

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER  
COLLEGE OF MUSIC

**GENERAL MASTER OF MUSIC  
DEGREE GUIDELINES**

The faculty of the College of Music has modeled the MM degree programs at CU Boulder after the guiding principles outlined by the National Association of Schools of Music. The purpose of Master of Music degree work is to refine skills in music performance, music composition, research and writing, and pedagogy. There are numerous fields of study within the Master of Music program: composition, conducting, music theory, performance, and performance with pedagogy. The musicology program admits students only at the Ph.D. level. Various options are available within each area, and the specific details of each major are listed at the College of Music's website:

<http://www.colorado.edu/music/academics/graduate-advising/degrees>

The policies set forth below and in related documents (University Catalog, College website, etc.) were determined by the faculty of College of Music, in accordance with the rules of the Graduate School and the University of Colorado. These formal written policies are used to guide all decisions made by the faculty and administration, and students are expected to refer to them often as they work toward earning their degrees. All official decisions pertaining to degree requirements, including special exceptions granted by the faculty or Associate Dean are recorded in *written* form and kept on file in the graduate music office. Oral agreements are not considered binding without written record in the student's file (e.g., official letters, printed email communications, etc.). The faculty regularly reviews all degree plans and academic policies; *the most current versions are posted at the website*. When degree requirements change, students may choose, with the consent of their faculty advisory committee, either to follow the revised plan or to continue with the degree as it was defined when they began the program. Many College of Music policies are governed by the Graduate School Rules for the campus; the current version of this important document may be found at the following website:

[http://www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/policies/\\_docs/GraduateSchoolRules.pdf](http://www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/policies/_docs/GraduateSchoolRules.pdf)

**ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS & APPLICATION PROCESS**

In order to pursue a Master of Music degree at CU Boulder, an applicant must hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university. The Graduate School requires a minimum 2.75 cumulative undergraduate grade point average as evidenced by official transcripts submitted with the application. Most programs require a live audition and/or personal interview with the faculty, and some require samples of written work (compositions, research papers, etc.). GRE scores are required for Theory applicants. See the application guidelines for program-specific requirements:

<https://www.colorado.edu/music/admissions/prospective-graduate-students>

A note about *Letters of Recommendation*: all applications must include four letters of recommendation (preferably confidential) from individuals who know the student's work well. Detailed letters that address specific accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses, work habits, and other relevant personal qualities, are much more helpful than brief, overly general letters. When soliciting these letters, applicants should choose four people who can address different aspects of their educational background. It is often helpful to provide each reference with a copy of one's resume, transcript/s, and a short list that reminds the writer of the particular qualities and accomplishments that could be addressed by their letter.

Applicants to performance degrees should include at least one letter from an academic faculty member who can speak to their record in music theory, music history, or another relevant field.

The faculty in each area and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies use the materials submitted to evaluate each applicant's preparation and potential for advanced study in the chosen major. Because academic transcripts provide only partial documentation of one's background and aptitude for graduate study, applicants should use the other components of the application dossier to provide the faculty with as complete a picture of their qualifications as possible. For applicants in performance and composition, the audition and composition portfolio are of critical importance. In addition, applicants should use the Statement of Purpose (part of the on-line application) to highlight important aspects of their previous training and accomplishments, as well as to outline future plans and professional goals. It is also helpful for the faculty to know what aspects of CU's program are of particular interest to the applicant.

***Prospective students who submit plagiarized work as part of an application to the College of Music will not be admitted and are not permitted to reapply later.***

## PRELIMINARY & MAJOR FIELD EXAMINATIONS FOR INCOMING MM STUDENTS

Immediately prior to beginning MM degree work, students are required to take diagnostic Preliminary Examinations in music theory and musicology. The preliminary exams are offered two times a year, during the week prior to the beginning of Fall and Spring semesters. Specific dates are announced in advance by the music Graduate Program Assistant, and students are expected to plan accordingly. The required preliminary exams differ slightly depending on the major area of study; consult the **Preliminary Examinations** document for these and other important details.

Results for each exam are posted anonymously as Pass (equivalent to C or higher) or Fail during the first week of classes. Any exam not passed on the first attempt may be taken a second time on the scheduled dates during the week before the second semester. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** *Students who miss the scheduled mandatory preliminary examinations (for any reason) before their first semester of study must take the exam on the scheduled date during the week before their second semester and will forfeit their right to attempt the exam a second time.* Students with failing grades on any required preliminary exam must begin enrolling in remedial course work no later than their second semester of study, and are expected to address all deficiencies as soon as possible. Some students may decide to enroll in remedial coursework during their first semester.

In all MM programs except for Composition and Music Education, students also must take the Major Field examination during orientation week. The scope and format of this examination vary by discipline, but the general aim is to evaluate the student's background in areas directly relevant to their chosen major. The area faculty uses the Major Field examination to advise students on coursework necessary for completing the degree requirements.

Students preparing for their written major field exam should review the history, literature, and pedagogy of their proposed major field of study. Jazz majors should also review jazz theory. The examination format varies and generally lasts three hours. The major field exam for music education majors (both MME and PhD) is a personal interview with the faculty.

## ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

A student who is noticeably deficient in the written and/or oral use of the English language cannot obtain an advanced degree from CU Boulder. The faculty and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies evaluate a student's English proficiency at the time of application and during their studies.

International applicants who are not native speakers of English **must** submit a current (i.e., taken within two years of the date of application) TOEFL score of 80 or higher in order to be admitted to the M.M. or M.M.E. These students also must be evaluated by the staff in the International English Center (IEC) *during the week before classes start*. The IEC will recommend any necessary remedial coursework in English as a Second Language, and students are required to begin enrolling in recommended coursework immediately.

## THE UNIVERSITY'S HONOR CODE

The College of Music expects all students to abide by the University of Colorado's Honor Code, which promotes "academic integrity, moral and ethical conduct, and pride of membership in a community that values academic achievement and individual responsibility." The Honor Code Pledge is posted across the campus and also appears on many course materials as a reminder that honor is a fundamental value at CU: "On my honor as a University of Colorado at Boulder student I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this work." The Honor Code system is comprised of various committees that support students and faculty in the implementation of the code. The Honor Code website includes essential information and links to numerous resources that help students to understand *plagiarism* and other violations. It also explains the formal processes in place for reporting suspected violations and imposing sanctions on students found guilty of violating the code. Because this information is readily available, the faculty assumes that students have studied it closely, and therefore students cannot claim ignorance as an excuse for violating the Honor Code.

All suspected violations of the Honor Code must be reported to the campus Honor Code office. The academic and non-academic sanctions for violating the Code can be severe; so please take the time to review the information at the website, especially the "Student Information" section:

<http://honorcode.colorado.edu/student-information> .

## FULL-TIME STATUS & MINIMUM REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

The minimum full-time course load is 5 or more credits at the 5000 level, or 1 or more credits of thesis (TMUS registration) per semester. Students taking individual composition or applied lessons (for 2 or 3 cr. each semester) must also carry at least one other course in that semester in order to show adequate progress toward the degree. Since each MM degree requires 30 to 32 total credit hours, students who wish to finish in two years must enroll in 7-8 hours each semester. Students with certain types of federal and state financial aid must register for more hours to be considered full-time; consult directly with a Counselor in CU's Office of Financial Aid to verify your own status.

Students who must complete more than two remedial courses by their second semester (as a result of not passing Prelim Exams or as a result of Major Field Exam remediation) are likely to take at least five semesters to complete the master's degree. The Graduate School mandates that a master's degree be completed within *four years* of first registration.

## GRADES & QUALITY OF WORK

*Grade Point Average:* A student is required to maintain at least a B (3.0) average in all work attempted while enrolled in the Graduate School, and a student must have at least an overall 3.0 average to receive a graduate degree. Courses in which grades below C (2.0) are received are not accepted for master's degree programs or for the removal of academic deficiencies. (Grades received in foreign

language courses taken to fulfill the language requirement are not used by the Graduate School in calculating grade point average.)

Courses taken toward the fulfillment of requirements for graduate degrees may not be taken pass/fail. Graduate students may not register for more than 15 credits during any one semester. Students whose cumulative grade point average falls below 3.0 at any time during their graduate career will be placed on probation by the Graduate School. See pp. 14–16 of the Graduate School Rules (2001 edition) for further information about academic standards:

[http://www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/policies/\\_docs/GraduateSchoolRules.pdf](http://www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/policies/_docs/GraduateSchoolRules.pdf) .

## TRANSFER CREDITS

Students who have taken graduate-level work at other institutions may request to transfer credits that are comparable to degree requirements at CU. The Graduate School allows master's students to transfer up to 9 credit hours. There are restrictions on transfer credits, as outlined in the current version of the Graduate School Rules. These include, but are not limited to: (1) the course grade must be B or higher; (2) work already applied toward a graduate degree received from CU Boulder or another institution cannot be accepted for transfer toward another graduate degree *of the same level* at CU Boulder; and (3) credit may not be transferred until **after** the student has completed 6 credits of graduate level course work as a degree-seeking student on the CU Boulder campus with a 3.0 GPA or higher.

Students who wish to transfer previous credits should obtain the Request for Transfer of Credit form ([http://www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/academics/\\_docs/transfercredit.pdf](http://www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/academics/_docs/transfercredit.pdf) ). Carefully follow the instructions before submitting it to your major advisor for their signature. The signed form, along with an original transcript, is then submitted to the Graduate Office for approval by the Associate Dean, who then forwards the paperwork on to the Graduate School for final approval.

## FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The student's major advisor chairs the three-member advisory committee and is primarily responsible for advising the student toward completing all degree requirements. In consultation with the major advisor, the student should choose the other two members of the committee, *no later than the second semester in residence*. Students planning to give a recital during their first year must have the complete committee formed well *before* the recital occurs. All advisory committee members must hold graduate faculty appointments, and one member usually is from a department outside the student's major. The members signify their commitment to serve on the committee by signing the **Graduate Advisory Committee** form, which then must be approved by the Associate Dean and placed in the student's file in the music graduate office.

In selecting committee members, students should consider faculty members with whom they have studied directly, as well as those whose areas of expertise are especially relevant to their own performance and research interests. Sometimes a particular area of interest emerges after the committee has been formed, and the student may wish to involve a faculty member who was not a member of the original committee. In such cases, changes to the committee may be proposed by the student, who submits to the music graduate office the **Graduate Advisory Committee Substitution** form (signed by the affected committee members and the major advisor).

All TMUS recitals and projects require grades and signatures from at least *two* committee members. (In the case of sabbatical leaves and exceptional circumstances, other qualified graduate faculty members may be asked to substitute for a regular committee member.) Once students are engaged in recitals and thesis projects (TMUS 6xxx), it is critical to plan well in advance to ensure that committee

members are available to attend recitals, and also to provide detailed guidance on research projects. Most College faculty members hold nine-month academic appointments that begin in mid-August and end in mid-May. Therefore, students should not expect faculty to do committee work during the summer unless special arrangements have been made in advance directly with the faculty member.

## DEGREE PLAN/ADVISING CHECKLIST

A degree plan should be formulated under the guidance of the major advisor and advisory committee during the first year in residence. The advising checklist (available on the graduate studies website <https://www.colorado.edu/music/academics/graduate-advising/degrees>) serves as your individualized degree plan as it contains a semester-by-semester schedule for all required course work, tentative dates (e.g. fall or spring) for the written Master's Qualifying Examinations (MQE) and final oral examinations, and a schedule of the TMUS recitals and projects (the latter should include a brief description of the topic whenever possible). To help with planning your registration all TMUS courses are set up as variable credit. DO NOT register for more than the total number of credits required for each project. The advising checklist should be signed by the major advisor and submitted to the Associate Dean (via email) no later than the middle of the second semester in residence.

Students should also submit the Graduate Advisory Committee form (available on the graduate studies website at [https://www.colorado.edu/music/sites/default/files/attached-files/advisory\\_committee\\_form\\_2018.pdf](https://www.colorado.edu/music/sites/default/files/attached-files/advisory_committee_form_2018.pdf)) to the graduate studies office no later than the middle of the second semester in residence. Careful planning helps the student to anticipate required courses that are not offered annually, faculty leaves, and to complete the degree as efficiently and economically as possible.

## APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY.

Before taking the Master's Qualifying Examination, master's degree students should file an application for admission to candidacy. Students cannot consider taking the MQE's unless they have completed all preliminary exam deficiencies and all individual dept. language requirements have been met. These requirements must be completed in the semester **before** the student plans to take the MQE's. The courses you and your department agree will be used to fulfill the requirements for your degree program are listed on this form. The student's major advisor must verify all coursework and approve the application before it is sent to the Graduate Office for approval. The application for admission to candidacy must be filed and approved by both the major advisor and the Associate Dean **before** the student will be allowed to take the MQE.

## MASTER'S QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

This written examination is normally taken during the third semester of study or the semester **before** the semester of expected graduation. The final oral examination is held with the student's faculty committee during the semester after completion of the written examination. The MQE's are administered in the Computer-Assisted Music Labs (CAML) on a Saturday in early November or April; the dates are scheduled at least one semester in advance by the Graduate Office. Individual make-up exams on alternate dates are not allowed, so students should plan well in advance to reserve the posted group exam date. The exam lasts from 9 AM until 4:30 PM (with a lunch break). The exam is formulated by the student's advisory committee, which consists of the major advisor, plus two additional graduate faculty members. The student is allotted three hours to answer the question from the major advisor; the questions from the other two committee members are each allotted 90 minutes.



Students should consult with their committee members in preparation for the qualifying exam. The questions may pertain to the student's coursework or research interests, or they may address broader topics or areas of expertise that are expected in the student's chosen discipline. Some committee members will provide *general* information about the nature of their question, but others may opt not to offer any details in advance of the examination. All advance preparations for the exam are coordinated by the Graduate Program Assistant; be sure to verify all arrangements *well in advance of the exam date*.

#### FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION

The one-hour final oral examination (Music Ed students oral exams are 1½ hours) is administered by the student's committee during the final semester and is based upon the student's course work, thesis projects, and work done on the MQE. In order that final grades and required documentation be processed on time, this exam must be scheduled prior to the deadlines posted by the Graduate School before the end of each semester. Students must arrange the time and place of the exam with their committee members and must notify the Graduate Program Assistant *at least* three weeks in advance of the examination.

Scheduling of a room for the exam can be done through the following website:

<http://www.colorado.edu/music/event-scheduling> . The Associate Dean's office then submits an oral exam report form to the Graduate School for their approval. The form is signed by the committee upon completion, certifying the student for graduation. The campus-level deadlines posted by the Graduate School are inflexible, so students must pay close attention to these dates or risk the extra time and expense of a graduation postponed to a later semester.

#### CU's GRADUATE TEACHER PROGRAM

Many students pursuing graduate degrees in music are planning on faculty careers in Higher Education. Some will already have experience as studio or classroom teachers, or have taken coursework in education. Whatever the student's previous experience, CU's acclaimed Graduate Teacher Program is an especially valuable resource for refining one's teaching skills. The GTP offers workshops and training throughout the year, and some graduate students decide to work toward obtaining the Graduate Teacher Certificate and or Professional Development Certificate. The College of Music has two or three Lead Graduate Teachers, who are current graduate students, and who act as liaisons with the campus GTP office. Workshops are offered throughout the year, within the College as well as on the campus at large. The GTP website provides current information and invaluable resources: <http://www.colorado.edu/gtp/> .