GENERAL INFORMATION

This handbook is designed to provide information about the activities and policies of the piano division at USM. It does not attempt to be comprehensive. Questions pertaining to degree requirements and curriculum should be addressed to the student’s advisor.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE PIANO MAJOR

The piano major program aims to develop the student’s abilities as a pianist and musician, and to prepare and qualify the student either for a career as an independent piano instructor, or for graduate study in music leading to a possible college teaching position. Specific objectives are:

- Developing technique
  Ability to consistently play correct notes and rhythms, and observe all other markings on the page (dynamics, staccato/legato, etc.), at a reasonable, steady tempo, in almost any piano work, given enough practice time. This includes passagework, octave passages, trills, and other pianistic technical considerations.
  Ability to play with a good tone at any dynamic level
  Good pedaling
  Ability to play simultaneous notes or lines at different dynamic levels or with different touches

- Increasing repertoire, in both quantity and scope
  Pieces by many different composers, from different periods, and in different genres (sonatas, variations, fugues, etc.)
  Concertos, chamber music, and accompanying.

- Developing interpretive abilities, in a wide variety of styles.
- Increasing familiarity with the literature of the piano.
- Providing opportunities to perform.
- Developing sight-reading and memorizing abilities, as well as functional piano skills, such as reading from instrumental or choral scores, harmonizing melodies, and transposing.

REQUIREMENTS

Lessons

Within the first two days of classes students will schedule a lesson time with their assigned teacher. Weekly lessons are either 45 minutes or one hour, depending on the course number. Two-hundred level courses are for freshmen and sophomores, 400-level courses are for juniors and seniors, 500- and 600-level courses are for graduate students.
Juries

Each semester, every BM and BME piano major enrolled in two or three credit hour applied piano lessons must take a jury exam, scheduled during finals week. A sign-up list will be posted two weeks before the jury date. The student will provide the jury with a list of repertoire and technical studies worked on during the semester, indicating which materials are memorized (BME, two memorized pieces/movements; BM three memorized pieces/movements) and ready to play for the jury. These jury-ready materials must include a minimum of three pieces of at least ten minutes total duration and must represent repertoire from at least three historical periods. The jury members will choose selections from these materials, but the first choice of presentation is the student’s. The teacher may raise or lower the jury grade one letter grade from the average of the grades given by jury members. Students enrolled in one-credit lessons will have a final project that may include an exam, at the discretion of either the student or the instructor.

Recital Class

Every student is encouraged to perform on at least one Recital Class every semester (please consult your applied teacher regarding specific semester studio requirements for performance). This class meets weekly by area and once a month with the entire student body (all areas).

Barrier Exam

Each student must take a barrier exam in place of the jury exam at the end of the fourth semester. Literature for the exam must be approved by the teacher in advance. The student may postpone the exam for one semester, and may take it a second time if he or she does not pass it the first time. Failure to pass the exam the second time will result in removal from the degree program.

Recitals

Course description for Junior Recital:

370. Recital. 1-3 hrs. One half (1/2) hour minimum performance open to the public, graded "satisfactory" by the appropriate faculty area. Recital repertoire and performance must be pre-approved by instrument area faculty. This course may be required to serve as the Senior Capstone Experience with a writing intensive component.

Course description for Senior Recital:

470. Recital. 1-3 hrs. One-hour minimum performance open to the public, graded satisfactory by the appropriate faculty area. Recital repertoire and performance must be pre-approved by instrument area faculty. This course may be required to serve as Senior Capstone Experience with a writing intensive component.

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Each student must play a junior recital (after having passed the barrier exam and recital hearing), consisting of approximately 30 minutes of music. Students in the BM in Piano Performance curriculum must also play a senior recital, consisting of approximately 60 minutes of music. The material must be approved in advance by the teacher, demonstrate three representative historical styles, and be memorized. With committee approval, chamber music may be included. Recitals and hearings cannot be scheduled between the last day of the spring semester and the first day of the fall semester, except with special permission from the faculty. Programs must be typed by the student and approved by the instructor at least two weeks before the performance. The appropriate program format of the School of Music will be followed. The expense of program duplication and recital recording is the student’s.

Recital Hearings

At least two weeks before the performance the student will perform a selection of pieces from the recital for the piano faculty. All selections must be performance-ready. Failure to meet the expectations of the faculty will result in rescheduling the hearing and recital.

MISSLED LESSONS

If for any reason the teacher is unable to meet during the normally scheduled lesson time, the teacher is responsible for rescheduling the lesson with the student in advance of the scheduled date and time, or within 24 hours if there is a sudden emergency. If the student is unable to meet, he or she must notify the instructor in advance or the lesson will not be made up, and will be counted as an absence.

GRADES

Grades are based on attendance, progress, and meeting the specific goals outlined below, as demonstrated in lessons, performances, and jury exams. At the beginning of each semester, the teacher may give the student an additional written elaboration of grading procedures.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

By the end of the first year:

1. All major and harmonic minor scales, and chromatic scale, two to four octaves ascending and descending, hands separately (or one octave hands together), at a minimum tempo of four 16th notes = 60, evenly, and with specified fingerings.

2. All major and minor arpeggios, root position, two to four octaves hands together, two 8th notes = 60, evenly, and with specified fingerings.

3. Cadences (such as I-IV-V-I, I-IV-V7-I, or I-IV-I-V7-I, etc.) in all major and minor
keys.

By the end of the second year:

1. All major and harmonic minor scales, and chromatic scale, four octaves hands together, four 16ths = 80-100.

2. All major, minor, and dominant seventh arpeggios, in root position and inversions, four octaves hands together, four 16ths = 60-80.

3. All major, minor, and dominant seventh chords with inversions.

By the end of the third and fourth years:

Maintain accomplishments of first two years, increasing tempo to four 16ths = 120. At the teacher’s discretion, scales in thirds, sixths, tenths, contrary motion, or double thirds may be introduced. Specific exercises in forearm rotation, wrist motions, wrist staccato, and similar technical objectives may be included throughout the course of study.

REPERTOIRE

Each semester the student will learn at least three pieces or movements from at least three different historical periods, and comprising at least ten minutes of music. Some examples of minimal but appropriate repertoire are:


Second year—Bach Preludes and Fugues, Haydn/Mozart/Beethoven Sonatas, Chopin Preludes and Nocturnes, Brahms Waltzes, Mendelssohn Songs Without Words, Tcherepnin Bagatelles.

Third year—A complete Bach Suite; complete Mozart, Haydn, or Beethoven Sonata; Chopin (any); Moszkowski Etudes; selections by Debussy, Bartók, or Scriabin, et al.

Fourth year—Chopin Etudes, Bach Well-Tempered Clavier, Beethoven Sonatas, selections by Liszt, Ravel, Rachmaninoff, or Prokofiev at entry level professional difficulty.

Graduate—Graduate student repertoire will be more extensive, and MM students should expect to play approximately 15 minutes at their exams (DMA students are not required to play jury exams).
MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES

1. Attendance is required of two- and three-credit hour students at studio masterclasses (this requirement is optional for one-credit hour students). A class absence counts the same as a lesson absence.

2. All upper level BM students must enroll in the appropriate accompanying class (MUP 375, 376, 475, 476) for 4 semesters, as well as the appropriate chamber music class (MUP 471) for two semesters. Whereas accompanying is considered to be a vital part of a pianist’s education, all piano students are expected to participate to the level of their ability.

3. All students are expected to: a) read and study the prefaces in their performing editions; b) study the playing of the great pianists in recordings, books, and public live or broadcast concerts; c) study multiple recordings of their assigned repertoire (if available); d) attend without fail the recitals of colleagues and faculty (NOTE: your final grade may also be lowered for failure in this regard); e) most important of all, practice a minimum of three hours a day for a three-hour course, two hours a day for a two-hour course, and one hour a day for a one-hour course; and finally f) practice with a metronome.

4. Students can also gain valuable teaching experience by participating in our community music program, the Southern Miss Piano Institute (SMPI). Our mission is to offer a quality education in piano to pre-college students and adults in the community. Our faculty is dedicated to help students reach their highest potential and to equip them with musicianship skills that can be applied to all areas of music. All students enrolled in SMPI will receive private instruction, as well as performance opportunities in institute recitals, and in local, state, and regional festivals and other competitive events.

5. Other: Students who wish to drop the course are responsible for filing the necessary paperwork. Students with disabilities must self-identify with the campus ADA officer.

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