UNDERGRADUATE CONCENTRATIONS AND THE CONFERRAL OF HONORS IN COMPOSITION

The following guidelines are designed to be read by the student and made public.

A. The nature and process of concentrations.

In addition to required coursework, the composition concentration consists of a “senior concentration recital” in which public performances of a substantial portfolio of original works takes place. The details of the portfolio and the performance are to be determined by the concentration advisor in consultation with the student; for example, the number of pieces may be many or few, their duration may be short or long, the media may vary from student to student, and the performance setting may be traditional or untraditional.

However, formal, detailed program notes and/or an oral presentation must accompany the performance.

B. The meaning of honors; the criteria and standards by which honors cases are to be evaluated.

Stanford students are very intelligent, capable, and hard-working individuals. We may presume that a baccalaureate degree from Stanford already indicates these fine qualities. Students who elect to undertake a concentration demonstrate special enthusiasm, creativity, and industry. Likewise, their successful completion of the concentration automatically denotes these qualities and indicates the completion of an undergraduate capstone project.

However, honors will be reserved exclusively for those students whose talent, creativity, achievement, and effort in composition exceed the already high expectations of the university. Excellence in composition is not a high enough criterion for honors; the student who is awarded honors must be truly exceptional. Honors suggests a rare individual who may be measured by a higher standard, i.e. work that is already at the graduate level. Honors is truly a mark of the highest and rarest distinction.

In order for the conferral of honors in composition to take place, the composition concentration recital, together with the submitted portfolio of corresponding scores, must, in itself, be a sufficient representation of this high standard.

C. The process for concentrations and the conferral of honors.

1. The student will request a date for the concentration concert and secure approval by the office staff. By three months before the date of the concert, the student will inform the undergraduate coordinator of the need to form an ad hoc concentration committee consisting of the concentration advisor plus two additional faculty members (preferably composers). The student will also propose a list of faculty for this committee. The undergraduate coordinator will inform the composition faculty of this request and they, in turn, will determine who is to serve on the ad hoc committee. See Guidelines for Planning a Concentration Recital.
2. Copies of the scores of the pieces to be performed and copies of the program notes and/or lecture notes will be given by the student to the concentration committee and the concentration advisor by one week prior to the performance.

3. Immediately following the performance (or at a later date if otherwise specified) the ad hoc concentration committee will meet to determine if the concentration was successfully completed. In addition, the concentration committee—with the concentration advisor as a non-voting member except as a tie-breaker—will determine if the student is to be recommended to the undergraduate committee for honors.

4. The undergraduate committee will determine if the grade point average is sufficient for honors, and will check to see that there are no outstanding incompletes, missing courses, or other blemishes on the student’s transcript. Except for this perfunctory check, it is assumed that the undergraduate committee will approve the recommendation of the ad hoc concentration committee.

5. Unless the student hears otherwise, he or she may assume two things:

   • The concentration project was successfully completed; and
   • Honors was not awarded.

D. The relationship of composition to the other programs in the music department.

The nature and process of concentrations in composition and the criteria and standards for the conferral of honors in composition are unique. It is the determination of the faculty—both the composition faculty and otherwise—that there need be no particular equivalency among the music department’s programs in regard to the concentrations and honors.