

Graduate Thesis and Research Committee

FAQs

Deadlines and decision announcements for 2017–18

The Graduate Thesis and Research Committee normally meets from September to April at the beginning of each month. Research proposals for DMA lecture recitals, DMA documents, master's theses, and PhD dissertations, with faculty approval signatures, are due for delivery to the office of the committee chair (Prof. Kregor, MEH4225C) on or before the proposal deadline, no later than 12:00 noon. The committee will begin collecting research proposals for the following month's meeting one day after the current meeting's proposal deadline.

Fall Semester 2017		Spring Semester 2018	
<i>Proposal deadline</i>	<i>Decisions announced</i>	<i>Proposal deadline</i>	<i>Decisions announced</i>
August 29	September 7	January 23	February 1
September 26	October 5	February 27	March 8
October 31	November 9	March 27	April 5
November 28	December 7		

Proposal requirements

1. You must provide three (3) paper copies and an electronic copy of your proposal to the committee chair. For paper copies, number pages in the upper right-hand corner, print on both sides if possible, and staple copies in the upper left-hand corner. Deliver copies to the box marked THESIS COMMITTEE SUBMISSIONS outside 4225C. Send the electronic copy of the proposal as a single, continuous document by email to: jonathan.kregor@uc.edu. Use doc, docx, or pdf (preferable) formats only.
2. The cover page must include the following information in the prescribed format:
 - a. Title: use Title Case and 12-point font (*do not* use: ALL CAPS or **Bold** or a font size larger than 12 point for the title); see the CCM Grad Handbook for a sample title page for a proposal.
 - b. Your information: include your degree program, major, degree requirement for which the proposal is being submitted and division, for example: A [Lecture-Recital/Thesis/ Document/Dissertation] Proposal Submitted to the CCM Graduate Thesis and Research Committee in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the [MM/DMA/DME/PhD] in [major], [CCM division].
 - c. Your academic status: the date doctoral candidacy was attained or is expected. It behooves PhD and DMA students to attain candidacy *before* submitting a dissertation or document proposal (Musicology students typically submit their proposals before taking their Oral Exams). Previously earned degrees (school and date) should also be listed.
 - d. Your contact information: the author's name, M-number, residential mail address and email address.
 - e. the printed name and signature of the adviser *and two readers*; lecture-recital proposals require the signature of the adviser only.
3. Order of proposal elements: 1) cover page, 2) abstract page (175-word limit), 3) proposal (3,500 word limit, not including footnotes and bibliography): Statement of Purpose, Background, Literature Review, Methodology, Preliminary Findings (optional, but recommended), Outline (Lecture Recital include timings), Bibliography, Appendices (optional).
4. The body of the document should be: (a) double-spaced throughout, (b) in a font not smaller than 11 point, (c) with text aligned on the left-hand margin (never use justified margins) and (d) with correct formatting for footnotes and bibliography consistent with an appropriate scholarly style. In general, the current edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (or Turabian) will be suitable.
5. Lecture Recitals: Lecture recitals cannot be scheduled until the Graduate Thesis & Research Committee has

approved the lecture recital proposal. Plan for a lecture recital accordingly, bearing in mind a proposal may need to be revised and resubmitted. Allot roughly thirty minutes for the lecture and thirty minutes for the recital; the event should not exceed sixty minutes. Rushing a proposal to the Committee that contains faulty timings or is hastily prepared will not expedite approval.

Details on awards vetted by the Graduate Thesis & Research Committee (Presser Award, URC Summer Fellowships) will be announced via the CCM Graduate Studies Blackboard Organization site and in the CCM College Office. Normally, these deadlines occur early in the spring semester, but it is advisable to plan research proposals far in advance.

Informal Advice from the Committee

The following is intended to supplement information in the CCM Graduate Student Handbook.

1. Academic Integrity encompasses everything you do toward earning your degree. Your effort and your honesty are the cornerstones of academic integrity and the value of your degree. The integrity of a research project is an essential factor in making a project, an achievement. You will need to demonstrate that you have put forth your utmost effort, and that you have worked conscientiously with your adviser and readers. The work that you represent as your own must, indeed, be your own work. Any evidence of plagiarism will disqualify your project; your committee, your adviser and the Dean of Academic Affairs will determine the consequences of plagiarism at the proposal level. The UC Graduate School may rescind a degree that has been awarded in the event that plagiarism has been discovered.
2. *What is a proposal?* A proposal is a concise, multi-part document that (1) proposes a research topic and sets forth the issues driving the research, (2) articulates a research plan that argues for and demonstrates the cogency of the methods by which the investigator will execute the research plan (in other words: what do you intend to do and how do you intend to do it?), (3) argues for the importance of the topic and the individuality of the undertaking, and demonstrates a command of the subject and its sources. The time to submit the proposal is when enough research has been done such that you are able to explain, argue for and define the topic fully. Before submitting your proposal, you are encouraged to share it with other students and professors for their comments. Bear in mind, your audience comprises expert readers in their respective areas. Your writing should therefore be at the highest level. A research proposal should be a clear and compelling, error-free document. Its length is variable; on average, good proposals tend to be between 2,500- 3,500 words. You may request a sample proposal in your subject area for perusal from the chair of the Graduate Thesis and Research Committee.

This outline is intended to help you organize your proposal:

I. Statement of Purpose: What is the topic and why is it important?

Effective statements of purpose, state their purpose at the outset: the topic (what the lecture, document, thesis or dissertation is about), the question or idea motivating the research and the purpose of the research. Furthermore, effective statements of purpose state what the investigator is hoping to produce (a history, a critique, an analysis, an edition, a transcription, a database, a theory, a composition, a performance, etc.). You should use this section to introduce your readers to the main concepts, sources and problems taken up in the proposal. This may also be the place to describe how the research will be organized: what will the chapters or sections of the lecture contain?

The Statement of Purpose is followed by sections of explanation and justification under the headings: Background, Literature Review and Methodology. Each section is there to define the topic in a particular way as will be explained below. Sources must be cited accurately and correctly in footnotes and bibliography (*The Chicago Manual of Style* is recommended) throughout. Where preliminary findings are available, these should be described. An outline and bibliography are essential supporting elements. Proposals for lecture-recitals should contain timings for both the lecture and recital. Each should total about 30 minutes; the whole program should not exceed one hour.

A 175-word abstract is the last element of the proposal to write and should be placed immediately after the cover page so readers can get a general idea of the proposal. An abstract is a completely standard element of all scholarly research.

II. Background: Place the subject – define the context. Do NOT write a biography!

The background places the subject matter in a meaningful context that defines the topic. A background entails sketching out such things as historical events or periods, compositional or performance issues, theoretical or intellectual disputes or some combination. Depending on the topic, projects on the same work would require different backgrounds (e.g. *Beethoven's Fifth Symphony* and ... *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Review* or ...*Its Sketches* or ... *Other Problems in Tonal Rhythm*). Generally, the exhaustive biography of a composer or the remote history of a musical practice (e.g. the history of the baroque trio sonata for a research project on the Bartók Piano Sonata) does not provide meaningful background. Only as much background as is necessary to make sense of the proposal should be included.

This section will help the committee assess your understanding of the topic and establish its substance in light of the background.

Students mistakenly use this section for encyclopedia-entry style biography. This is not what the Background is for. Proposals that make this error are routinely returned to students to revise and resubmit.

III. Literature Review: Place your research in context: how will it contribute to the discourse?

The literature review provides an exposition of the discourse on a particular topic. Effective proposals elucidate the discourse; they do not negate it. Explain what has been written and from what perspectives: where do you find agreement and where do you find dispute? Moreover, how has the existing literature shaped *your* topic, and how will your research project contribute to the discourse. The literature review should demonstrate that you have undertaken a thorough bibliographic search of primary and secondary literature in various media (books, periodicals, etc.). And it should demonstrate your familiarity with, if not command of the bibliography cited.

This section will help the committee assess the thoroughness of your research and the kind of contribution your project will make to the literature.

Students mistakenly use this section to make remarks that are too general: "... *Elements of Sonata Theory* is a great source ..." instead of saying "... *Elements of Sonata Theory* elaborates a concept of formal rotation that recognizes as normative the corresponding ordering of thematic elements between a sonata's exposition and recapitulation ... this concept, as I shall argue, is also essential for explaining formal correspondence in recent music ..."

Proposals that describe a source as nothing more than "great," "important," or "useful" are routinely returned to students to revise and resubmit.

IV. Methodology: How will you conduct your investigation and turn your area of interest into a topic, and turn your topic into a work of scholarly research?

Here are a few examples, in no particular order, of what might count as methodology:

- *Comparison*: a critical examination of manuscripts and published editions to *establish the text* of composition. Or a comparison of historic and recent recordings to establish a performance tradition.
- *Analysis*: using particular analytical tools in a theoretical framework for the analysis of one or

more compositions.

- *Synthesis*: drawing together ideas from diverse areas (analysis and performance, science and pedagogy, history and aesthetics, criticism, cultural studies and social geography) to broaden a perspective on a musical work or practice.
- *Case study*: taking a single subject and evaluating the subject's performance in a single task vis-à-vis the spectrum of the subject's abilities. This is apt for the study of a teaching method or an artist's way of working.
- *Experimental study*: testing the efficacy of a pedagogical technique: does this technique really work?
- *Compilation*: assembling information or lists of works with commentary on some aspect of them. This is apt for performance guides and combinable with any of the methodologies suggested above.
- *Interdisciplinary methods*: adapting the concepts and procedures used in one discipline for some aspect of musical study.

Many more examples could be offered. The point is that you need to justify and refine this crucial step: on what basis is the raw material accumulated in your research notes turned into a critically considered piece of writing as a lecture or document. What will you need to do to make your case persuasive?

This section will help the committee assess the coherence of the research project whether the student has the necessary knowledge base to undertake the particular project, and the attainability of the research objective.

Proposals that do not explain or argue on behalf of their methods persuasively are routinely returned to students to revise and resubmit.

V. Preliminary Findings (*optional*): What has your research produced so far?

The proposal is not a draft or short version of your lecture or document. Preliminary findings that may occur in your lecture or document can be presented in a succinct form as further justification of the fruitfulness of the research project.

VI. Outline: How will the research be organized and presented?

In all cases, the outline should provide an overview of the topic and reflect the content of the proposal. Boilerplate lists of routine data collection are not outlines. For lecture-recitals, realistic timings are a primary consideration; the lecture-recital should flow with minimal time lost to stage set-up or other delays.

Proposals whose outlines do not reflect the proposal accurately and comprehensively are routinely returned to students to revise and resubmit.

VII. Footnotes & Bibliography: What sources inform and define the research project?

The bibliography should contain authoritative primary and secondary sources drawn from books, periodicals and other media that ground the research topic, that demonstrate the project's standing as graduate-level research and that define the issues taken up in the research topic. A thorough and critical bibliographic search is essential. Often bibliographies are larded with citations of highly general, outdated or elementary works; this is unnecessary. A Select Bibliography is preferable.

As stated above, formatting for footnotes and bibliography must be correct and consistent with an

appropriate scholarly style. In general, the current edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (or Turabian) will be suitable. Great care must be taken with the citation and discussion of the work of others; anything less is tantamount to academic dishonesty.

Proposals whose formatting and footnoting is inconsistent and/or sloppy are routinely returned to students to revise and resubmit.

VIII. Abstract: The abstract page should be the page following the cover page. In 175 words or less, the abstract must explain: what is the project about, and why is it important?

Here are two sample abstracts:

... [T]his article explores the interconnected histories of disability and music as they are manifested in three theoretical approaches to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth- century Western art music (the musical *Formenlehre* and the tonal theories of Schoenberg and Schenker) and in three works by Beethoven and Schubert. Around the turn of the nineteenth century in Western Europe, disability began to be understood not as something natural and permanent but rather as a deviation from a normative standard, and thus subject to possible remediation. In the same time and place, art music also underwent a significant shift... one that involved an increasing interest in rhetorically marked deviations from diatonic and formal normativity, and the possibility of their narrative recuperation. The article describes ways in which language about music and music itself may be understood both to represent and construct disability. More generally, it suggests that disability should take its place alongside nationality, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation as a significant category for cultural analysis, including the analysis of music.¹

[This study] focuses on the first generation of recordings of Chopin's works, principally waltzes and mazurkas, made in the first three decades of the 20th c. The relationship between the recordings and the musical text is explored; the recordings document a performance tradition that does not always reflect the music as written. Also considered is what conception of the ontological status of music underlies the relationship. It is suggested that recordings should be primary objects of musicological study.²

3. *What is the difference between a document, a thesis, and a dissertation?* The Minutes of Academic Council (May 21, 2004) state: "In the DMA requirements, each reference to the word 'thesis' should be replaced with the word 'document.'" Thus, for purposes of satisfying the degree requirement, there is no difference between a document and a thesis. Nevertheless, some documents "may resemble a thesis in the more narrowly defined sense of persuasively arguing a central point through analysis of primary and secondary sources" (CCM Graduate Student Handbook). A thesis in this narrower sense will contain a thesis statement expressing

the author's perspective on the material and is usually formulated as a problem to be addressed, a controversy to be resolved, or an assertion to be demonstrated. ... Some topics may not lend themselves to ... specific theses at the early stages of research, but the proposal should [still] indicate some of the questions that the author intends to pursue. (CCM Graduate Student Handbook, App. F).

In other words, a thesis should contain a thesis statement with propositional content typically beginning, "I demonstrate," "I claim," or "I assert," which the author supports with evidence and argument. In the proposal, of course, only a *working thesis* is expected, since the final thesis of the thesis may not be known at that early stage.

A document, on the other hand, "may be of a more descriptive nature" (CCM Graduate Student Handbook). Document proposals, therefore, are not required to state a working thesis, but only a clear plan to carry out a descriptive project of the kind exemplified by, but not limited to, a conductor's/performer's guide, a survey of repertoire, a pedagogical discussion, and an expansion of the lecture-recital. Nevertheless, the document proposal must propose more than simply to be useful and interesting to the reader, since that is merely to restate

¹ Joseph N. Straus, "Normalizing the Abnormal: Disability in Music and Music Theory," *JAMS* 59 (2006): 113–184.

² Leo Treitler, "Early Recorded Performances of Chopin Waltzes and Mazurkas: The Relation to the Text," *JALS* 51 (2002): 55–75.

what is already taken for granted. The **statement of purpose** must indicate *how* the document will be useful and interesting (e.g., by pointing out features that are not self-evident or by observing relationships or inferring generalities that have not been observed or inferred before).

Dissertations are associated exclusively with the PhD degree. Even if some electronic research guides refer to a “DMA dissertation,” this is inaccurate. “DMA document” is the nomenclature used at CCM.

4. *Is the literature review required?* Yes. The CCM Graduate Student Handbook states that the bibliography should list “pertinent sources already examined and other sources that appear to be relevant.” Further, “some of the material from the bibliography must already have been perused.” One of the purposes of the bibliography is to demonstrate that the amount of existing source material, whether primary or secondary or both, is sufficient to make the proposed research possible. Authors must also show that they have some preliminary notion of what the listed items contain so that they can verify to the committee that there is something new or fresh to be done—that they are not proposing to do over again what someone has done already. That means reviewing summarily the available bibliography and giving a preliminary evaluation of its usefulness for the proposed research instead of merely listing unexamined items.

In identifying such material, a review of the online versions of *RILM Abstracts*, *The Music Index*, *Dissertation Abstracts*, and the bibliographies in *The New Grove* and *MGG* will often be a helpful starting place. It depends on the subject. For example, you would never want to neglect the *Garland Composer Resource Manuals*, if one is available for your composer, nor would you ever want to neglect that composer's thematic catalogue or modern collected edition. Collected editions, especially those published since the mid-20th century, are a mine of information, for they contain not only critical scores, but historical commentary and critical notes that are often more thorough and more up-to-date than in any other source.

5. *What does research mean?* The CCM Graduate Student Handbook states:

According to generally accepted standards, the document is intended to show the candidate's ability to perform satisfactory graduate-level research and to report the results in scholarly prose. It further states:

While MM theses and DMA documents do not need to demonstrate completely original research (they may rely primarily on secondary sources, for example), they must present the material from a fresh perspective and represent the author's own arguments and perspective. They may not simply summarize or recast already existing research.

The first quotation from the Handbook refers to research and reporting. When a researcher has an idea, s/he must first investigate the potential sources of information in order to learn what others have already discovered about the subject and give them appropriate credit. Along the way, the researcher may also learn what aspects of the subject need to be refreshed or argued anew.

The second quotation refers to originality. Except in PhD dissertations, absolute originality is not required; DMA documents and master's theses may simply have a fresh perspective. In any case it is important to realize that originality, whether of discovery or perspective, usually rests on a foundation of existing knowledge. You must relate your views and findings to those that are already available in the published literature in order to build on the foundation laid by others and to integrate your work into that of the field. The external signs of such integrative research are citations in the form of footnotes in the finished document. (In the proposal, on the other hand, it is possible to allude to published research informally in the running text; the use of footnotes is valuable, but discretionary.)

6. *What is the most important thing to keep in mind when proposing musical analysis?* The CCM Graduate Student Handbook, Appendix F, states: “If a theoretical discussion is proposed, the author should indicate what analytical method will be used (e.g., Schenkerian, set theory), and what elements of the music will be considered.” The committee will consider no proposal that proposes to do musical analysis without indicating and justifying the method of analysis to be employed.

A sample of how an analytical technique will be applied is looked upon favorably in proposals. Musical examples with analysis can make the case for a proposal compelling.

7. *Can one propose a combined lecture-recital and document proposal?* No. Combined proposals fail to delineate what each will include. Furthermore, the lecture recital and document are such different formats with such different goals that they are ultimately incompatible as a combined proposal.

Lecture recital topics, however, can develop into document topics, and particular details of document topics can lend themselves for lecture-recital presentation. So the two may arise from the same research effort.

8. *When must lectures, documents and dissertations be distributed to the evaluating committee?* According to the Graduate Student Handbook, **lecture recitals** must be submitted “at least **two weeks prior** to the date of the lecture-recital. Students must supply to the divisional office/s of evaluating committee “three fully documented copies of the entire lecture-recital document.” For **documents or dissertations**, “the student must submit a separate copy of the document in final draft form to each member of the committee no later than **the first Monday of the semester in which he/she intends to graduate**. This copy must be certified in writing by the advisor as being basically acceptable.” Consult the CCM Graduate Handbook and your advisor for further details.

For dissertations, consult your adviser in all matters related to the review of dissertation chapters and the final draft.

9. *Who is ultimately responsible for submitting the proposal by the deadline?* The student who is the author of the proposal is ultimately responsible for on-time submission. Students who reside at a distance from CCM must plan accordingly to allow time for gathering signatures, photocopying and delivery of the printed copies. Do not let things go to the last minute, and plan with a specific deadline in mind. Submissions can always be accepted early; late submissions cannot be considered.
10. *What if I am conducting interviews as part of my research?* Research interviews are appearing on proposals with greater frequency. The interview questions should be included as part of the research proposal. The proposal should argue for the importance of interviewing a particular research subject, and argue for the coherence of the line of inquiry: what is it you are trying to learn or document from this interviewee? Research interviews must be recorded and a full written transcript of the interview must be made. If interviews are being conducted in the context of an experiment, you must make an application to the UC Institutional Review Board [IRB] (<http://researchcompliance.uc.edu/HSR/IRB/Overview.aspx>).
11. *What if my research involves an experiment with human subjects?* Any and all experimental research involving human subjects must have the approval of the UC Institutional Review Board [IRB] in order to proceed. (<http://researchcompliance.uc.edu/HSR/IRB/Overview.aspx>) Please peruse the IRB site for a full description of the training, procedure and requirements concerning applying to the IRB and research compliance.
12. *What is the purpose of the Graduate Thesis and Research Committee?* The purpose of the committee is to offer to students working on doctoral or master’s-level research projects, advice and feedback in the form of a letter of advice sent to each student after the committee meets. Advice often accompanies letters of approval as well of letters that request revision and resubmission.