhythmic organization
- Texture and instrumental writing
- Unity, character, and expression
- Notation

Students are also expected to attend their jury and talk about their music in a clear and articulate manner. Additionally, they will be asked to demonstrate basic keyboard skills, specifically a short excerpt (8-16 measures) of a piano piece from the repertoire or from their own music, at the discretion of their Composition instructor.