

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

***D.M.A. Composition
Degree Program***

Composition Program Web Site
www.music.sc.edu/ea/comp/

DMA Composition Degree
REQUIREMENTS

Residence

A minimum of four semesters of full-time study and residence on the USC Columbia campus is required. Three of the four semesters must be consecutive. Under no circumstances may the Comprehensive Examinations be taken before the three consecutive semesters and all coursework (exclusive of the dissertation requirement) have been completed.

Credits

A minimum of 48 credits beyond the Master's degree are required, structured as follows:

CREDITS	COURSES
	COMPOSITION STUDY
12	MUSC 816 (Private study in composition) ¹
6	Composition-related courses: MUSC 816, 717, 737, etc.. These courses may not be counted toward the Doctoral Minor or Other Studies (see below).
	DOCTORAL MINOR
12	Study in approved field of music (music theory, technology, history, performance, etc.). Courses to be chosen in consultation with the academic advisor.
	OTHER STUDIES
6	With the approval of both the academic and dissertation advisors, students may take courses outside the School of Music that are closely related to their background and interests as a composer.
	DISSERTATION REQUIREMENT
1	MUSC 890 <i>Composition Recital</i> ²
1	MUSC 897 <i>Document Preparation</i>
10	MUSC 899 <i>Dissertation Preparation</i>
48	TOTAL

¹ During the Fall and Spring terms, MUSC 816 *Composition* is a 3 credit course. During the Summer I session, MUSC 816 *Composition* is a 1 credit course.

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REQUIREMENTS (CONT.)

Unless students have taken the equivalent courses elsewhere, they must take an advanced course in each of the following areas: post-tonal analysis, tonal analysis, computer music, and MUSC 707 Music Bibliography and Research.

Students with deficiencies in counterpoint, orchestration, score reading, conducting, or keyboard skills should remedy these gaps before taking the Comprehensive Examinations. Note that these courses may *not* be applied toward the 48 credits needed to complete the DMA degree.

In addition, it is important that all DMA students have their compositions represented every semester on program-approved concerts including: the *USC Composers' Concert*, *USC Computer Music Concert*, or other program-approved concert. Performance of works is an important part of compositional study at USC; such performances are also invaluable in helping the field determine your progress.

Composition Seminar

Students must attend the weekly *Composition Seminar* while enrolled in MUSC 816.

Candidacy and Program of Study

See the *Graduate Studies in Music* handbook.

Foreign Language

See the *Graduate Studies in Music* handbook.

Recital

All DMA students in composition must present a public performance of at least 30 minutes of original work written during their course of study. These works should demonstrate compositional mastery in a variety of media. The recital may be scheduled anytime after the comprehensive examinations have been successfully passed.

Doctoral Committee

The doctoral committee is made up of three faculty from the major area (composition) and one from the doctoral minor. The student's primary dissertation advisor (commonly referred to as the major professor) serves as the chair of the doctoral committee.

Sometime during the second year of study, but after admission to candidacy, a student should work closely with the academic advisor to decide which faculty members will serve on his/her doctoral committee. In no case should this occur later than the end of the fourth semester of study. Selecting a committee is an important matter, and though the student has the right to change any member of the committee until the Program of Study is approved, such decisions ought to be considered seriously.

At least one semester before the Comprehensive Examinations are to be taken, the student and committee members from the major area must agree upon which composers and compositions the student will be tested in Part II and Part III of the Oral Examination (see below).

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REQUIREMENTS (CONT.)

Comprehensive Examinations

The Comprehensive Examinations may not be taken until all coursework (except the dissertation requirement) has been completed. Further, it may not be attempted earlier than the fourth semester of study, or later than the eighth semester.

The Comprehensive Examination is divided into two components: 1. a written examination, and 2. an oral examination as carefully defined below. The written component must be taken first, and is followed by the related oral component no later than one month thereafter. Scheduling of the exams must be done through the Music Graduate Office.

Written Examination

Day 1/2 Take-home Composition Exam (up to 48 hours to complete)

A small composition for specified forces.

Day 3 Techniques and Materials Exam

Exercises and/or problems in any or all of the following areas: counterpoint, orchestration, tonal harmony, post-tonal harmony, and analysis. (up to 8 hours)

Day 4 Doctoral Minor Exam (up to 3 hours)

History and Theory Exam (up to 2 hours each)

Questions covering any period in western music history before 1900; questions concerning any topic in music theory; questions on 20th-century and 21st-century music history, literature, and theory. The committee member representing the doctoral minor will contribute the doctoral minor exam. Questions in the area of music history and theory will be developed by the composition faculty in consultation with the history and theory faculty.

Oral Examination (2 hours)

Part I: Questions relating to the Written Examination

Part II: Contemporary Composers Exam

Three major 20th (or 21st) century composers about whom the student knows a great deal. This should include in-depth analysis and history of all their major works as well as considerable familiarity with any scholarly and analytical literature written about them and their music.

Part III: List of Compositions

Students should come prepared to discuss twelve pieces in great detail. For each work, the student should be able to provide a detailed and thorough analysis, citing the work's historical importance as well as its place in a broader social/historical context and any important scholarly or analytical literature written about the work. In addition, the student should be able to relate the works to each other. The list of compositions must be decided jointly with the doctoral committee, and should reflect this historical scope:

- 4 pieces from pre-1900 (drawn from a range of periods, Medieval to late 19th century)
- 4 pieces from 1900 to 1960 (spanning that period)
- 4 pieces from 1960 to the present

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REQUIREMENTS (CONT.)

A 2/3 vote of the doctoral committee is required to pass. However, anything less than a unanimous vote will automatically result in the student receiving a conditional pass. Any member of the music faculty may attend the examination, but only members the student's doctoral committee may vote. If a student is given a conditional pass or fails the examination entirely, he/she will be allowed to remedy the problems identified by the committee and attempt the exam again in one or two semesters. Students who earn a conditional pass must schedule an additional meeting with their entire doctoral committee to assess whether the candidate has made sufficient progress to earn an unconditional pass. However, students who prepare conscientiously and work closely with their doctoral committee members are not likely to encounter such problems.

Dissertation Committee

The Dissertation Committee is formed to provide the candidate with feedback on both the dissertation composition and supporting document. It must include three members of the composition faculty and one member from outside the composition program.

Dissertation

A composition or group of compositions totaling at least 20 minutes for large forces. The candidate must have passed the Comprehensive Examination before beginning work on the dissertation. Further, the dissertation project and research document (see below) must be approved by the student's dissertation committee *before* the candidate begins work. Approval is obtained by submitting both a dissertation project and research document prospectus. Guidelines for preparing the dissertation project and research document prospectus, dissertation composition, and research document are available from the Music Graduate Office.

Research Document

A 25-40 page analytical, historical, or theoretical paper developed in conjunction with the dissertation advisor.

Dissertation Defense

See the *Graduate Studies in Music* handbook.

Length of Degree

See the *Graduate Studies in Music* handbook.

GENERAL TIMETABLE FOR COMPLETION OF THE DEGREE IN FOUR YEARS

YEAR	CREDITS	DESCRIPTION
Year 1	12 + 12	Full-time coursework.
Year 2	12 + 12	Full-time coursework. Select dissertation advisor and doctoral committee. Begin study for Comprehensive Examinations.
Year 3		Additional coursework as necessary. Study for and pass Comprehensive Examinations.
Year 4		Recital (MUSC 890), Dissertation (MUSC 899), and Supporting Document (MUSC 897)

DMA Composition Degree
ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

1. Master's degree in composition strongly preferred.
2. See the *Graduate Studies in Music* handbook for general application procedures required for all graduate music programs.
3. Submission of 2 or 3 representative scores; include recordings of those works if possible (cassette, CD, CD-ROM, DAT, or VHS video).
4. A resume or curriculum vitae that includes a typed summary of educational and professional experience.
5. A list of completed compositions that includes the following information: date of composition, duration, instrumentation, and a list of all performances.
6. A sample of your writing in the form of a published article or term paper.
7. A brief, 1-2 page essay outlining your goals, ambitions, and interests as a composer, as well as what you hope to accomplish while at USC.