UMSL | Music
University of Missouri–St. Louis

Vocal Handbook
Guidelines for Applied Music - Vocal Study
Fall 2025

Vocal Area Team

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VISION: UMSL Vocal Studies

Today's vocal musicians must have a variety of skills at their disposal to begin to make an impact in the music industry. Singers must possess a flexible vocal technique, have excellent sight-reading and musicianship skills, be literate in lyric diction across 5+ languages, have a command of multiple musical genres, and develop a keen business acumen including public speaking skills. The UMSL Voice Area is aware of the long list of what is needed to build a career as a musician (be it as a performer, educator, arts administrator, or many other industry jobs) and is committed to producing musicians that rise to the challenge. The UMSL program will equip vocal students with the tools necessary to thrive and be competitive musicians after graduating from the program.

To that end, the Forward Vision of the Vocal Area will include:

1. *Full Diction Curriculum in the First Year of Collegiate Study*. All voice majors will study Lyric Diction during their first two semesters. Singers will become well-versed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and learn the tools necessary to sing in English, Latin, Italian, German, and French.

2. *Sight-Singing as a Core Component*. Becoming the best sight-reader you can equates to real jobs in the professional world. Every student enrolled in applied voice lessons will spend 5 minutes of each lesson sight-reading excerpts geared toward their year in the program. First-years and Sophomore sight-reading will be aimed at preparing for the Sophomore Barrier. Junior and Senior sight-reading will include excerpts meant to continue their growth.

3. *Professional skills built into the curriculum.* Projects in Vocal Studio Class will include professional skills like resume building, interview skills, public speaking, and program note writing.

4. *Assigned repertoire will reflect a variety of genres.* While foundation in art song will continue, students will also be assigned music from a variety of genres throughout their study, which may include: Musical Theater, jazz, pop, country, Concert Spirituals, sacred, opera, operetta, oratorio, chamber music.

What is applied music, and what to expect from your weekly Voice Lesson
Each semester of applied study includes fourteen (14) 45-minute private lessons and a jury. (If you are an upper-level performance major, your lesson will be 60-minutes in length.) The first half of the lesson will typically focus on technique with your teacher. Your collaborative pianist will arrive at the half-point of your lesson, where typically you will work on solo vocal repertoire assigned by your teacher.

Who may enroll?
All music majors and minors whose degree program requires applied vocal lessons must enroll. Music majors and minors enrolled in applied music in voice must also be concurrently enrolled in University Singers, Voice Studio Class, and the Friday Music Seminar.

Lesson Cancellation and Make-up Policy
Instructors are not obligated to reschedule lessons canceled by the student or that may land on a school-sanctioned holiday. Lessons canceled by the instructor will be rescheduled at a mutually convenient time.

Final Exam (Vocal Jury)
Jury examinations are held during the final exam period of each semester. The jury is the concert examination for all levels of applied study and should be regarded as a performance, including appropriate attire. It is the student's responsibility to sign up for a jury time when sign-up sheets are posted.

Each student must bring multiple copies (completely filled out) of the Jury Exam Form (available from Dr. Worrell). This form will be used to record comments from the faculty jury and will serve as the written record of the student's progress. It will remain in the student's permanent file in the music office for review.

With the guidance of the applied instructor, each student will select their starting song/aria for the jury. At the start of the jury, the student will announce themself and their first selection. Other selections will be requested at the discretion of the jury faculty members. Specific jury requirements and literature information can be found in Appendix C.

Junior Standing Evaluation – During 4th Semester Jury
All voice majors are evaluated at the end of their 4th semester of vocal study in order to progress to the AP MUS 3459 or 4459 level. To pass the Junior Standing Evaluation, they must perform all 5 songs in a mini-recital format during their jury time. Order of repertoire is by discretion of the performer and their teacher. The repertoire studied during the 4th semester should show a variety of stylistic periods and languages.

In the event that a student does not successfully pass their Junior Standing Examination, they will be given one (1) more opportunity to do so, after one (1) more semester of applied lessons at the 1459 level. Failure to pass the second Junior Standing Examination will result in the student needing to enroll into a degree major with a non-vocal emphasis.

Exceptions
Only in extraordinary circumstances may a jury performance be delayed. Delayed juries must be recommended by the applied instructor and agreed to by the full voice faculty. Delayed juries are not a student option. A delayed jury should take place within two weeks of the onset of the following semester. It is the student's responsibility to prepare for and confirm scheduling of the delayed jury. If a student has successfully presented a junior or senior recital within the six weeks preceding the jury date, a jury may not be required for that semester.

Transfer Students
Students wishing to transfer from another college or university must first meet the general requirements for admission to UMSL. In addition, the student may be asked to take proficiency exams in aural skills and rudiments of music and placement exams in music history and literature, music theory, and music education.

Students wishing to transfer applied music credits from another college or university will be expected to audition using vocal departmental guidelines. Typically, transferring juniors or seniors will enter the program at the 1459 level and may use their jury examination to audition for upper-level credit. If they would like to enter UMSL Vocal Studies at the 3459 or 4459 level, they must perform the Junior Standing Evaluation before they begin study (meaning they must present a mini-recital of 5 songs showing differing periods/languages) before being admitted to the upper-level of study.

Attire for Solo Vocal Performances, including Juries
As a soloist, all eyes are on you. This is part of the thrill and importance of being a vocal performer. Your musicality and delivery of the text has the power to reach each listener in the audience and create a profound effect. Performing is not only aural, but also contains a visual component. Keep this in mind when you are dressing for performances and realize the power that can come from expressing yourself through your attire as well as your artistry. Below is a short list of guidelines for solo performance attire for all UMSL solo voice performance events, including juries.

1. Allow your attire to reflect your personality. Be yourself, while also remembering that the visual aspect is part of your performance.
2. A good indicator of successful attire is an outfit that you would feel comfortable wearing to an interview for an important job with your dream boss. You shouldn't need to tug at the clothing for it to stay in place, attire isn't wrinkled, etc. You needn't wear a suit unless it reflects your personal style. When in doubt, business or business casual will always be appropriate for vocal performances.
3. Hem lengths: While personal style is highly encouraged, hem lengths for skirts and dresses can be an issue when performing. This is because as performers we are almost always on a stage that is above audience eye-level; meaning that cute skirt might show more than you intended. Because of this, hemlines should be at knee length or 1-2 inches above knee length.
4. Undershirts: For those wearing button-up shirts who choose to begin with an undershirt layer, it is recommended that you purchase v-neck undershirts. When a crew-neck shirt is worn underneath, it almost always shows and looks less polished in contrast to the crisp button-up. The v-neck option is an easy switch that makes you look instantly more polished.
5. Comfort: In general, choose garments, shoes, and accessories that you feel comfortable in. Performing can be stressful enough without feeling like your pants are too tight or your bangle bracelets are making too much noise. Comfort is also important when choosing heel height. Make sure you can move easily and feel stable *while singing* in your shoes. If you feel comfortable, you will undoubtedly sing more freely and connect more easily with your audience.
6. If you have a question about appropriate attire, please consult with Dr. Worrell or your applied voice teacher directly.

Weekly Friday Seminar: 11-11:50 AM on Fridays
As part of your Applied Voice grade, attendance and participation in Weekly Friday Seminar is required. This seminar offers a rotating format including student recitals, guest lectures, faculty presentations, and masterclasses. Each session is designed to expand your understanding of musicality, literature, and professional practice. You can find more information about Friday Seminar on the corresponding Canvas Page.

Vocal Studio Class: 3:30-5:00 PM on Wednesdays
Location: The Lee Theater, Touhill Performing Arts Center

Vocal Studio Class is a core component of your Applied Voice instruction. All students enrolled in voice lessons are expected to attend and participate weekly. This class fosters a supportive learning environment where students grow through performance, observation, and discussion.

What to Expect in Studio Class:

- *Masterclass performance*: Students perform repertoire and receive feedback in a group setting.
- *Collaborative learning*: Engage with peers through observation, discussion, and shared insights.
- Discussion topics may include:
    - Voice science
    - Performance practice
    - Industry standards and current trends

Studio Class emphasizes mutual respect, constructive feedback, and community building among developing artists.

Note: If you have a non-negotiable course conflict with Studio Class, contact Dr. Worrell to request a one-semester exemption.

Instructor: Dr. Bethany Worrell
Collaborative Pianist: Zach Neumann

The Singing Actor's Workshop (EN PER 1560)
The Singing Actor's Workshop will be a training and performance course for the 21st century solo vocal artist. Each semester will feature a different project, and we will explore diverse vocal genres, making sure UMSL vocalists have a generous foundation of experiences. The vision for projects in the coming years include: Musical Theater, Opera, and Operetta productions and scenes, Jazz & Cabaret unit, and a Song Salon unit.

Fall 2025:

- Schedule: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4:00–6:00 PM
- Location: Whitaker Rehearsal Hall, Touhill PAC
- Instructor: Mr. Ben Worley
- Collaborative Pianist: Zach Neumann

Spring 2026:

- Schedule: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00–4:00 PM
- Location: AAB Recital Hall
- Instructor: Dr. Bethany Worrell
- Collaborative Pianist: Zach Neumann

Plans for future Vocal Workshop classes and productions include (in no specific order):

- Jazz Cabaret
- Song Salon
- Opera Scenes
- Opera Production
- Opera One-Acts
- Musical Theater Scenes
- Performance Skills Courses

Master Classes
Throughout the course of the year there might be cross-studio Master Classes (outside of Friday Seminar Class) sponsored by the Vocal Department. These Master Classes may feature visiting guest artists. All students taking applied lessons are required to participate in these classes. Participation is defined by audience attendance as well as directly performing in a Master Class. These events will be announced well in advance of their designated date and it will be the student's responsibility to resolve any scheduling conflicts that prohibit the attendance of these classes.

How much work should I expect each week?
The registrar's office lists that on average, students should expect 3 hours of outside work per credit hour for each course you take. **Applied lessons have a different expectation**, as the majority of voice students are registered for 1 credit (this is mainly so that all music credits fit into your schedule without causing extra over-enrollment fees). If you only practiced 3 hours/week, you wouldn't make the progress you anticipated upon enrolling at UMSL.

If you are a music major and Voice is your primary instrument, singing is your main vehicle to interact with the musical world. Cultivating your instrument, technique, and artistry **every day** is essential to succeeding as a musician, no matter what profession you intend on entering (choral conducting, performance, music business, etc.) You are encouraged to carve out time every day to dedicate to your instrument. While you only have one voice lesson a week, having an exemplary understanding of your voice, talent, artistry, and technique is the end goal of your four years at UMSL. Work hard for your artistic expression and ease of production; you deserve to thrive as a musician with your principal instrument.

You will receive specific expectations regarding daily and weekly practice from your applied voice teacher.

Music Literacy
Keep in mind that we as musicians must "speak" multiple languages. While completing your studies at UMSL, you will learn and be asked to speak/read the following at a high level:

- *Standard musical notation*
  These are the skills you will learn and hone in Aural Skills, Music Theory, choir, and voice lessons. Sight-singing, understanding harmony, reading different clefs and time signatures; all of these skills join together to form the language of music. Devote time every day to improving your music literacy; the investment will pay dividends as you make your life as a musician.

- *International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)*
  The IPA skills you learn and use in Diction class, choir, and voice lessons is a second language that is necessary to thrive as a singer. Your challenge while at UMSL is to make IPA a second language that runs through your mind while preparing any text. By refining your vowels/consonants and having a firm grasp on the precise sounds you produce, you will be able to learn texts quicker and be an even better contributor to ensembles.

What kind of homework will I be assigned as part of Applied Vocal Study?

Applied Vocal Study homework will likely include all of the following throughout the semester:

1. Daily practice sessions
    a. Vocal Journal
2. Repertoire Preparation, including:
    a. Translation work
    b. Diction (pronunciation) work
    c. Song analysis worksheets
3. Readings (including written responses)
4. Listening assignments (including written responses)

Appendix A
Applied Music: Voice
Course Levels and Descriptions

Applied Music 1459
Undergraduate vocal music majors and minors are required to take four (4) or more semesters at the **1459** level. Credit from another institution may count toward this requirement at the discretion of the voice faculty in consultation with the Music Department Chair.

It is primarily the student's responsibility to keep track of their course-level status in the Applied Music curriculum and to consult the applied instructor regarding the advancement jury.

Each student's applied instructor will determine specific repertoire based on an assessment of the singer's abilities and goals. More information can be found in Appendix C.

Advancing to upper level voice credit (Junior Standing Examination)
After successfully completing four (4) semesters of study at the **1459** level (or the equivalent of vocal area approved transfer credit), a student must take a jury for, and pass a Junior Standing Examination in order to advance to the **3459** or **4459** level. To pass the Junior Standing Examination, the student must demonstrate sufficient musical and vocal excellence, appropriate styles in contrasting periods and languages of the classical vocal repertoire, and a quality and pace of work appropriate to the successful presentation of future required recitals. Criteria are listed on the jury exam form included in Appendix D. In the event that a student does not successfully pass their Junior Standing Examination, they will be given one (1) more opportunity to do so, after one (1) more semester of applied lessons at the **1459** level. Failure to pass the second Junior Standing Examination will result in the student needing to enroll into a degree major with a non-vocal emphasis.

Applied Music 3459
To study at the **3459** level, students must have successfully completed all **1459** requirements and passed the Junior Standing Exam. All undergraduate degrees (*except the Bachelor of Music in Performance major)* require a minimum of three (3) semesters of study at the **3459** level followed by a senior recital. (See Appendix B for recital requirements.) Each student's applied instructor will determine specific repertoire based on an assessment of the singer's abilities and goals. Please see Appendix C for more information.

Applied Music 4459 (candidates for the Bachelor of Music - Vocal Performance)
To study at the **4459** level, students must have successfully completed four (4) semesters of study at the **1459** level and passed the Junior Standing Exam. Criteria are listed on the jury exam form included in Appendix D. Performance majors are required to study for four (4) semesters at the **4459** level.

Performance candidates must demonstrate exceptional artistry, musicianship, facility with foreign languages, and professional vocal potential. This includes musical understanding of contrasting styles and periods and the ability to learn appropriate literature with expediency. Additional information can be found in Appendix C. Students studying at the **4459** are required to present solo junior and senior recitals. Recital requirements can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix B
Recital Requirements
(all majors)

Junior Recital Requirements *(Bachelor of Music - Performance)*

Juniors in the music performance degree must present the equivalent of a solo recital (at least 30 minutes of music) that includes music from three (3) major stylistic periods and uses at least three (3) languages (including English). Repertoire may be chosen from previous semesters of study and will also include additionally assigned new repertoire.

In preparation for the performance, students must prepare program translations of all songs in foreign languages. The printing of programs and copying of any notes or translations will be the student's responsibility. The program copy must be approved by the student's teacher and submitted through the Music Office four (4) weeks prior to the date of the Performance.

Program dates should be reserved in consultation with your instructor and accompanist. Rehearsal times must be reserved and scheduled, in consultation with the student's instructor and accompanist. A hearing must be scheduled at least five (5) weeks in advance of the program, for programs held at the Touhill PAC and four weeks in advance, for programs held at other venues. All selections must be fully memorized at the time of the hearing. A copy of the recital program (including all texts and translations) must be surrendered at the time of the hearing. Failure to do so will cause the student to fail their recital hearing leading to the postponement and possible cancelation of their recital.

Senior Recital Requirements *(Bachelor of Music - Performance)*

Seniors in the music performance degree must present a solo recital (at least 45 minutes of music) that includes music from four (4) major stylistic periods and uses at least four (4) languages (including English). Some repertoire may be chosen and presented from previous semesters of study, only upon the instructor's consent.

In preparation for the performance, students must prepare translations of all songs in foreign languages. The printing of programs and copying of any notes or translations will be the student's responsibility. The program copy must be approved by the student's teacher and submitted through the Music Office at least five weeks prior to the date of the performance.

Program dates should be reserved in consultation with your instructor and accompanist. Rehearsal times must also be reserved and scheduled, in consultation with the student's instructor and accompanist. A hearing must be scheduled at least five (5) weeks in advance of the program, for programs held at the Touhill PAC and four weeks in advance, for programs held at other venues. All selections must be fully memorized at the time of the hearing. A copy of the recital program (including all texts and translations) must be surrendered at the time of the hearing. Failure to do so will cause the student to fail their recital hearing leading to the postponement and possible cancelation of their recital.

Senior Recital Requirements

(Bachelor of Arts in Music, Bachelor of Music Education, and Bachelor of Music w/ Elective Studies in Business)

The recital requirements for these degree programs is the same as described in the paragraph on Junior Recitals (B.M. Performance). Upon recommendation of the instructor and agreement or the voice faculty, this requirement may also be fulfilled by performing a minimum of two to four selections on each of three Friday Student Recitals (Friday Seminars) within the same semester. The quantity and newness of the selections required to be sung on each of the student recitals is left entirely to the teacher's discretion. The repertoire should represent different stylistic periods and languages and may be chosen from repertoire studied during previous semesters of study, but must include new repertoire as well.

Appendix C:
Repertoire Guidelines and Jury Expectations

Repertoire Expectations
Minimum Expectation: Each singer *must* complete the minimum expectation to receive a passing grade in voice lessons. As you grow, continue to champion more and more repertoire. This will ready you for the professional world. Keep in mind that each semester contains fourteen (14) weeks. At no time in your degree progress are you expected to learn more than one (1) song per week. With the "On Deck" approach, you will be able to transfer a number of songs to the next semester, making the minimum even more attainable. (See "On Deck Songs" on p. 11.)

Our program at UMSL is structured to help you become the best musician possible in four (4) years, no matter your degree program. When you embark into the professional world, you will be expected to learn music quickly and accurately while leaving your own artistic mark. The minimum expectation is in place to ensure that every UMSL voice major is challenging themselves throughout the semester to cultivate a balanced repertoire list for use in the professional world.

Voice Level	Semester	Minimum Repertoire	Jury
Applied Music 1459	1st & 2nd Semesters	4 songs	4 songs (2 languages)^
Applied Music 1459	3rd & 4th Semesters	5 songs	5 songs (3 languages)
Applied Music 3459	Each Semester	6 songs	6 songs (4 languages)*°
Applied Music 4459	Each Semester	7 songs	7 songs (4 languages)*

^ First-year students: Languages included in Jury should reflect languages studied in Diction class. (Latin and Spanish may also be included, but in addition to the required English, Italian, German, and French.)

° For Applied Music 3459, students must sing in 4 languages throughout each academic year. Languages may be split up by semester (for example, a student could sing in Italian and German in the Fall and English and French in the Spring, and this would complete the requirement.) The aim of this guideline is to encourage students to take a deep dive into a language or composer and begin creating sets for their recitals early on in their education.

*If a student presents a Junior or Senior recital, they do not need to present a Jury that semester.

4 necessary languages for all Vocal Majors include:
1. English
2. Italian
3. French
4. German

If a student wishes to include repertoire in languages other than the 4, that is great and encouraged. A list of possible, but by no means an exhaustible list, follow:
1. Latin
2. Spanish
3. Russian
4. Ukrainian
5. Portuguese
6. Any other language you would like to explore.

On-Deck Songs: These are songs/arias that are works in progress. They need not be memorized, and should be in all different stages of working. Students are encouraged to think of the repertoire learning process as a machine that continues to manufacture products. These are the general stages of song learning:

1. Read poem / research poet / write 1 paragraph bio of the poet / write 1 sentence summary of what poem is about in your own words.
2. Listen to at least 3 professional recordings of the song/aria. Fill out song log sheet and include your thoughts about style, performance, what inspires you.
3. Learn rhythms
4. Learn pitches
5. IPA the text, translate foreign texts, look up words you don't know in English and foreign language repertoire
6. Put text with melody
7. Continue to nuance your performance, listen again.
8. Memorize song and incorporate memory into performance.

Ideally, throughout the semester, you will have a variety of songs/arias in various stages of preparation and readiness of performance. By the end of the semester you should have a certain number of polished repertoire (see above table), which you will be ready to perform at your jury.

Repertoire from Semester to Semester

Due to the nature of the "On-Deck" Repertoire system, some of your repertoire might carry over to the next semester. Here are the guidelines of what may be allowed as continued repertoire (in terms of the Vocal Area Curriculum.)

1. Any song/aria that has been presented in a jury may NOT carry over to the next semester
2. Any song/aria that has been memorized or has been submitted in the "polished" rep list may NOT carry over to the next semester.
3. Any song/aria that is not yet memorized MAY carry over to the next semester.
4. Your voice teacher must sign off on which songs carry over to the next semester.

The "On-Deck" system is meant to teach students to be as ready for the professional world as possible throughout their study at UMSL. As a professional musician, you will always have works in progress that you are getting ready for a performance further out (or to simply advance your own study and technical versatility.) As a pro musician, you will also have gigs that come up faster that you must cultivate for performance quickly. To practice the "On-Deck" method means that UMSL students will be more ready to enter the professional world than if they only had to work on 4-7 polished songs a semester.

Challenge yourself to add repertoire to your list, while also learning how to balance the amount of polished repertoire expected from you. As you grow in the program, more polished rep will be expected, and if you have a good amount of songs "On-Deck," you will find that the required polished repertoire is easily accessible.