

NASM Competencies Summary

Degree: The Baccalaureate Degree in Music Therapy, a professional 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. Items 5 and 6 indicate recommendations for competency development.

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; the term "(All)" indicates standards applicable to all professional undergraduate music degrees including music therapy; "(Music Therapy)" indicates specific standards for that major.

Item 1. (All)

Common Body of Knowledge and Skills (H.VIII.B.)

1. Performance. Students must acquire:

- a. Technical skills requisite for artistic self-expression in at least one major performance area at a level appropriate for the particular music concentration.
- b. An overview understanding of the repertory in their major performance area and the ability to perform from a cross-section of that repertory.
- c. The ability to read at sight with fluency demonstrating both general musicianship and, in the major performance area, a level of skill relevant to professional standards appropriate for the particular music concentration.
- d. Knowledge and skills sufficient to work as a leader and in collaboration on matters of musical interpretation. Rehearsal and conducting skills are required as appropriate to the particular music concentration.
- e. Keyboard competency.
- f. Growth in artistry, technical skills, collaborative competence and knowledge of repertory through regular ensemble experiences. Ensembles should be varied both in size and nature.

Normally, performance study and ensemble experience continue throughout the baccalaureate program.

2. Musicianship Skills and Analysis. Students must acquire:

- a. An understanding of the common elements and organizational patterns of music and their interaction, the ability to employ this understanding in aural, verbal, and visual analyses, and the ability to take aural dictation.
- b. Sufficient understanding of and capability with musical forms, processes, and structures to use this knowledge and skill in compositional, performance, analytical, scholarly, and pedagogical applications according to the requisites of their specializations.
- c. The ability to place music in historical, cultural, and stylistic contexts.

3. Composition/Improvisation. Students must acquire a rudimentary capacity to create original or derivative music. It is the prerogative of each institution to develop specific requirements regarding written, electronic, or improvisatory forms and methods. These may include but are not limited to the creation of original compositions or improvisations, variations or improvisations on existing materials, experimentation with various sound sources, the imitation of musical styles, and manipulating the common elements in non-traditional ways. Institutional requirements should help students gain a basic understanding of how to work

freely and cogently with musical materials in various composition-based activities, particularly those most associated with the major field.

4. **History and Repertory.** Students must acquire basic knowledge of music history and repertoires through the present time, including study and experience of musical language and achievement in addition to that of the primary culture encompassing the area of specialization (see Standards for Accreditation III.L.).
5. **Synthesis.** While synthesis is a lifetime process, by the end of undergraduate study students must be able to work on musical problems by combining, as appropriate to the issue, their capabilities in performance; aural, verbal, and visual analysis; composition/improvisation; and history and repertory.

Item 2. (All)

Results (H.VIII.C.)

Upon completion of any specific professional undergraduate degree program:

1. Students must demonstrate achievement of professional, entry-level competence in the major area, including significant technical mastery, capability to produce work and solve professional problems independently, and a coherent set of artistic/intellectual goals that are evident in their work. A senior project or presentation in the major area is required in many concentrations, and strongly recommended for all others.
2. Students are expected to have the ability to form and defend value judgments about music, and to communicate musical ideas, concepts, and requirements to professionals and laypersons related to the practice of the major field.

Item 3. (Music Therapy)

Essential Competencies, Experiences, and Opportunities (H.IX.N.3.)

(in addition to those stated for all degree programs):

- a. Advanced keyboard skills, including the ability to play at sight, accompany, transpose, and improvise.
- b. Ability to sight-sing and take aural dictation.
- c. Skills in voice, especially as related to group singing. Ability to communicate using a basic repertory of traditional, folk, and popular songs.
- d. Guitar skills sufficient to accompany self and ensembles. Ability to perform a basic repertory of traditional, folk, and popular songs in several keys, with or without printed music.
- e. Knowledge of and performance ability on percussion and other instruments sufficient to facilitate rhythm-based musical experiences for individuals and groups.
- f. Conducting skills adequate to the therapist's needs in providing repertory and leadership to small and large vocal/instrumental ensembles.
- g. Composition and arranging skills sufficient to compose songs with simple accompaniment; and to arrange, transpose, and simplify music compositions for small vocal and non-symphonic instrumental ensembles.
- h. Movement skills to direct and move expressively in structured rhythmic and improvisatory movement experiences.
- i. Knowledge of the basic principles of normal human development, exceptionality and psychopathology, principles of therapy, and the therapeutic relationship.
- j. Knowledge of the basic foundations and principles of music therapy, including history and philosophy; the psychological, physiological, and sociological bases for the use of music as therapy; music therapy methods, techniques and materials with their appropriate applications to various client populations.
- k. Knowledge of various client populations; client assessment; treatment planning; therapy implementation and evaluation; clinical documentation (both oral and written) and termination/discharge planning.

- l. Knowledge of professional standards of clinical practice; professional role and ethics; interdisciplinary collaboration in designing and implementing treatment programs; supervision and administration.
- m. Knowledge of research methods to be able to interpret information, demonstrate basic knowledge of historical, quantitative, and qualitative research, and to apply research findings to clinical practice in music therapy.

Item 4. (All)

General Studies Competencies (H.VIII.A.6.)

- a. **Competencies.** Specific competency expectations are defined by the institution. Normally, students holding a professional undergraduate degree in music are expected to have:
 - (1) The ability to think, speak, and write clearly and effectively.
 - (2) An informed acquaintance with fields of study beyond music such as those in the arts and humanities, the natural and physical sciences, and the social sciences.
 - (3) A functional awareness of the differences and commonalities regarding work in artistic, scientific, and humanistic domains.
 - (4) Awareness that multiple disciplinary perspectives and techniques are available to consider all issues and responsibilities including, but not limited to, history, culture, moral and ethical issues, and decision-making.
 - (5) The ability to identify possibilities and locate information in other fields that have bearing on musical questions and endeavors.

Item 5. (Musical Therapy)

Specific Recommendations for General Studies (H.IX.N.2.)

Studies in such areas as oral and written communication, social sciences, and the arts are strongly recommended.

Item 6. (All)

Recommendations for Professional Studies (H.VIII.D.)

Students engaged in professional undergraduate degrees in music should have opportunities to:

1. Gain a basic understanding of the nature of professional work in their major field. Examples are: organizational structures and working patterns; artistic, intellectual, economic, technological, and political contexts; and development potential.
2. Acquire the skills necessary to assist in the development and advancement of their careers, normally including basic competency development in communication, presentation, business, and leadership, all with particular regard to professional practices in their major field.
3. Develop teaching skills, particularly as related to their major area of study.
4. Continue to develop improvisational skills whether as an aspect of composition, musicianship, or performance studies.
5. Experience a broad range of repertory through attendance at events such as recitals, concerts, opera and music theatre productions, and other types of performances.
6. Develop an awareness of copyright, licensing, and permission requirements as they relate to access to and use of musical works.
7. Explore areas of individual interest related to music in general or to the major. Examples are music bibliography, notations, aesthetics, acoustics, performance practices, specialized topics in history, musicology, ethnomusicology, analysis, and technology.

8. Explore multidisciplinary issues that include music.
9. Practice synthesis of a broad range of musical knowledge and skills, particularly through independent study that involves a minimum of faculty guidance, where the emphasis is on evaluation at completion (see Standards for Accreditation III.G.)

Please Note:

For specific information regarding curricular structure, see H.IX.N.1. Normally, approximately 45-50% of a 120 semester hour program is in music studies, and studies in music therapy and clinical foundations, approximately 30%, to ensure that time is available to develop the requisite competencies.

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