

NASM Competencies Summary

Degree: BA or BS in Music, a liberal arts undergraduate degree

Essential Note: Items below are excerpts from the *NASM Handbook*. Items 1 through 4 indicate the content and natures of the competencies expected of those graduating with the above degree.

Only the *Handbook* in its entirety contains all standards and guidelines applicable to and used by all phases of NASM membership reviews. In the text below "H." indicates the location of the excerpted text in the *Handbook*.

Essential Content and Competencies (H-VII.D.)

1. General Education

a. Competencies

Specific competency expectations are determined by the institution. Normally, students graduating with liberal arts degrees have:

- (1) The ability to think, speak, and write clearly and effectively, and to communicate with precision, cogency, and rhetorical force.
- (2) An informed acquaintance with the mathematical and experimental methods of the physical and biological sciences; with the main forms of analysis and the historical and quantitative techniques needed for investigating the workings and developments of modern society.
- (3) An ability to address culture and history from a variety of perspectives.
- (4) Understanding of, and experience in thinking about, moral and ethical problems.
- (5) The ability to respect, understand, and evaluate work in a variety of disciplines.
- (6) The capacity to explain and defend views effectively and rationally.
- (7) Understanding of and experience in one or more art forms other than music.

b. Operational Guidelines. These competencies are usually developed through studies in English composition and literature; foreign languages; history, social studies, and philosophy; visual and performing arts; natural science and mathematics. Precollegiate study, regular testing and counseling, and flexibility in course requirements are elements in achieving these competencies.

2. Musicianship

a. Competencies

Students holding undergraduate liberal arts degrees must have:

- (1) The ability to hear, identify, and work conceptually with the elements of music such as rhythm, melody, harmony, structure, timbre, texture.
- (2) An understanding of and the ability to read and realize musical notation.
- (3) An understanding of compositional processes, aesthetic properties of style, and the ways these shape and are shaped by artistic and cultural forces.
- (4) An acquaintance with a wide selection of musical literature, the principal eras, genres, and cultural sources.
- (5) The ability to develop and defend musical judgments.

- b. **Operational Guidelines.** There is no one division of content, courses, and credits appropriate to every institution. These competencies should be pursued through making, listening to, and studying music.

3. Performance and Music Electives

a. Competencies

Students holding undergraduate liberal arts degrees must develop:

- (1) Ability in performing areas at levels consistent with the goals and objectives of the specific liberal arts degree program being followed.
- (2) Understanding of procedures for realizing a variety of musical styles.
- (3) Knowledge and/or skills in one or more areas of music beyond basic musicianship appropriate to the individual's needs and interests, and consistent with the purposes of the specific liberal arts degree program being followed.

b. Operational Guidelines

- (1) Instruction in a performing medium, participation in large and small ensembles, experience in solo performance, and opportunities to choose music electives are the means for developing these competencies.
- (2) Institutions have various policies concerning the granting of credit for performance studies in liberal arts curricula, including the relegation of performance to extracurricular activity. Such policies are taken into account when curricular proportions are considered.
- (3) Normally, opportunities are provided for advanced undergraduate study in various music specializations consistent with the liberal arts character of the degree.

4. Levels

- a. The institution shall make clear the levels of competency necessary to graduate for areas stipulated in Standards for Accreditation VII.D.2. and 3. above.
- b. The levels specified must be consistent with expectations for an undergraduate liberal arts major in music.

Please Note:

For specific information regarding curricular structure, see H-VII.C. Normally, between 30% and 45% of a 120 semester hour program is comprised of studies in musicianship, performance, and music electives to ensure that time is available to develop the requisite competencies.

For a table of contents for all standards, see [NASM Handbook](#).