

## FAQ: BA MAJOR in POPULAR MUSIC STUDIES

Don Wright Faculty of Music  
The University of Western Ontario

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### 1. What faculty and facilities do you have?

Western's Faculty of Music has three faculty specialists in Popular Music Studies (PMS). The PMS program is serviced by a 20-terminal music technology lab in Talbot College. Each workstation is fitted with a UA MkII quad core I/O, Logic, Pro Tools, Max/MSP, and other industry-standard recording and songwriting software packages. Western also provides access to a recording facility in the Faculty of Music, which is used for recording projects in PMS courses and occasionally for classical and spoken-word recording and game scoring. The tech complement includes: a hemi-anechoic chamber; ADAM A5X and A7X monitors; API 500 series with 2 Shadow Hills Mono Gama preamps; serial API 550B EQs; elysia mpressor; Toft ATB-08 mixing board; Apollo 16 I/O; Scarlett 16 I/O; Steinberg UR 28M I/O; microphones and stands.

### 2. What courses are in the major?

Like other majors at Western, the major in Popular Music Studies consists of selected year one pre-requisite courses which are followed by a module of 6.0 full-year required courses (or the equivalent in half-year courses):

MAJOR IN POPULAR MUSIC STUDIES

(<http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/Modules.cfm?ModuleID=20783&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=>)

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#### Admission Requirements

Recommendation of the Faculty on the basis of an interview. Completion of first-year requirements, including a mark of at least 60% in each of the following courses: [Music 1649A/B](#), [Music 1651A/B](#), [Music 1710F/G](#), [Music 1730A/B](#), and 1.0 course from: English 1020-1999; [Film Studies 1020E](#), [Film Studies 1022](#); [World Literature and Cultures 1030](#).

#### Module

6.0 courses:

**0.5 course** from: [Music 2700A/B](#), [2701A/B](#), [2702A/B](#).

**0.5 course** from: [Music 2736A/B](#)

**0.5 course** from: [Music 3730A/B](#), [3731A/B](#), [3737A/B](#)

**3.5 courses** from: [Music 2171A/B/Y](#), [Music 2695A/B](#), [Music 2700A/B](#), [Music 2701A/B](#), [Music 2702A/B](#), [Music 2734A/B](#), [Music 3713A/B/Y](#), [Music 3730A/B](#), [Music 3731A/B](#), [Music 3733A/B](#), [Music 3735A/B](#), [Music 3736A/B](#), [Music 3737A/B](#), [Music 3738A/B](#), [Music 3739A/B](#), [Music 4720A/B/Y](#), [Music 4735A/B](#), [Music 4740A/B/Y](#).

**1.0 courses** from: [English 2017](#); any 2000 level or higher Film Studies course; [Sociology 2106A/B](#).

### 3. May this major be combined with other majors or minors at Western?

The major in Popular Music Studies may be taken on its own or in combination with another major or minor (eg, Media, Information and Technoculture, Film Studies, Comparative Literature and Culture, Chemistry, French, etc.). We strongly encourage students to combine Popular Music Studies with another subject thereby giving students access to other faculty scholars, several of whom also specialize in popular music. A full list of majors and minors at Western and their admission requirements may be found in the Academic Calendar. Please note that, like other majors at Western, the major in Popular Music Studies occupies just six courses out of a total of twenty courses for an undergraduate degree.

#### **4. Would you describe the admission process?**

Students who apply for admission to the major will be sent a questionnaire to complete. Applicants also may choose to submit a portfolio of work in popular music (songs written, recorded performances, etc.). Students will then be invited to attend an interview and bring along a pre-recorded single-take MP4 audio/video file of the student performing with hands and face clearly visible. The MP4 files must be on a USB memory stick, and the student should also bring the file on another device as backup such as a smart phone or iPad. It's a good idea also to have your pre-recorded performance available to view on Vimeo or YouTube.

The Faculty of Music's Theory Placement Test should be completed online before the interview. If you prefer, you may write the Theory Placement Test on campus on your interview day. The Theory Placement Test contains written questions at the level of the Royal Conservatory's Grade 7-8 Theory (intervals, clefs, rhythmic notation, transposition of melodies, chords, chord progressions, harmonic analysis, and simple forms), as well as questions which test basic aural ability, that is, recognition of intervals, chords, and simple melodic dictation and identification of chord progressions.

#### **5. On which instrument(s) may I prepare the MP4 audio/video file?**

Musicians interested in the major in Popular Music Studies may, for their interview, prepare the single-take MP4 audio/video file on guitar (acoustic or electric), electric bass, keyboard, drums, or as a singer (please contact us if you play an instrument not listed). Requirements for specific instruments are given [here](#).

#### **6. Do I need to follow the MP4 file preparations strictly?**

Yes. Please prepare for the single-take recording as thoroughly as you would for a public performance. Please note that guitarists may use effects pedals for their solo, but we require the accompaniment and scales to be played with no effects, except for a small amount of reverb.

#### **7. If I fall short on the Theory Placement Test, may I still be admitted?**

Entry to all our programs is competitive, so it is best for you to do as well as you can on each aspect of the admission process. If needed, we suggest that you find a theory teacher to help you prepare for the test. However, the test is a diagnostic one, and as long as the other aspects of the interview are acceptable to us and you have the necessary high-school average for entry to Western and you are offered admission, then you may take our summer correspondence course to achieve the appropriate level in music theory.

#### **8. If I am applying as a vocalist or on an instrument other than keyboard/piano, what level of piano is expected?**

The ability to play the piano is not a requirement for entry to the BA Major in Popular Music Studies. If you are not a pianist, we will not ask you to play the piano for us at the interview.

#### **9. If I do not live close enough to Western to interview in person, may I send an MP4 file or YouTube link of my performance?**

Yes. If you do not live close enough to Western, the pre-recorded single-take MP4 file of your performance may be attached to us in an email or you may email us the link to a streaming video of your interview via YouTube or Vimeo. The single-take recording must have no effects or pitch correction applied. Guitarists, however, may use effects pedals for their solo, but we require the accompaniment to be played with no effects, except for a small amount of reverb.

#### **10. Within the BA Major in Popular Music Studies, how much emphasis is placed on the historical and theoretical aspects of popular music, as opposed to creative work and performance?**

We have two streams of courses in the program: creative (songwriting, desktop music production) and historical/cultural/theoretical (genres, periods, etc). Both streams are important to the development of the complete musician so that knowledge complements practice. Please note that this is not a performance program and no lessons on instruments are provided. Performance opportunities are informal, occurring mainly in songwriting and recording production courses, and in composition and other music specialization courses available as electives.

The BA Major begins in the second year and occupies years 2-4 of the degree. The program trains creative musicians who have a broad understanding of music within society. Courses are offered in songwriting and desktop music production (which includes aspects of arranging), as well as the analysis of songs, recordings, styles, artists, and the place of popular music in contemporary culture. Students in the program will have an opportunity to compose, arrange, record, and produce their own songs in the courses on desktop music production and songwriting. Note that some courses are offered in alternate years.

**11. Are lessons on instruments or in voice part of the program?**

No, they are not. But students may take private lessons at their own expense if they wish.

**12. Will the program allow me to specialize in a specific style of music, or will I be expected to study music I don't particularly like?**

We define popular music broadly, and our courses cover styles from the late 1800s to the present. We expose students to a wide variety of genres to enable them to understand how popular music developed. Students also may take courses in jazz, musical theatre, world music, electroacoustic music, composition, music theory, and IP copyright.

**13. Do you provide rehearsal space for rock bands?**

Yes (with some restrictions). Students specifically in the Major in Popular Music Studies may book one of our large classrooms, TC 101, during the evenings with the condition that any equipment used would be put back into storage or removed from the room and that the space would be respected (as we ask all students when using spaces for rehearsals and practice). Due to sound isolation considerations, students may not use this space during the day when other classes are in session in the adjacent classrooms. Lastly, it is to be used for just those students in the program. We have such a demand on space that it is critical we ensure it is available for our students only.

**14. If I am accepted into the program while in my final year of high school, do I have to re-apply at the end of first year to enter the major?**

No, but you must submit an Intent to Register form towards the end of first year. Although students enter the major in their second year of study at Western, applicants who pass the interview when applying for admission to the University will be guaranteed a place in the major, as long as they complete first-year requirements at Western with a mark of at least 60% in each of the following courses: Music 1649A/B (Music Theory I), Music 1651A/B (Music Theory II), Music 1710F/G (Music History: Introduction), Music 1730A/B (Introduction to Popular Music and Culture), and 1.0 course from: English 1020-1999, Film Studies 1020E (An Introduction to Film), and Film Studies 1022 (Introduction to Film Studies), World Literature and Cultures 1030.

**15. What high-school average is required for admission to Popular Music Studies at Western?**

The minimum average is 80% based on your top six Grade 12 U or M courses (including English).

**16 How do I apply to the BA Major in Popular Music Studies?**

New applicants from an Ontario high school to the University should apply through the Ontario Universities' Application Centre ([www.ouac.on.ca](http://www.ouac.on.ca)) by selecting "Undergrad 101" (click Browse Programs>By University>Western University>MN:BA Music >Subject of Major Interest >Popular Music Studies).

New applicants from someplace other than an Ontario high school should also apply through Ontario Universities' Application Centre ([www.ouac.on.ca](http://www.ouac.on.ca)) by selecting "Undergrad 105" (click Browse Programs>By University>Western University>MN:BA Music >Subject of Major Interest >Popular Music Studies).

Students already enrolled at Western who wish to transfer to the program should contact the office of the Associate Dean (Undergraduate) in January to arrange an interview in advance of the Intent to Register period.

**17. When do I find out if I have been admitted to the program?**

Music completes interviews by the middle of April (although we may permit late applications under special circumstances, provided there is still room in the program), and we endeavour to let people know the results of their application as soon as we can. Students usually receive an informal letter from us in advance of formal notification by the University (only the Registrar's Office may make an official offer of admission).