

Oberlin Conservatory
Of Music

Individual Majors
(IMCN)
Handbook

Based on the Individual Majors Handbook of the
College of Arts and Sciences

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Individual Majors in the Conservatory

An Individual Major focuses on an area or topic that cannot be studied adequately within an existing department or program major. An Individual Major leading to a Bachelor of Music degree may be designed with a concentration in a single Conservatory department or among two or more Conservatory departments. In some cases, Arts and Sciences courses may be an integral part of a student's major. Examples of possible concentrations include ethnomusicology, African-American music, liturgical music, pedagogy, arts management, as well as interdisciplinary approaches to teaching in the arts, etc.

Oberlin's diversity of departments and courses is rich and as a result, the proposal of an Individual Major is regarded as something extraordinary, more akin to an Honors designation. The Individual Majors' Committee will apply the strictest academic standards to such proposals. The Committee will be concerned specifically that an Individual Major draws together the strongest courses and resources that Oberlin has to offer into a curricular plan that is stronger than any of its parts.

Programs of study for an Individual Major must be based on teaching and course resources available at Oberlin. While a capstone or other special project might be best supported by a private reading, the majority of formal study for an Individual Major should be chosen from classes offered in the Conservatory and College of Arts and Sciences. (Please see information regarding off-campus study; for information about transfer of credit policies, please see the Conservatory section of the Course Catalog.)

Applying for an Individual Major

Application for an Individual Major is made to the Conservatory Individual Majors' Committee. In formulating the Individual Major, the student should seek the help and advice of one or more faculty advisors. Samples of previous proposals may be requested from the chairperson of the Individual Majors' Committee. Students may consult with the chairperson or other members of the Committee at any stage in the development of a proposal.

The usual deadline for declaring an Individual Major is the second semester of the student's second year. In practice, the major must be submitted no later than the first semester of the student's third year. No proposals will be considered from seniors.

The Individual Major Committee holds meetings to consider proposals or changes to approved Individual majors. Any proposals, modifications or other information for the Committee should be submitted to the chairperson.

Materials will normally be considered by the committee within two weeks following submission. The student and advisor(s) will be notified by letter soon thereafter that the proposal has been accepted, rejected, or granted conditional approval and returned for re-submission with suggested changes. Students and advisors should be aware that many proposals are returned for revision. Approved proposals will be filed by the Committee with the Registrar, to serve as the basis for certification by the Registrar of successful completion of the Individual Major when the requirements have been completed.

¹The Conservatory faculty approved the requirements for the individual Major listed in this handbook on April 14, 1998.

Individual Major Advisors

Advisor-advisee communication is a crucial facet of the Individual Major program. The Committee requires that proposals be carefully reviewed by the advisor(s) and that proposals represent the best use of time and resources. Advisors are asked to work closely with the student in the planning process by offering suggestions and pointing out alternatives. Advisors also continue to work with the student throughout her/his career at Oberlin so that changes in course offerings or in the student's plans and interests can be discussed and incorporated in the major.

For a proposed major with a concentration in a single Conservatory Department, a student must discuss the proposal with a faculty member who agrees to serve as the advisor. For an interdisciplinary proposal, the student must speak with two (or more) advisors: advisors will be from different departments within the area of the individual major or, in the case of cross-divisional majors, from both divisions. It is necessary that advisors be on campus during the course of the major program, and if an advisor has to leave campus, a replacement must be found.

One advisor must be designated as the principal advisor, who will have the primary responsibility for maintaining regular contact with the student's program. (See the following section on changes.)

In order to ensure that programs are given the attention they need, the advisor(s) is expected to meet at some length with the student. It is desirable for these to be joint meetings between the student and all advisors.

The initial meetings should be arranged by the student to discuss the preliminary proposal and to draw up the final draft. As a basis for these discussions, the student should submit a written draft to the advisor(s) for evaluation. Should it seem prudent, either the student or advisor may request that a member of the Individual majors' Committee participate.

Once a final draft is produced, the student should keep a copy for her/his own records, and give a copy to each advisor.

Advisors' recommendations are to be submitted on the forms provided and should contain a detailed evaluation based on the final draft provided by the student. Proposals will not be considered until these recommendations have been received.

The Individual Major Proposal

Title

The title should be appropriate for entry on the student transcript. Please avoid titles such as "composition and violin performance," because it would indicate a double major rather than an interdisciplinary one. A list of current Individual Major titles is available from the Associate Dean's Office.

Primary Rationale

The student's task in the primary rationale is to explain what he or she proposes to study and to convince the Committee that the major is consistent with the educational goals of the Conservatory. The primary rationale defines the area(s) of concentration (or unifying theme or several central issues/questions) covered by the proposed major. The student should write a primary rationale indicating the focus, direction, and purpose of the major, as well as its viability and suitability as an undergraduate field of concentration. In the case of an interdisciplinary proposal, a student must explain how the proposed

major represents a clearly definable interdisciplinary area. In particular, the Committee will look for clarification of the worth, viability, and appropriateness of the proposed Individual Major as a major at Oberlin Conservatory. Finally, the rationale must include discussion of how the proposed major will support the student's career aspirations.

List of courses

The student is responsible for submitting a list of courses that will constitute the major, as well as a grid showing the distribution of course work over the student's total semesters at Oberlin. All courses will be selected from the total course offerings and other resources of the Conservatory and College of Arts and Sciences. As with all Bachelor of Music degrees, an Individual Major must include 168 semester hours of course credits, 84 of which must be earned at Oberlin or in Oberlin College programs, 88 of which must be earned in Oberlin Conservatory courses (excluding those entitled "Liberal Arts") or in music courses completed elsewhere for which transfer credit has been awarded, and at least 32 of which must be in Arts and Sciences courses. Because of the pre-professional nature of the Bachelor of Music degree, an Individual Major will normally include the following courses and non-course requirements:

- 48 credits from the area of concentration
- Music Theory I-IV and the linked Aural Skills courses²;
- Two upper-division music theory courses;
- Introduction to Music History and Literature;
- Two music history courses (that may include ethnomusicology) at the 200-level or above, appropriate to the major;
- Four semesters of principal applied lessons with a faculty member
- Eight semesters of ensemble participation (appropriate to the major)
- Two semesters of secondary or class piano
- Sophomore committee (acquiring approval of an Individual Major may be the equivalent of a sophomore committee)
- Junior recital or project³

The proposal must include an explanation of the relevance of listed courses to the major. In the case of proposed courses with prerequisites, evidence of completion of any prerequisites or appropriate instructor's consent must be presented. The student must categorize courses as appropriate, and in each category include a brief explanation and rationale for the choice and status of the courses.

Alternative courses

Because courses may change due to staffing or scheduling, students are advised to identify direct alternative courses as appropriate and when possible. If changes become necessary, a student must receive her or his advisor's approval and then inform the Registrar and the Individual Majors' Committee chairperson of the change(s).

²Music Theory and Aural Skills Requirement: Students are expected to register for Music Theory and Aural Skills courses each semester until they have completed the requirements. Part or all of these requirements may be waived by placement examination when the student enters Oberlin. Music Theory I-IV and Aural Skills I-IV must be taken concurrently, e.g., a student will register for Music Theory I and Aural Skills I in the same semester. Under certain circumstances, with the permission of the appropriate division director and the Music Theory division director, students will be allowed to take Aural Skills IV and Music Theory IV separately. A student's aural skills requirement must be completed before the senior recital can be scheduled. Double-degree student will resolve any conflicts with these expectations in consultation with their advisors.

³In order to perform a junior or senior recital, a student must be registered for applied lessons during the semester the recital is performed.

Capstone course or project

One course or non-course requirement must be identified as a capstone course or project, and it will serve as the culminating experience of the Individual Major. The capstone course or project should be taken in the senior year. Its focus must reflect the specific theme of the major and provide an integrated overview of the diverse components of the major. In many cases, the capstone course or project will be a private reading, and it is essential to identify the instructor and to obtain her/his consent prior to submitting the proposal. If an existing, regularly offered course meets the above criteria, it may be listed as the capstone course or project. The Committee expects the student to provide a substantial description of the capstone course or project at the time of initial submission, together with written consent from the instructor(s).

Level of Courses

At least 24 hours above the introductory level are required; these courses should be clearly identified in the proposal. Some of this work must involve advanced study or performance, or be in-depth research.

EXCO Courses and/or Winter Term Projects

These are not usually included in an Individual Major proposal. See the course catalog for requirements & limitations.

Work not yet completed

The proposal must include at least twelve hours not yet begun at the time of submission, including the capstone course or project.

Transcript

A student must submit a copy of her/his current transcript with the proposal for an Individual Major.

Off-Campus Study

Off-campus work may be included if it is clear that it enhances the major. Normally, this component of the major, including courses taken Enrolled-Not-in-Residence, should not exceed one-third of the total hours of the major. The number of off-campus hours, their content, and the location of study must be approved in advance by the advisors, the Individual Majors Committee, and the Associate Dean. A student planning off-campus study should address this in her/his proposal.

Additional Useful Information

Senior Year

Early in the senior year, the student should meet with the advisors to ascertain the state of the major by comparing the transcript with the grid sheets, and report all deviations to the Individual Majors Committee.

Changes

Careful attention must be given to course selection, in as much as the Individual Majors Committee considers an approved major proposal to be a contract that the student agrees to fulfill in order to graduate. The Committee recognizes that some modifications may be necessary, but it cannot be stressed too strongly that such modifications must be approved in advance and submitted on a corrected grid sheet.

Extensive changes are those affecting the capstone course or the general plan and direction of the major; after consultation with advisors, a revised proposal must be submitted to the Individual Majors Committee together with new advisor recommendations. If the student has any doubt about whether a proposed change is extensive, he or she should consult with the Individual Majors Committee chairperson.

Minor Changes...

Are construed as additions, substitutions, or deletions of a course, or a class that is deferred to a later semester. As long as such changes do not affect the general plan of the Individual Major, minor modifications are made between the student and advisors. Advisor approval is indicated on an Individual Major change form and the student is responsible for forwarding this notification to the Committee chairperson.

Summary of Important Points About Individual Majors

- **An Individual Major includes:**
 - a) A concentration in a single Conservatory Department or an interdisciplinary core of courses
 - b) Conservatory course and non-course requirements
 - c) One capstone course or project
 - d) At least 24 hours of work above the introductory level
 - e) No more than one third of courses completed *off-campus*
 - f) 16 credits not begun at time of submission, including capstone course or project
- **Deadline**
 - a) The usual deadline for declaring an Individual Major is the second semester of the student's second year. No proposals from seniors are accepted.
- **Changes to an Individual Major:**
 - a) Extensive Changes (core courses, capstone course or project, changes in general description or rationale) must be approved in advance by advisors and Individual Majors Committee.
 - b) Minor changes are approved in advance by advisors and filed with Registrar and individual Majors' Committee Chairperson.

Honors in the IM

Honors in the IM may be proposed after the IM proposal has been approved, and during the junior year.

To be eligible for Honors in the IM, you must have:

- a B+ average in courses that count toward the major
- recommendations from both advisors.

To apply for Honors in the IM:

- Meet with your advisors to determine your eligibility. If eligible, you and your advisors should devise an Honors project. [An Honors program normally involves two consecutive courses (4 credit hours each) during the senior year.]
- Submit the proposed Honors program to the IM Committee chair for approval.
- The IM Committee chair will notify the Honors at Graduation Committee of the names of students approved for the IM Honors program.

Supervision

The advisors are responsible for supervising the Honors Project, you and your advisors should maintain close contact during the project semesters.

Evaluation

At the end of your senior year, you must pass a comprehensive examination on the Honors project. It is your responsibility to see to it that arrangements for such an examination are made:

The student is to request the advisors to prepare and administer jointly an examination which has the approval of the departments or programs of which the advisors are members. When the examination has been completed, both advisors and their departments or programs must concur on the degree of honors to be recommended (no Honors, Honors, High Honors, or Highest Honors).

Your advisors will inform the IM Committee chair as to the degree of honors to be recommended, as well as the grade to be awarded for the courses constituting the Honors program.

THE INDIVIDUAL MAJOR: STUDENT TIPS AND TIMETABLE

- Plan early: don't put off planning and submitting an IM proposal because you're not totally sure of what you're doing. Almost everybody changes their original proposal somewhat. Get started in your sophomore year.
- **Advisors:**
 - ✓ Choose advisors who are familiar with the IM process if you can (people who have been on the Committee, or have advised other IM students). If that won't work, learn about the IM yourself and make sure your advisors have the same materials and knowledge.
 - ✓ If you like working with someone, ask them to be your advisor. No single person will fit exactly your needs.
 - ✓ Remind your advisors to turn in recommendations when they are due.
 - ✓ Ask your advisors specifically about the strengths and weaknesses of written drafts for your proposal and their recommendations about how to make it better. Address these concerns before submitting your proposal.

- Please note that the entire process, from beginning through committee approval, may take many weeks. Developing a specific calendar of deadlines is an important first step.

Sophomore year – planning and proposing the IM:

- Shape your ideas for an IM and consult with the IM Committee chair.
- Find advisors and work with them to give the proposal initial shape—title, rationale, course list, capstone project.
- Draft your proposal and discuss the draft with your advisor(s.)
- Prepare a final version of the proposal, get advisors' approval, and submit it to the IM Committee chair (**Deadline:** normally, the end of the second semester of sophomore year, and no later than the first semester of the junior year).
- Advisors email their recommendations to the IM Committee chair.
- The IM Committee discusses the proposal, approves it or suggests changes.
- If necessary, you revise and resubmit your proposal.

Junior Year – implementing the IM:

- Begin the bulk of the IM coursework.
- Maintain regular contact with your advisors, especially at registration times.
- Propose minor or extensive course changes, if necessary.
- Propose an Honors program, if appropriate.
- At registration for the first semester of senior year, meet with your advisors to review progress, consider changes, and discuss the topic course.

Senior Year – finishing the IM:

- Finish the IM coursework.

Near the end of your senior year, the Registrar will check your transcript against the IM proposal and will certify completion of the IM. The title of your Individual Major is recorded on your official transcript. Congratulations!

Conservatory Individual Majors Committee

Conservatory Associate Dean for Advising & Retention, *ex officio*, chair

<https://www.oberlin.edu/dean-of-the-conservatory/staff>

Conservatory Bibbins 113

Form A = Cover Sheet (hard copy)
Form B = Primary Rationale, Course Grid Sheet, Course Rationale, Capstone Project Description (emailed)
Form C = Advisors recommendations (emailed by Advisors)

CONSERVATORY

INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL COVER SHEET – A

NOTE: Form A should be submitted to the Chair of the IM Committee as a hard copy. It should be hand-signed by you and your IM advisor(s.) All the other required forms should be submitted as email attachments. If the IM is approved, the set of forms you have submitted will be considered an official contract between you and Oberlin College. You will be expected to abide by this contract in completing your IM; any changes you may want to make to your IM will have to be approved by the IM Committee. The Registrar will use the same contract to certify the successful completion of the IM before you can graduate.

PLEASE FILL IN THIS INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF:

Your Name _____ T# _____

Current Class (check one) 1st sem. SO 2nd sem. SO 1st sem. JR

Please note that freshmen and seniors are not expected to propose individual majors.

Expected Graduation Date (MO/YR) _____ OCMR # _____

Oberlin Campus Phone # _____ Email Address _____@oberlin.edu

PLEASE LIST YOUR CURRENT MAJOR(S) AND/OR MINOR(S):

Will you be dropping your major(s) in order to add Individual Major? Yes No Maj: _____

IF IM IS APPROVED, CIRCLE MAJOR(S)/MINOR(S) ABOVE YOU WILL CONTINUE.

PLEASE WRITE THE TITLE OF YOUR INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL:

Please note that once approved, your individual major will be available to be read by other students upon request.

PLEASE CHECK THE MATERIALS YOU HAVE SENT AS EMAIL ATTACHMENTS:

Primary Rationale Course Rationale
 Course Grid Sheets for each semester Capstone Project Description

PLEASE LIST THE FACULTY ADVISOR(S) WITH WHOM YOU HAVE DISCUSSED YOUR IM PROPOSAL. *Their signature(s) on this page indicates that they discussed your proposal with you and have read the version presented to the Committee. Once approved they will act as your Individual Major Advisor(s).*

Advisor's Name _____ Dept./Prog. _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Advisor's Name _____ Dept./Prog. _____

Signature _____ Date _____

PLEASE SIGN AND DATE THIS FORM (Student Signature):

Signature _____ Date _____

INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL PRIMARY RATIONALE – B-1

NOTE: This form should be submitted to the Chair of the IM Committee as an email attachment from your Oberlin College email account. Please follow the instructions below when completing this form.

Your Name _____ **T#** _____

TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL:

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Write the rationale as an essay. Expand on and explain the IM title. Define the major focus of the proposed IM. The first paragraph of the essay must be an abstract i.e., a concise summary of what follows. Indicate the focus, direction and the purpose of the IM.*
 - *Do not exceed 750 words. Essay must be double-spaced in a 12-point font.*
 - *Make sure you use this page as the first page of your rationale.*
 - *See further instructions in the IM Handbook.*
-

INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL COURSE GRID SHEETS – B-2

NOTE: THIS FORM SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE CHAIR OF THE IM COMMITTEE AS AN EMAIL ATTACHMENT FROM YOUR OBERLIN COLLEGE EMAIL ACCOUNT. PLEASE FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW WHEN COMPLETING THIS FORM.

Your Name _____ T# _____

TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL:

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. *The grid sheets must represent course work in the individual major that has already been done, as well as course work that has yet to be completed.*
2. *In the "TYPE" column, please type:*
 - *INT - for introductory courses*
 - *ADV - for advanced courses*
 - *CAP – for capstone project*
 - *ALT - for an alternative to a course listed in the grid (list an ALT course immediately after the primary course it may substitute for)*
3. *In the "OFF CAMPUS" column, please provide the name of the institution and program where courses were or will be taken.*
4. *If more or fewer semesters are needed, please add or delete grids as necessary.*
5. *You may change the row height and/or the column width if necessary to fit the information you have to include.*

**Course work already completed or currently enrolled in
(in transcript order):**

Type	Off Campus	Department/ Program	Course #	Credit Hrs	Course Title	Instructor

Total Number of Credit Hours:

Future semester I course work - Year:**Total Number of Credit Hours:**

Type	Off Campus	Department/ Program	Course #	Credit Hrs	Course Title	Instructor

Future semester II course work - Year:**Total Number of Credit Hours:**

Type	Off Campus	Department/ Program	Course #	Credit Hrs	Course Title	Instructor

Future semester III course work - Year:**Total Number of Credit Hours:**

Type	Off Campus	Department/ Program	Course #	Credit Hrs	Course Title	Instructor

Future semester IV course work - Year:**Total Number of Credit Hours:**

Type	Off Campus	Department/ Program	Course #	Credit Hrs	Course Title	Instructor

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IM

- At least 48 hours in the major
- At least 24 hours in advanced courses above introductory level (generally this means courses with prerequisites)
- At least 16 hours of major work not begun at the time of submission
- Music Theory I-IV and the linked Aural Skills courses
- Two upper-division music theory courses;
- Introduction to Music History and Literature;
- Two music history courses (that may include ethnomusicology) at the 200-level or above, appropriate to the major;
- Four semesters of principal applied lessons with a faculty member
- Eight semesters of ensemble participation (appropriate to the major)
- Two semesters of secondary or class piano
- Sophomore committee (acquiring approval of an Individual Major may be the equivalent of a sophomore committee)
- Junior recital or project
- 32 Liberal Arts Credits

TOTAL CREDIT HOURS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL MAJOR (*must be at least 48 hours*): _____

ADVANCED COURSES ABOVE THE INTRODUCTORY LEVEL (*At least 24 hours*)

Credit Hrs	Dept /Course #	Course Title

HOW MANY HOURS IN PROPOSAL NOT YET EARNED (*Must be at least 16*).

Credit Hrs	Dept /Course #	Course Title

HOW MANY CREDITS TAKEN OFF-CAMPUS (Maximum is 1/3 of total in IM): _____

INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL COURSE RATIONALE – B-3

NOTE: This form should be submitted to the Chair of the IM Committee as an email attachment from your Oberlin College email account. Please follow the instructions below when completing this form.

Your Name _____ **T#** _____

TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL:

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Group the courses listed in the Course Grid Sheets by topic or department (for example, you can categorize them from introductory through advanced).*
 - *Briefly explain the function of each course in the Individual Major you are proposing.*
 - *Do not reproduce the entire Course Catalog description of each course, unless it is absolutely necessary in order to show its relevance to the IM proposal.*
 - *Make sure you use this page as the first page of your rationale.*
-

INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL

CAPSTONE PROJECT DESCRIPTION – B-4

NOTE: This form should be submitted to the Chair of the IM Committee as an email attachment from your Oberlin College email account. Please follow the instructions below when completing this form.

Your Name _____ **T#** _____

TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL:

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Please describe your capstone project and its relevance to your proposed major.*
-

INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL

ADVISOR'S RECOMMENDATION

NOTE to student: PLEASE FILL IN THE PORTION OF THE FORM ABOVE THE DOUBLE LINE AND FORWARD IT TO YOUR ADVISORS. Note to advisors: PLEASE COMPLETE THE PORTION OF THE FORM BELOW THE DOUBLE LINE AND EMAIL IT TO THE CHAIR OF THE IM COMMITTEE FROM YOUR OBERLIN COLLEGE EMAIL ACCOUNT. PLEASE USE THIS PAGE AS THE FIRST PAGE OF YOUR RECOMMENDATION.

Your Name _____ T# _____

TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PROPOSAL:

Advisor's Name: _____ Dept.: _____

1) PLEASE EVALUATE THE IM PROPOSAL BY TYPING "WEAK", "ADEQUATE" OR "STRONG" NEXT TO THE RESPECTIVE MATERIAL:

- PRIMARY RATIONALE
- COURSE SELECTION & RATIONALE
- CAPSTONE PROJECT
- OVERALL IM PROPOSAL

2) PLEASE INDICATE THE PRIMARY AREAS OF STRENGTH IN THE IM PROPOSAL:

3) PLEASE INDICATE ANY AREAS OF WEAKNESS OR RESERVATIONS:

4) PLEASE OFFER ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS: