

GUIDELINES FOR MM ORAL EXAMS

Purpose and Content: The purpose of the MM oral exam is to encourage the student to focus on the repertoire and pedagogy of their instrument. Most often this will take form of an in-depth exploration of the degree recital repertoire, involving historical, analytical, pedagogical, literary, technical, stylistic, or contextual material. Ideally, the information gleaned by the student will inform their interpretation of the works presented on the MM degree recital.

Scheduling and Faculty Committee: Students and teachers are encouraged to schedule the oral exams at least two weeks before the recital. Normally, three faculty members adjudicate the oral exam; they include the student's applied teacher and normally two faculty members from the student's department (in cases where the student is performing repertoire that may cross disciplines, a faculty member from the related area may be chosen). Often the faculty members who serve on the oral exam are the same individuals who serve on the student's recital committee, and often they are chosen by the applied teacher in consultation with the student.

The actual scheduling is handled differently from department to department. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the student's applied teacher to schedule the oral exam. Some departments devote time during a department meeting to assign all of the faculty committees for their students' oral exams and recitals that will occur during that semester.

Format and Length of the Exam: Normally, the oral exam is scheduled for one hour. Typically, the student begins with a presentation on the given topic; this prepared portion often includes handouts, musical examples, PowerPoint, and/or a bibliography, and ideally it is presented spontaneously rather than read or memorized. Faculty members are then invited to question the student on aspects of the presentation and/or on issues related to the work discussed, other works by the same composer, or even questions about other works performed on the recital.

Evaluation: At the conclusion of the exam, the student is asked to leave the room while the faculty committee assesses the student's presentation, depth of knowledge of the selected topic, clarity and organization of the presentation, and ability to respond to the ensuing questions. Each faculty member is asked to vote, with the applied teacher voting last. Decisions are pass/partial fail/fail, and faculty members sign a form with their evaluation, returning it to their department assistant for reporting to the Office of Graduate Studies and the Office of the Registrar. In the case of a fail, the student must repeat the entire oral exam; in the case of a partial fail, the student will be asked to provide supplementary material to the committee members within a specified period of time. Any failed oral exams must be reported to the Office of Graduate Studies.

Guidelines: Students are encouraged to consult closely with their applied-music teacher well in advance regarding the scope and topic of their oral exam. A good rule of thumb is that this planning process should occur hand-in-hand with the repertoire planning for the degree recital itself. As students prepare their presentations, they would do well to treat it as an opportunity to inform their audience, illuminating aspects of their repertoire and/or instrument that reveal both research and some reflection on the part of the student. Finally, students are encouraged to schedule run-throughs of their MM oral exam presentations for their studio class, groups of friends, etc.