STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027 MUSIC PROGRAM



ODESSA COLLEGE

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Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide music students training in the areas of musical performance, music theory, music literature, and piano studies, in preparation for transfer to upper-level baccalaureate degree programs, and to provide cultural enrichment for music students, Odessa College and the community at large.

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ODESSA COLLEGE

Welcome Music Majors

Welcome to the Odessa College Department of Visual and Performing Arts Music Program! We are glad you have chosen Odessa College to begin or continue your music studies. The purpose of this handbook is to help you understand what is involved in being a music major and to guide you in making the most of your experience. If any of the guidelines are unclear, or if you have questions, please feel free to contact us.

ADVISING

Students pursuing Music will work with both Odessa College Academic Advisors and Music faculty throughout their educational journey. After referral to the Music Unit, faculty assess each student's musical preparation and provide individualized guidance for coursework, applied study, ensembles, academic progression, and transfer planning. This collaborative advising process helps students follow an appropriate pathway while supporting their musical and academic development.

STUDENT RECITALS

Music majors are required to attend all student recitals. Each student must also perform on at least one recital per semester on their principal instrument or voice. Additional performances are encouraged but not required.

At times, other performances may be considered as fulfillment of this requirement, at the discretion of the music faculty.

RECITAL PROCEDURES

Students should dress appropriately for performance on student recitals, (no jeans, modest skirt length, etc.) and should exhibit professional performance practices, such as bowing and acknowledging the accompanist.

MUSIC SEMINAR

Music majors are expected to attend the Music Seminar, held once every 4-weeks in the Jack Rodgers Auditorium. These sessions may include student demonstrations or faculty performances designed to enrich your musical education. Meeting times are to be determined per term.

MUSIC JURIES

All music majors are required to complete juries (final performance exams) at the end of each semester. Pianists and instrumentalists must demonstrate scales, etudes, or another repertoire studied during the semester.

Procedures are the same as for student recitals:

- Sign up in advance.
- Provide music to the accompanist.
- Schedule a rehearsal at least two weeks prior.

Juries are normally held during final exam week.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Ensemble Scholarships

Scholarships are available to students enrolled in ensembles (band, choir) and in piano (class or private study). These scholarships are awarded at the discretion of the respective directors and faculty.

Departmental Scholarships

Additional scholarships (including the Rich, Rea, and Ward scholarships) are awarded through auditions, typically in the spring semester. In addition to audition performance, factors such as GPA, attendance, attitude, and overall participation are considered.

Odessa College is a fully accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Music.

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENT MUSICIANS

Your health and well-being are essential to your success as a musician. Just as athletes train carefully to prevent injury, musicians must also protect their bodies and voices. The following recommendations are designed to help you practice and perform at your best while reducing the risk of strain or long-term damage.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL MUSICIANS

Evaluate your technique. Use efficient, relaxed movements. Keep joints within their natural range of motion, use large muscle groups when possible, and avoid fixed or tense positions.

Always warm up. Musicians, like athletes, should prepare carefully before practicing or performing.

Take breaks. Include short breaks to stretch and relax. Several shorter practice sessions are often more effective than one long session. Even in performance, find small moments to release tension and restore circulation.

Pace yourself. “No pain, no gain” is not safe for musicians. Learn your limits and avoid overextending yourself in practice or performance.

Check your instrument setup. Ensure your instrument is adjusted properly for your body. Use straps, stands, or carriers when needed to reduce stress on your hands, joints, or posture.

Evaluate other activities. Non-musical activities—such as computer use—can also cause injuries like tendinitis or carpal tunnel syndrome.

Listen to your body. Pain is a warning sign. If something hurts, stop immediately.

Seek medical attention when necessary. Do not delay treatment. A few weeks or months of rest is far better than a permanent injury.

VOCAL HEALTH FOR SINGERS

The demands placed on singers’ voices are significant—singing for one to three hours can be as physically intense for the voice as running
a marathon is for the body. Protecting vocal health is critical to maintaining longevity and success.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SINGERS

Maintain good general health. Get sufficient rest. If you are ill, rest your voice rather than “talking through” laryngitis.

Exercise regularly. General fitness supports breath control and stamina.

Eat a balanced diet. Emphasize fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Limit caffeine, alcohol, and foods that irritate your voice (spicy, acidic, or dairy, if you are sensitive).

Stay hydrated. Aim for at least two quarts of water daily.

Manage your environment. Avoid overly dry indoor air; use a humidifier if necessary.

Limit vocal use in noisy environments. Restaurants, parties, cars, and planes can strain your voice. Use amplification when projection is required.

Avoid harmful habits. Do not yell, clear your throat, or cough forcefully. Avoid harsh vocal attacks on initial vowels.

Use healthy speaking techniques. Adjust your speaking pitch to a natural level, speak in phrases (not long paragraphs), and take small breaths before each phrase.

Reduce talking when possible. Give your voice time to rest.

Breathe silently and efficiently. Use proper breath support to reduce tension.

Rely on water and air. These are your most effective tools for vocal recovery.

Warm up and cool down. Treat your voice like an athlete treats their muscles. Warm up before singing and cool down after.

Be careful with physical training. When lifting weights or doing high-intensity exercise, always exhale rather than holding your breath or grunting, which can strain the vocal folds.
Be aware of medications. Some medications can negatively affect the voice. For more information, visit the National Center for Voice and Speech.

BEST PRACTICES FOR INSTRUMENTALISTS

Instrumentalists face different physical demands depending on their instrument. To prevent injury:

Strings: Maintain balanced posture, avoid excessive pressure, and take breaks to reduce tension in the shoulders, neck, and wrists.

Winds/Brass: Use proper embouchure technique, support with breath rather than lip pressure, and avoid overplaying.

Percussion: Use relaxed, efficient motions. Avoid gripping sticks or mallets too tightly.

Keyboardists: Keep wrists level and relaxed, avoid collapsing joints, and take frequent breaks to reduce repetitive stress.

NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS (NIHL)

We experience sound in our environment, such as the sounds from television and radio, household appliances, and traffic. Normally, we hear these sounds at safe levels that do not affect our hearing. However, when we are exposed to harmful noise-sounds that are too loud or loud sounds that last a long-time sensitive structures in our inner ear can be damaged, causing noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL). These sensitive structures, called hair cells, are small sensory cells that convert sound energy into electrical signals that travel

to the brain. Once damaged, our hair cells cannot grow back. NIHL can be caused by a one-time exposure to an intense "impulse" sound, such as an explosion, or by continuous exposure to loud sounds over an extended period of time.

The humming of a refrigerator is 45 decibels, normal conversation is approximately 60 decibels, and the noise from heavy city traffic can reach 85 decibels. Sources of noise that can cause NIHL include motorcycles, firecrackers, and small firearms, all emitting sounds from 120 to 150 decibels. Long or repeated exposure to sounds at or above 85 decibels can cause hearing loss. The louder the sound, the shorter the time period before NIHL can occur. Sounds of less than 75 decibels, even after long exposure, are unlikely to cause hearing loss. Although being aware of decibel levels is an important factor in protecting one's hearing, distance from the source of the sound and duration of exposure to the sound are equally important. A good rule of thumb is to avoid noises that are "too loud" and "too close" or that last "too long."

It is very important to understand that the hair cells in your inner ear cannot regenerate. Damage done to them is permanent. There is no way to repair or undo this damage.

According to the American Academy of Audiology, approximately 26 million Americans have hearing loss. One in three developed their hearing loss as a result of exposure to noise. As you pursue your day-to-day activities, both in the Music program and in other educational, vocational, and recreational environments, remember:

1. Hearing health is essential to your lifelong success as a musician.

2. Your hearing can be permanently damaged by loud sounds, including music. Technically, this is called Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL). This danger is constant.

3. Noise-induced hearing loss is generally preventable. You must avoid overexposure to loud sounds, especially for long periods of time.



4. The closer you are to the source of a loud sound, the greater the risk of damage.

5. Sounds over 85 dB (your typical vacuum cleaner) in intensity pose the greatest risk to your hearing.

6. Recommended maximum daily exposure times to sounds at or above 85 dB are as follows: 85 dB (vacuum cleaner, MP3 player at 1/3 volume) - 8 hours, 90 dB (blender, hair dryer) - 2 hours, 94 dB (MP3 player at 1/2 volume) - 1 hour, 100 dB (MP3 player at full volume, lawnmower) - 15 minutes, 110 dB (rock concert, power tools) - 2 minutes, 120 dB (jet planes at take-off) - without ear protection, sound damage is almost immediate.

7. Certain behaviors (controlling volume levels in practice and rehearsal, planning rehearsal in order to provide relief from high volume works, avoiding noisy environments) reduce your risk of hearing loss.

8. The use of earplugs (Sensaphonics, ProGuard, Sensorcom) helps to protect your hearing health.

9. Day-to-day decisions can impact your hearing health, both now and in the future. Since sound exposure occurs in and out of musical situations, you also need to learn more and take care of your own hearing health on a daily, even hourly, basis.

10. If you are concerned about your personal hearing health, talk with a medical professional.

11. If you are concerned about your hearing health in relationship to your study of music at Odessa College, consult with your applied instructor, ensemble conductor, or department chair.

MUSCULOSKELETAL HEALTH AND INJURY PREVENTION

Musculoskeletal health is vital for musicians, as repetitive movement, poor posture, and overuse can lead to discomfort, chronic pain, and long-term injury. The Odessa College Music Program is committed to educating students on healthy practice habits that promote physical longevity, proper technique, and lifelong wellness in music-making.

MUSCULOSKELETAL RISK

Musicians commonly experience injuries related to:

- Repetitive motion (e.g., finger, hand, and wrist strain)
- Improper posture while sitting or standing
- Excessive tension in muscles during performance
- Sudden increases in practice duration or intensity
- Lack of adequate rest and recovery time

HEALTHY PRACTICE TECHNIQUES

To reduce the risk of injury:
Warm Up and Stretch: Begin each practice

session with gentle stretches and breathing exercises to warm the muscles.

Maintain Proper Alignment: Use approved posture and ergonomic positioning for your instrument. Instructors will provide guidance specific to each major instrument family (piano, voice, wind, brass, percussion, etc.).

Take Regular Breaks: Avoid practicing for long periods without rest. The recommended guideline is a 5-minute break for every 25–30 minutes of practice.

Use Natural, Relaxed Movement: Avoid unnecessary tension in the neck, shoulders, hands, and back.

Gradually Increase Practice Time: Sudden increases in playing time can lead to overuse injuries.

SIGNS OF POTENTIAL INJURY

Students should be aware of early warning signs, including:

- Tingling or numbness in fingers or limbs
- Muscle fatigue or persistent soreness
- Reduced range of motion
- Sharp or localized pain during or after playing

If any symptoms occur, students are expected to stop playing immediately and consult a qualified medical professional. Continuing to play through pain can lead to long-term damage. Students should also notify their applied instructor so that adjustments can be made to technique or repertoire as needed.

INJURY PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Use ergonomic aids such as adjustable chairs, footstools, or wrist supports when appropriate.

Maintain overall physical health through exercise, hydration, and adequate sleep.

Incorporate cross-training activities such as yoga, swimming, or strength training to support muscle balance and flexibility.

Utilize services available through the Odessa College Health and Wellness Center as needed.



PROPER HANDLING OF MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, AND TECHNOLOGY

Students in the Music Program will receive training on the safe operation and handling of all instruments, equipment, and technology relevant to their coursework. This includes, but is not limited to:

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

Percussion Instruments: Proper technique for lifting and assembling large instruments (e.g., timpani, marimbas) to prevent back and joint strain.

Brass and Woodwind Instruments: Safe handling of mouthpieces, cleaning tools, and reed knives to prevent injury and infection.

Pianos and Keyboards: Correct bench height and posture to prevent wrist and shoulder strain.

Electronic Equipment: Safe connection and disconnection of amplifiers, audio cables, mixers, and recording devices to prevent electric shock or damage to equipment.

TECHNOLOGY AND SOFTWARE

Students must follow faculty instruction when using practice software, recording interfaces, and digital equipment. Misuse of cables, improper audio levels, and carelessness around electrical equipment can cause injury or equipment damage.

POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Some music activities may involve the use of cleaning chemicals (for instrument maintenance) or sharp tools (such as reed knives or tuning equipment). Students are required to:

- Wear appropriate protective gear when necessary
- Use tools only under supervision or after documented training
- Adhere to all posted safety procedures and faculty instructions

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

All students are responsible for following faculty guidance on healthy technique, proper posture, and equipment use and reporting any health concerns or equipment malfunctions immediately.

Practicing self-awareness and self-care will promote long-term health and injury prevention.

Failure to comply with safety guidelines may result in restricted access to facilities or disciplinary action in accordance with Odessa College policy.

PIANO CARE GUIDELINES

Odessa College is proud to be an All-Steinway School. Through the generosity of the College and our community donors, we now have a collection of Steinway pianos for student practice, classroom use, and stage performances.
These instruments are among the finest in the world, and it is our shared responsibility to care for them properly. Doing so ensures that students, faculty, guest artists, UIL contest participants, Jack Hendrix Piano Competition players, and all other musicians who use our facilities have access to instruments in excellent condition.

• The following guidelines, adapted from Steinway & Sons, are posted in all practice rooms. Please follow them at all times:

• Keep the lid clear. Do not place food, drinks, coats, instrument cases, or other objects on the piano.

• Maintain proper environment. Keep rooms at a consistent temperature and humidity level. Do not place pianos near heaters, vents, or direct sunlight.

• Leave benches in place. Never remove the piano bench without authorization. Moving it improperly can cause injury or damage.

• Protect the finish. Do not write on paper resting on the piano, and never write directly on the piano surface. Pens and pencils can scratch the finish.

• Do not tamper with the instrument. Never attempt to take apart or adjust any part of the piano.

• Keep the key cover open. When not in use, leave the key cover up to allow air circulation and help prevent sticking keys.

• Respect the lid. Never sit, stand, or place heavy items on the lid of the piano.

• Use proper cleaning methods. Only wipe with a soft, clean cloth. Avoid sprays or polishes not approved for pianos.

• Tuning: Pianos must be tuned regularly by the College's piano technician. Do not attempt tuning yourself.

• Report problems immediately. Notify the music office or piano technician if you notice sticking keys, unusual sounds, or any needed repairs.



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MUSIC PROGRAM RETENTION, PROGRESSION, AND REMEDIATION POLICIES

The Odessa College Music Program has developed a proposed Retention, Progression, and Remediation Policy to establish consistent academic expectations, document student achievement, and provide appropriate support for students who experience academic difficulties.

Retention

Music students are expected to maintain satisfactory academic progress and demonstrate continued development in music theory, ear training, piano, applied music, and ensemble performance, as applicable. Student achievement will be evaluated through course grades, examinations, competency assessments, performance juries, and faculty evaluations.

The program's approach emphasizes student success and retention while maintaining appropriate academic and performance standards.

Progression

The proposed policy establishes a four-semester course sequence for Music Theory I–IV, Ear Training I–IV, and Piano Class I–IV.

Students will complete designated competency assessments at two stages:

- **Level 1:** At the completion of Theory II, Ear Training II, and Piano II.
- **Level 2:** At the completion of Theory IV, Ear Training IV, and Piano IV.

These assessments are intended to measure student achievement, identify areas needing improvement, and document progress toward program-level student learning outcomes.

Applied Music students will continue to demonstrate progress through semester performance evaluations and juries.

Remediation

Students who do not demonstrate the required competencies will be provided opportunities for additional preparation and improvement. Depending on individual needs, remediation may include individualized tutoring, supplemental assignments, additional practice materials, faculty guidance, and reassessment.

Students may also be encouraged to enroll in supportive courses, such as Fundamentals of Music or Applied Music, including during summer terms when available, to strengthen foundational skills and prepare for subsequent coursework.

Remediation procedures will emphasize student improvement and continued academic progress while maintaining established competency requirements and applicable course prerequisites.

MUSIC EVENTS SCHEDULE

(Tentative and Subject to Change)

Fall Semester 2026

Band Concert
Wednesday, November 11th
6:30 PM — Veterans Day Concert
WHSB Community Room 201

Piano Recital
Tuesday, November 17
6:00 PM — Piano Departmental Recital
Jack Rodgers Auditorium

Band Concert
Wednesday, December 2nd
6:30 PM — Holiday Concert
WHSB Community Room 201

Jazz Band | OC Choir
Monday, December 7th
6:30 PM — Holiday Concert
Jack Rodgers Auditorium

Spring Semester 2027

Band Concert
Monday, March 1st
6:30 PM — Mid-Spring Concert
WHSB Community Room 201

Piano Recital
Tuesday, April 20
6:00 PM — Piano Departmental Recital
Jack Rodgers Auditorium

Jazz Band | OC Choir
Monday, April 26
6:30 PM — Spring Concert
Jack Rodgers Auditorium

Band Concert
Wednesday, April 28
6:30 PM — End-of-Year Concert
WHSB Community Room 201

MUSIC (FIELD OF STUDY) A.A.

Year 1

FALL | 16 Weeks

EDUC 1300 LEARNING FRAMEWORK (8 Week Course)	**CREDIT(S): 3**
MUSI 1311 MUSIC THEORY I	**CREDIT(S): 3**
MUSI 1116 SIGHT SINGING & EAR TRAINING I	**CREDIT(S): 1**
MUSI 1181 PIANO CLASS I	**CREDIT(S): 1**
MUAP 12XX APPLIED MUSIC (Voice/ Primary Instrument)	**CREDIT(S): 2**
MUEN 1XXX MUSIC ENSEMBLE	**CREDIT(S): 1**
ENGL 1301 COMPOSITION 1 (8 Week Course)	**CREDIT(S): 3**

SPRING | 16 Weeks

MATH 1332 CONTEMPORARY MATHEMATICS (8 Week Course)	**CREDIT(S): 3**
MUSI 1312 MUSIC THEORY II	**CREDIT(S): 3**
MUSI 1117 SIGHT SINGING & EAR TRAINING II	**CREDIT(S): 1**
MUSI 1182 PIANO CLASS II	**CREDIT(S): 1**
MUAP 12XX APPLIED MUSIC (Voice/ Primary Instrument)	**CREDIT(S): 2**
MUEN 1XXX MUSIC ENSEMBLE	**CREDIT(S): 1**
ENGL 1302 COMPOSITION 2 (8 Week Course)	**CREDIT(S): 3**

SUMMER

SPCH 1315 PUBLIC SPEAKING	**CREDIT(S): 3**

Year 2:

FALL | 16 weeks

GOVT 2305 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (8 Week Course)	**CREDIT(S): 3**
MUSI 2311 MUSIC THEORY III	**CREDIT(S): 3**
MUSI 2116 SIGHT SINGING & EAR TRAINING III	**CREDIT(S): 1**
MUSI 2181 PIANO CLASS III	**CREDIT(S): 1**
MUAP 22XX APPLIED MUSIC (Voice/ Primary Instrument)	**CREDIT(S): 2**
MUEN 2XXX MUSIC ENSEMBLE	**CREDIT(S): 1**
MUSI 1307 MUSIC LITERATURE	**CREDIT(S): 3**

SPRING | 16 weeks

HIST 1301 UNITED STATES HISTORY I (8 Week Course)	**CREDIT(S): 3**
MUSI 2312 MUSIC THEORY IV	**CREDIT(S): 3**
MUSI 2117 SIGHT SINGING & EAR TRAINING IV	**CREDIT(S): 1**
MUSI 2182 PIANO CLASS IV	**CREDIT(S): 1**
MUAP 22XX APPLIED MUSIC (Voice/ Primary Instrument)	**CREDIT(S): 2**
MUEN 2XXX MUSIC ENSEMBLE	**CREDIT(S): 1**
BIOL 1408 BIOLOGY/ NON-SCIENCE MAJORS I	**CREDIT(S): 4**

Total Credit Hours 60 out of 60 = 100%

STUDENT CONDUCT AND EXPECTATIONS POLICY

Visual and Performing Arts Department

1. PURPOSE

The Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) Department is dedicated to maintaining a creative, respectful, and professional learning environment where students can develop their artistic skills and academic knowledge. This Behavior Plan establishes expectations for student conduct in VPA courses and outlines consequences for violations.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students enrolled in Visual and Performing Arts courses, including studio, performance, and lecture-based classes in face-to-face, hybrid, and online formats.

3. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to maintain professionalism, integrity, and artistic respect in all coursework, rehearsals, and exhibitions.

A. Studio, Classroom, and Performance Conduct

- Treat instructors, peers, staff, and visiting artists with respect.
- Arrive on time and remain engaged throughout the class, rehearsal, or performance.
- Silence cell phones during class, rehearsals, and performances. Use electronic devices only for academic or creative purposes as approved by the instructor.
- Follow all safety protocols in studios, theaters, and lab environments, including proper handling of equipment and materials.
- Maintain a clean and organized workspace, respecting shared studio, stage, and gallery areas.

B. Academic and Artistic Integrity

- Adhere to Odessa College's academic honesty policy.
- Plagiarism, cheating, or unauthorized collaboration on assignments or performances will not be tolerated.
- Properly credit all sources in written, visual, and performance-based work.
- Any work submitted must be an original expression of the student's ideas and artistic vision.

C. AI Use Policy

AI tools can serve as creative aids in research, brainstorming, and artistic development, but students must document and acknowledge any AI-generated content used in their work. AI should supplement—not replace—original artistic or academic efforts. Faculty members reserve the right to define appropriate AI usage within their courses, with misuse subject to disciplinary action.

D. Online Learning and Communication Etiquette

- Use professional language and tone in emails, discussion boards, and virtual meetings.

• Follow online proctoring policies when applicable.

E. Rehearsal, Performance, and Exhibition Conduct

• Attend and fully participate in all scheduled rehearsals, performances.
• Arrive prepared with necessary materials (e.g., sheet music, scripts).
•Display professionalism in group projects, critiques, and productions.
• Follow established etiquette in performance spaces, including proper dress and backstage conduct.

4. CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATIONS

Failure to adhere to these expectations may result in:

1. First Offense: Verbal or written warning from the instructor.
2. Second Offense: Formal written notification with possible grade penalties.
3. Third Offense: Referral to the department chair for disciplinary review.
4. Severe or Repeated Offenses: Potential removal from the course, referral to the BIT committee, or expulsion from the program in extreme cases.

5. REPORTING AND DOCUMENTATION

Faculty should document behavioral incidents and notify the department chair as necessary.

Reports of severe misconduct should be submitted to the BIT (Behavioral Intervention Team) for further review.

Faculty are encouraged to submit BIT reports if students are struggling with personal challenges affecting their academic performance, such as grief, mental health concerns, or financial hardship.

Students have the right to appeal disciplinary actions in accordance with college policies.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

By enrolling in Music courses, students agree to uphold the expectations outlined in this plan. Continued participation in VPA coursework indicates acknowledgment and adherence to these policies.

I (Your Name): _____ understand and agree to abide by the behavior policies for the Music unit.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

MUSIC STUDENT HANDBOOK CONFIRMATION

After reading and signing the Music Student Handbook, scan the QR code to submit your confirmation via email!



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