

Applying to Schools as a Music Major



Hingham High School
School Counseling Department

Types of Programs

Conservatory

The main characteristic of a conservatory is that it offers focused, performance-intensive training for students who want to pursue a career in music. While conservatories generally emphasize music requirements, no two conservatories are alike. For instance, some encourage students to take non-music classes while others do not. Two waive tuition for undergraduates who get accepted. Be sure to check their websites to learn about the specific classes their students must take and other important requirements.

Conservatory, Music College and Music School within a University

Many universities house their own conservatory, music college or music school. It's not unusual to see their programs listed as a "conservatory education" but within a university environment that offers an NCAA football team, Greek life, and a host of other academic programs, non-music activities and opportunities. BM degree candidates are likely to have set music and non-music academic requirements, whereas BA students will have more flexibility in choosing courses as well as electives.

Music Departments

Many universities have exceptionally strong and highly-competitive music departments where students can major, minor or take electives in music. Ivy league schools typically have music departments as well, but do check as to whether the music education is performance or academically-focused. Others with less competitive music departments offer students an opportunity to major in music without auditioning. Students can choose to participate and audition in instrumental and vocal ensembles, orchestras and bands once they get to school.

Liberal Arts Colleges

Liberal arts colleges are great places for students who want to explore a variety of music options as well as other paths, but not commit up front to any one particular area. Many liberal arts schools have strong music faculty and excellent music course offerings. Since their focus is less on preparing students for high-powered auditions upon graduation, this is not the way to go if you dream of a job in a big city symphony or opera company.

From "What Type of Music School is Right" <http://majoringinmusic.com/finding-the-right-school-2/>

Music Degrees

Bachelors of Music (BA)-The degree may be awarded for music performance, music education, composition, music theory, musicology / music history (musicology degrees may be a Bachelor of Arts (BA) rather than a BMus) music technology, music therapy, music ministry, music business, music entertainment, music production or jazz studies.

Bachelor of Music (B.M., B.Mus., Mus.B. or Mus.Bac.) - The Bachelor of Music curriculum is a four-year program designed to develop not only students' performance abilities, but also their practical and academic skills. The core curriculum of this degree centers on applied lessons, ensemble participation, music theory, music history, keyboard proficiency, and humanities. A student who chooses the BM degree program is typically preparing to become a performing musician, music educator, composer, theorist, musicologist, or a professional in another musical field.

Bachelor of Music Education (MBE)- The BME degree prepares you for a career in teaching K-12 vocal and instrumental music, along with the preparation necessary to gain state licensure. Be sure to check licensure requirements in the state where you think you'll want to work, as this may inform your decision about where you'll want to go to school. As a BME student, your curriculum will include a combination of music education courses, conducting, music theory, aural skills, and music history. You will study a major instrument, take methods courses, and gain experience through observation and supervised teaching in classroom situations. You will student teach, attend workshops and events for current and future teachers, and gain exposure to a host of professional development opportunities. You will also take a required number of liberal arts courses as well as music technology classes.

Bachelor of Science in Music (BS)- The BS degree is offered at some schools where the emphasis is more business-oriented. Music business and music industry majors are likely to find themselves getting BS degrees. Some schools also offer the BS for music education and sound recording technology.

Music Minor- Minor in a related but separate field from your major can be a good complement to your major and may open up additional career doors when you graduate. Your minor will require fewer courses than your major, yet it still conveys a serious interest in a particular field when it comes time to look for a job or internship. Acceptance into a minor program may be based on application, audition, interview, and GPA, depending on the school and the program.

Double or Dual Degrees- Universities that house their own music colleges, conservatories or schools typically make it possible for students to get a music degree in conjunction with a degree in a separate field.

From "What Type of Music School is Right" <http://majoringinmusic.com/finding-the-right-school-2/>

Researching/Visiting Schools

1. Curriculum

- Does each music school offer what you want to study?
- What classes, ensembles and other musical groups are required in order to graduate?
- Are there foreign language requirements?
- What are the options for elective classes?
- If you have taken AP or IB exams, can you get credit for any of them?
- Are there any basic classes you can test out of?
- If you want to explore other areas, is a double or dual degree an option? Or can you take a minor? Will this require additional time to graduate?
- What classes or programs in addition to your major area of interest appeal to you?
- How flexible is the curriculum? What support is there for pursuing independent projects?
- Are there study abroad opportunities for music majors? Will it take you more than four years to complete your degree if you do study abroad?

2. Teachers

- Are there faculty you'd like to study with?
- How accessible are they for lessons, meetings, etc. ?
- Will they give you a sample lesson when you visit?

3. Facilities

- What facilities are available for what you want to study? How up-to-date are they?
- What kind of equipment and unique resources are available — and can you use them as an undergraduate?
- Are there enough conveniently located and readily available practice rooms? Can you use them 24/7? What are the pianos like in the practice rooms?
- Is there instrument storage in a safe, climate-controlled area on campus? Where is it, in relation to practice rooms and classrooms?

4. The Music Environment/Your Fellow Students

- What is the playing level of other students and where will you fit in (top, bottom, middle)?
- Are there students you will be able to learn from?
- How competitive are students with one another?
- How many undergraduate music majors are there and how many are in your area of study?
- Is there a graduate music program in the area(s) you're interested in?
- What is the student/teacher ratio?
- What is the average class size?
- Does the school sponsor musicians/groups in residence?
- What master classes have been offered within the past year?
- Is the school religiously affiliated? If so, will that affiliation be comfortable for you? Will you be accepted for who you are?

5. Applying

- If the music school is part of a larger university, do you need to apply separately to both?
- Do you need to submit SAT or ACT scores? If so, what were the average scores for students admitted to last year's freshman class?
- Will you meet the academic requirements?
- What was the average high school GPA for students admitted to last year's freshman class?
- Are transcripts and letter of recommendation required?

6. Auditions

- Are pre-screens required? If so, when are they due?
- When and where are auditions held?
- Do you need to bring an accompanist?
- If recorded auditions are acceptable, are they as competitive as live auditions?

7. Career Opportunities

- What career services are offered?
- What support is available for performing outside of classes?
- Is there a gig office?
- Is there support for students teaching private lessons? Is there space at the music school where you can teach? Does the school help promote this?
- What support is there for performing in music festivals and competitions?
- Are entrepreneurship classes or programs offered?
- Are there opportunities for students doing their own projects?
- Are internship opportunities available through the school during the school year and in the summer?
- For alumni: what services are offered and how long after graduation are these available?

8. Paying for School

- What is the total cost of attending? Include tuition, room, board, books, travel (going home for vacation, required travel to competitions and festivals), school fees, property insurance, and health center fees (and health insurance if you won't be staying on your family's plan).
- Are lessons included in the tuition or do they cost extra?
- Are academic and performance scholarships available? Do they continue for all four years? Are they adjusted for cost of living increases?
- What financial aid opportunities are available for music students?
- What percentage of students receive financial aid?

9. Housing

- Where do freshmen live? Sophomores? Juniors? Seniors?
- How is housing assigned?
- What kind of support will the school offer in finding housing?

10. Location

- Does the location of the school appeal to you and if so, why? Or — why not?
- What are the features of the campus and areas surrounding the school?
- What transportation options are there for leaving campus?
- Is having a car important? If so, where can you park it and how much does parking cost?
- What transportation options are there for getting home or to anywhere else that's important to you?
- Do you have family members or friends who live in the area?

From "10 Considerations for Visiting Music Schools" <http://majoringinmusic.com/10-considerations-for-visiting-music-schools/>

Performance Resume

A Performance Resume, much like an Activities Resume, documents a student's experiences in the field of music. Performance Resumes typically include:

- Education
- Ensembles
- Camps and Festivals
- Awards

Music Auditions

Many schools require a music audition. *It is important to review the admission and audition requirements at each school to which you plan to apply.*

Pre-Screenings

Schools that require pre-screens expect you to send recordings. The pre-screen information on their websites will indicate how they want you to do this — through an upload company such as Accepted or DecisionDesk, or through the mail.

If you make it through pre-screens, you'll need to decide whether to audition live on campus, live at a regional audition site if available, or through a recorded audition.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- At this stage in your musical development, how do you think you measure up in terms of talent and skills?
- What area(s) of music are you most interested in studying? Are you focused on music performance or on the more academic aspects of music?
- Do you know of specific faculty you'd like to study with, and who will help you develop as a musician? (Most schools allow you to express your preference for private music teachers but won't guarantee you your top pick.)
- In addition to music, what else do you want to study and learn?
- What makes you thrive and feel successful and fulfilled?
- At this point in your life, what do you think you will want to do with a degree in music?