



JACKSONVILLE STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS,  
HUMANITIES, AND SCIENCE

DAVID L. WALTERS  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Undergraduate Voice Area Handbook



This document is designed to answer frequently asked questions about the voice area. Students are responsible for knowing and following all the information contained in this handbook, along with all school policies and procedures outlined in the university catalog. Should you have any questions about any details included here, please consult with your applied teacher, advisor, or the department chair. We wish you every success in your endeavors and are here to assist you as part of your Student Care Team.



## **Table of Contents:**

### Websites

Department of Music Website: <https://www.jsu.edu/music/>

Voice Area Website: <https://www.jsu.edu/music/voice/handbook.html>

Jacksonville Opera Theater Website: <http://jacksonvilleopera.org/>

Please be sure to friend a current voice major or faculty member so that you can be invited to the “JSU Voice Majors and Minors Facebook” page. Weekly and last-minute announcements are often posted here!

### Voice Lessons

Teacher Assignments

Attendance Policy

Communication

Lesson Preparation and Practice

Collaborative Pianists

### Checkpoints

Freshman Technical Aptitude Checkpoint

Remedial Coursework

Juries

Mid Degree Assessment

Repertoire Requirements

### Recitals

Junior/Half Recital

Senior/Full Recital

Recital Hearings and Adjudication of Recitals

Programs and Program Notes

### Vocal Health

### Appropriate Attire

# Voice Lessons

A successful audition is required for students wanting to take lessons as a major, primary, secondary, minor, or non-major. Please see the audition website for more information (<https://www.jsu.edu/music/scholarships/index.html>) or contact a JSU voice faculty member. Before registering, students who wish to switch from one primary area to another are required to audition/re-audition before the faculty of that area.

In the David L. Walters Department of Music, you are registered to receive twenty-four, 50-60-minute private lessons with your applied studio teacher during one academic year. Most teachers give one lesson each week. Referred to as one-hour lessons, the extra few minutes should enable students to make it to their next class or appointment on time. Make certain that you understand your teacher's syllabus and lesson schedule. Every voice studio essentially uses the same syllabus, with a few personal modifications. It is imperative that you read and understand what will be required of you in your lessons and preparation. Students are assigned lesson times based on their schedules and faculty availability. While applied faculty do their best to work around all conflicts, students should let work supervisors know that lesson times, as your weekly applied class, take precedent over work and extracurricular scheduling. If you are concerned that you are not receiving the requisite number of lessons or have a problem with the frequency of your lessons, please notify your advisor or the department chair. Students with unexcused absences and/or insufficient practice time/progress forfeit their right to the allotted number of lessons.

## Teacher Assignments

The JSU Voice Area is unusual, in that it operates on an open-studio policy. This means students are free, welcomed, and encouraged to observe a lesson taught by another applied studio teacher other than their own, or they may request a lesson from another studio teacher other than their own. It is assumed that communication with your applied teacher has already taken place at some point in the process out of courtesy for all involved.

Teacher assignments will be made by the Full-Time Voice Faculty. Studio assignments will be posted in a timely manner via official JSU email. At the beginning of study, the applicant may indicate a teacher of his/her choice before formal assignments are made. The number of openings in a studio will vary from year to year, but a student's teacher request is honored *if/when possible*. An applicant may contact and audition for a particular teacher prior to matriculation. The teacher may then request that this student be placed in his or her studio if he or she wishes.

Your voice teacher is among the most vital sources in helping you make academic and career decisions, both large and small. As in any relationship, sometimes there are misunderstandings or personality conflicts that can cause difficulties. Should issues arise which require discussion and/or resolution, you should first discuss these problems directly with your teacher as they occur. Should you feel that the issues are unresolved and/or have the sense that you cannot discuss these problems with your teacher, you are encouraged to discuss them with your advisor or the department chair. Studio changes will be determined by studio availability and conflict resolution.

## Attendance Policy

Private lessons constitute the core performance study for every student. If a student needs to cancel a studio lesson for any reason, the student should immediately inform the studio teacher within 24-48 hours of the absence. In cases of documented illness or other emergency, the teacher will attempt to make up missed lessons at a mutually convenient time if possible. The studio teacher is not obligated to adjust lesson times or make up lessons that were canceled for non-illness/non-emergency reasons. Any student who has two consecutive unexcused absences in his or her private lessons will be required to see their advisor before lessons may resume. Unexcused absences may result in the final course grade being reduced by one letter grade. **Three unexcused absences result in failure of the course.** Students with consistent tardiness or unpreparedness (including low practice) forfeit their right to a make up lesson.

Students enrolled in applied voice lessons are **required** to attend studio class every Friday at 1:45 pm in the recital hall or otherwise designated location. Instrumental primaries should attend their own primary studio class but may be asked to perform at least once in Voice Studio. Absences from studio class do count towards your 3 unexcused absences resulting in failure of the course. Communication is required so that any conflicts can be adjusted, or a substitute project given.

Students enrolled in applied voice lessons are required to attend Student, Faculty, and Guest **Vocal** Recitals, Workshops, and Master Classes. Communication is required so that any conflicts can be adjusted, or a substitute project given.

Voice Primaries are required to perform in C&R throughout the semester. See your applied teacher for expectations concerning this.

## Communication

The voice area communicates using many methods. Most announcements are made through the *Facebook group for "JSU vocal majors and minors."* All official communication will take place through an official JSU email. It is important for students to monitor their official stu.jsu.edu email on a daily basis. Having an adequate academic etiquette is an essential component for a professional university experience. Therefore, all personal communication via email among students and instructors should be respectful and timely. Every email must include a salutation and a signature and should address the academic issue at hand coherently and in full sentences. All disrespectful behavior, including poor email etiquette, may be reported to your academic advisor and department chair. Poor email etiquette is subject to silence on the professor's part until the student emails in a manner appropriate to the academic and professional environment.

## Lesson Preparation and Practice

Students must come to lessons prepared and with noticeable progress made on any assignment given in the last lesson. Preparedness is determined by your professor. Lack of preparedness may result in a lowered or failing grade for that lesson and/or dismissal from the lesson.

You absolutely *must* practice regularly. Your practice IS your homework each week! Your success as a singer depends largely on consistent practice and the application of what you learn in your lesson. Remember that self-motivation is your most valuable tool in learning to sing your best. Each student is required to maintain a daily practice schedule of at least 5 out of 7 days a week.

- Voice Secondary/Music Minor: 4 hours of practice per week
- General Music Primary: 6 hours of practice
- Music Ed Primary: 6 hours of practice
- Voice Performance: 7 hours

The Voice Area requires students to video record practices and lessons. Students should consider the following sources, as convenient to their personal situation: YouTube Links, mp3 file upload, Canvas Studio, Collabra, etc. It is the student's responsibility to provide their own recording (audio and video) devices.

Students enrolled as Voice Primaries are required to participate in the National Association of Schools of Music Competition--Classical Division every spring. Students should plan this in their budget early in the fall semester (registration fee, travel, meals, housing if needed). Students are also encouraged to consider other vocal competitions and summer programs. See you teacher for details, if interested.

## Collaborative Pianists

Applied music students are expected to engage the services of a collaborative pianist in a timely fashion to play for lessons, rehearsals, and performances. A list of pianists is available outside MH 205, although the applied teacher may opt to assign you a pianist. Collaborative pianists are available on a private, free-lance basis. Fees for free-lance pianists typically range from \$250 to \$450 per semester depending on the level of experience of the pianist and the amount and difficulty of repertoire to be prepared. Compensation for these services within 3 weeks of the start of the semester is the responsibility of the student. While the list of pianists is provided through the school, all arrangements with these pianists (contracting, scheduling, and payment) are the exclusive responsibility of the student. Please see the "Guidelines for Working with Collaborative Pianists" below.

### Guidelines for Working with Collaborative Pianists

1. The student is responsible for contacting the pianist in advance to allow for adequate preparation of repertoire for rehearsals, lessons, and performances. This demonstrates respect for the pianist's time and other performing commitments as well as a desire for a high-quality musical experience.
2. Lack of payment to a collaborative pianist will result in them not playing for lesson, rehearsals, and juries, which will result in a failing grade for the semester. Payment should take place within 2-3 weeks of pianist procurement.
3. **Pianists are not there to teach you notes and rhythms.**
4. Music should be given to the pianist as soon as it has been assigned in the format that the pianist desires. *Do not wait until you wish to rehearse to get the pianist the music. Be sure all the notes are on the page.*
5. A minimum of 24-hour's notice is to be given for cancellation or rescheduling of rehearsals, lessons, or other engagements. Meetings canceled with less than a

24-hour notice, unless the direct result of an emergency, will only be rescheduled at the pianist's discretion with no reimbursement. Any student who is 5+minutes late to an accompanying rehearsal will forfeit their right to that rehearsal.

6. Know the best way to reach your pianist. Pianists have been advised to respond to messages in a timely fashion; however, a soloist should not assume that the pianist "got the message" and should keep calling or messaging until confirmation is received.

In conclusion: In working with freelance pianists, students should show consideration for the pianist's time by procuring her/his services well in advance, by making sure she/he has the music, being on time to all rehearsals, coming prepared to each rehearsal, and by discussing all fees and how they are to be paid up front. Student's found mis-using a pianist's time and resources will be subject to a grade reduction appropriate to the offense as discussed by the voice faculty.

## Checkpoints

### Freshman Technical Aptitude Checkpoint

The student must demonstrate the necessary technical aptitude, progress, and practice/preparation to ensure completion of the degree in a timely manner. At the student's second semester jury, discussion will take place between jury committee and student to determine if the student should proceed with primary applied voice or if they will be required to have remedial coursework. The student will have the ability to challenge this decision at the next jury. Students should expect to discuss this even at the first semester jury if needed. Once this discussion has taken place, students may only seek continuance/appeal once via the next jury.

### Remedial Coursework

At the discretion of the teacher, a student may be required to register for secondary applied lessons or class voice to work on deficiencies that will allow them to succeed in primary applied lessons.

### Juries

Juries are assessed on the following criteria: Intonation/Timbre, Diction/Language Fluency, Expression/Artistry, Breath Management, Posture, Musicianship (notes, accuracy, rhythm, style, etc.), overall progress, and practice/preparation. Adjudicators will give constructive criticism aiding in the students' cultivation of these categories. Grades will be assigned accordingly. See the following link for a more exhaustive look at the voice exam assessment (TBD).

### Mid Degree Assessment

Skill in singing must be progressively developed to a level deemed as "artistic". While faculty understand that the four-year degree is set up to accommodate this expectation, students at JSU are given four semesters of voice study in which to demonstrate *adequate progress* toward the eventual achievement of this goal. At the end of four semesters, the

voice faculty assesses the student's progress and directly communicates one of the following to the student in a meeting following the MDA: (1) the student be able to continue in the major at the MU 334 level, (2) the student is denied continuation in the program based on demonstrating inadequate talent, skills, seriousness of purpose, etc., and should change to another field of study, or (3) the student may be placed in remedial lessons (MU 113) to allow more time for demonstration of the requisite skills, talent, seriousness of purpose, etc. A student who fails his MDA the first time may submit an appeal to the studio teacher. Per Department of Music Policy, this appeal will then be sent to all voice faculty for discussion and final approval/denial. An appeal for the failed MDA may only be submitted once.

### Assessment criteria:

1. Completion of English core and Math core requirements,
2. Completion of Class Piano II MU 171 requirements,
3. Completion of Theory IV and Aural Skills IV requirements,
4. Performance of an appropriate cross-section of music from all styles represented in the complete repertoire for your voice,
5. Completion of four semesters of Primary Applied Voice - documented by the submission of a cumulative repertoire list, and
6. The development of technical skills adequate to meet the needs of artistic self-expression. Among these skills are:
  - a. Seriousness of purpose, as seen in time management, discipline, weekly practice, professionalism within the studio, voice area, and music department at large,
  - b. The ability to memorize not only the basics but the details of a score, including, but not limited to,
    1. Phrasing,
    2. Sensitive use of dynamics,
    3. Interpretation and musical style, and
    4. Text.
  - b. The ability to sing in tune,
  - c. Technique appropriate to current level of development—FR, SO, JR, SR,
  - d. Demonstrate skills in languages: both proper pronunciation and the ability to use language subtly (consonants, vowels, attacks, etc.) as a tool to make singing "enhanced speech,"
7. The ability to read music at sight (a separate portion of the MDA), and
8. Participation in solo and ensemble departmental sponsored activities.

Please Note: A jury is a semester assessment, while the MDA is a cumulative assessment of the four semesters. The MDA is the benchmark to determine if a student can continue as a music major in his or her applied area. The MDA assesses all elements of progress seen on the rubric up to that point, in addition to the element of sight reading and a seriousness of development or commitment concerning practice and progress. For juries, the MDA, and all recitals, a rubric is used. One can pass the 4<sup>th</sup> semester jury assessment and not the MDA (but not visa versa). To summarize, the jury acknowledges the semester input by the student and any progress that may have been made in the one semester, while the MDA is cumulative.

## Repertoire Requirements for Voice Majors/Primaries\*

Students may be required to purchase music as directed by the instructor. IMSLP and Art Song Central (as well as other free music websites) may be used in place of anthologies when the song is available. Other websites exist where students may purchase a single download in the available key, including musescore, SheetMusicPlus, etc.

### Semester One

- 4 pieces covering English and Italian

### Semester Two

- 5 pieces covering English, Italian, and German
- One Aria may be substituted if deemed appropriate by the teacher

### Semester Three

- 6 pieces covering English, Italian, German, and French
- One Aria may be substituted if deemed appropriate by the teacher

### Semester Four--MDA

- 6 pieces total including the following are required:
  - One art song in each language covering English, Italian, German, and French. Spanish may be substituted for Italian.
  - One oratorio aria
  - One operatic aria
  - One recitative must be included with either the oratorio aria OR the opera aria
  - Per teacher approval, one musical theater selection appropriate to the student's technical ability and voice type may be added to the MDA **AFTER** all required rep options have been finalized and begun in lesson. If required rep falls behind, the teacher may cut the MT piece.

### Semesters Five and Six

- Junior Recital Preparation semesters. Repertoire at the discretion of the instructor. An Oratorio aria **AND** an opera aria must be included on this recital. Only one group vocal piece (duet, trio, etc.) may be permitted on this recital. It is the student's responsibility to coordinate any instrumental accompaniments/groups by the time of the hearing. Per teacher approval, musical theater selection(s) appropriate to the student's technical ability and voice type may be added to the jury or recital **AFTER** all required rep options have been finalized and begun in lesson. If required rep falls behind, the teacher may cut the MT piece.

### Semesters Seven and Eight

- Senior Recital Preparation semesters. Repertoire at the discretion of the instructor. An Oratorio aria **AND** an opera aria must be included on this recital. Only one group vocal piece (duet, trio, etc.) may be permitted on this recital. It is the student's responsibility to coordinate any instrumental accompaniments or groups by the time of the hearing. Per teacher approval, musical theater selection(s) appropriate to the student's technical ability and voice type may be



added to the jury or recital **AFTER** all required rep options have been finalized and begun in lesson. If required rep falls behind, the teacher may cut the MT piece.

*\*At the discretion of the applied teacher, participation in a large-scale production can count for some of the repertoire requirements of the Applied Lessons for regular juries. Mid-semester rep substitutions due to voice changes may also be determined per the discretion of the studio teacher.*

## Repertoire Requirements for Voice Minors/Secondaries/ Non-majors\*

### Semester One

- 4 pieces covering English and Italian

### Semester Two+

- 5 pieces covering English, Italian, and at least one additional language
- By the approval of the voice faculty and per faculty availability, non-major voice students may elect to give an informal, no-credit recital, limited to 30 minutes in length in the Semester 4. The student is responsible for all details pertaining to the recital.
- Majors and Minors are expected to give a jury each semester, but both the jury and repertoire for Secondaries are subject to teacher discretion

## Recitals

### Junior/Half Recital

- See Repertoire Requirements above for Semesters 5-6 for Primaries
- 2 Art songs representing **each** language (French, Italian, German, and English)
- One Operatic aria
- One Oratorio aria
- At least one substantial recitative
- Time Periods: selections from at least three time periods
- Time requirement: 25-40 minutes of music, no more than 50 minutes on stage, including bows
- Oratorio and Collaborative (group) works may use a musical score if desired. Scores should be held in a black choral folder.
- Performance majors should perform more advanced repertoire

### Senior/Full Recital

- See Repertoire Requirements above for Semesters 7-8 for Primaries
- At least 2 Art songs representing **each** language (French, Italian, German, and English) Additional languages are highly encouraged.
- It is strongly encouraged that a cyclic work or programmatic elements be included.
- At least One Operatic aria

- At least One Oratorio aria
- At least one substantial recitative
- Time Periods: selections from at least three time periods
- Time requirement: at least 40-50 minutes of music, no more than 50-55 minutes on stage, including bows
- Oratorio and Collaborative (group) works may use a musical score if desired. Scores should be held in a black choral folder.
- Performance majors should perform more advanced rep

## Recital Hearings and Adjudication of Recitals

A recital hearing will be conducted no later than four weeks before the proposed recital date. At the hearing, the recital will be performed in its entirety - in the programmed order for the vocal faculty. Anyone performing with the soloist in the recital must be present. The hearing will determine if the student will be allowed to give the recital. The hearing will consist of all full-time faculty and the student's primary applied teacher (if studying with an adjunct). It is the student's responsibility to contact the voice faculty once the date for your recital has been approved and ask them to be on the hearing. Students are required to notify faculty of hearing date options at least 5 weeks in advance of the recital date, giving ample time to find a compatible hearing time. A failed hearing can be appealed within two weeks of the first hearing. If passed, the recital may proceed. If the second hearing is also failed, the recital will be moved to the following semester and the student required to enroll in another semester of lessons.

All repertoire, including encores, must be presented at the Recital Hearing for approval on the recital. While songs may be dropped after the hearing, new or substituted repertoire may not be added after the Hearing.

All degree recitals are to be adjudicated by a faculty jury. The recital assessment should include the applied teacher, one other voice teacher (full-time), and one other music faculty member. Students are responsible for contacting faculty to be on their recital adjudication committee at least 1 week before the recital and should bring the 3 (filled-out) recital approval forms to the applied teacher prior to the recital. The recital grading form can be found here:

[https://www.jsu.edu/music/student\\_resources.html](https://www.jsu.edu/music/student_resources.html)

## Programs and Program Notes

Programs with accompanying Notes are to be made available to the applied teacher in their final format two weeks before the recital hearing. Failure to do so will result in the hearing being postponed. Program notes must include the following:

- Original language and translation for all songs in two columns side by side
- A short paragraph that speaks to each song or grouping to be performed

Programs must use the official department format. A rough draft of the program and program notes/translations must be submitted to the hearing committee at the time of the hearing. After the passed hearing, students must supply the final draft and any required information to the department secretary no later than one week before the recital. Failure to do so will result in the hearing being postponed.

# Vocal Health

Please read the article at this link: [Student Vocal Health Guide](#)

Additional Guidelines for Vocalists:

- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated (half your body weight in ounces at least!—more due to the heat, humidity, stress, allergens, and caffeine). “Sing wet; pee pale!”
- Avoid shouting, screaming, throat clearing, habitual coughing
- Treat any allergies, asthma, reflux, and other ailments affecting the voice. Contact your doctor if you need help determining diagnosis and treatment.
- Get plenty of sleep and exercise to reduce stress
- If sick, see the doctor, treat the symptoms, reduce voice use as instructed by your teacher, rest, hydrate, steam, etc. Do not come to a lesson if contagious! Ask your voice teacher for ways to practice while sick that do not use your voice. You still must get your practice in.

## Appropriate Attire

Appropriateness of dress is an important part of your training as a singer and educator. We request that you give thought to presenting a professional appearance in all educational settings. First, because you must learn to be comfortable in dress clothes. Second, because the art form itself, as well as your faculty and student colleagues, deserve this sign of respect. Students represent not only themselves but also the University and the vocal area. Any attendance or participation in public performances, workshops, master classes, recitals, and juries require that students dress appropriately. With that in mind, we offer the following industry-standard guidelines for these venues.

- **Countertenor, Tenor, Baritone, Bass-Baritone, Bass, etc.:** Suit or jacket with dress slacks, shirt and tie; **or** dress slacks/jacket and shirt without a tie. Be sure the jacket and slacks fit you well. Remember you need room to breathe! Polished dress shoes, matching socks, and your hair styled to be out of your eyes and away from your face.
- **Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Contralto, etc.:** Audition-type dress – length at the knee or below, never above the knee. When planning your clothing, it is preferable to have dresses with sleeves or a thick “strap” covering much of the shoulder. Professional-looking jumpsuits are also permitted. Solid colors are considered more professional than patterns. Black makes you disappear into the piano/stage curtain. Please wear shoes at a comfortable height (no more than 2” heels) to keep your posture balanced. Style your hair so that it is off your face and out of your eyes. When singing a “pants role” aria, pants are acceptable. Jewelry should accent, but not take over the outfit.
- **For applied lessons,** business-casual for all is the minimum required.

*This handbook describes policies and procedures for undergraduate voice students in the David L. Walters Department of Music at Jacksonville State University. Jacksonville State University and the David L. Walters Department of Music reserve the right to change the policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and information in this handbook at any time. Changes will become effective at the time the proper authorities so determine, and the changes will apply to both prospective students and those already enrolled. This handbook is a general information publication only and is not intended to, nor does it, contain all regulations that relate to students in the David L. Walters Department of Music.*