

NASM Competencies Summary

Degree: The Baccalaureate Degree in Music Education, 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 education; "(Music Education)" 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 Education)

Desirable Attributes, Essential Competencies, and Professional Procedures (H.IX.O.3.)

a. Desirable Attributes

The prospective music teacher should have:

- (1) Personal commitment to the art of music, to teaching music as an element of civilization, and to encouraging the artistic and intellectual development of students, plus the ability to fulfill these commitments as an independent professional.
- (2) The ability to lead students to an understanding of music as an art form, as a means of communication, and as a part of their intellectual and cultural heritage.
- (3) The capability to inspire others and to excite the imagination of students, engendering a respect for music and a desire for musical knowledge and experiences.
- (4) The ability to articulate logical rationales for music as a basic component of general education, and to present the goals and objectives of a music program effectively to parents, professional colleagues, and administrators.
- (5) The ability to work productively within specific education systems, promote scheduling patterns that optimize music instruction.
- (6) The ability to maintain positive relationships with individuals of various social and ethnic groups, and be empathetic with students and colleagues of differing backgrounds.
- (7) The ability to understand, apply, and practice principles of professional ethics.
- (8) The ability to evaluate ideas, methods, and policies in the arts, the humanities, and in arts education for their impact on the musical and cultural development of students.
- (9) The ability and desire to remain current with developments in the art of music and in teaching, to make independent, in-depth evaluations of their relevance, and to use the results to improve musicianship and teaching skills.

The following competencies and procedures provide means for developing these attributes:

- b. **Music Competencies.** The profession of school music teacher now encompasses a wide range of traditional, emerging, and experimental purposes, approaches, content, and methods. Each institution makes choices

about what, among many possibilities, it will offer prospective specialist music teachers. Institutions may offer a comprehensive curriculum involving two or more specializations and/or focus on one or more particular specializations. The following standards provide a framework for developing and evaluating a wide variety of teacher preparation program goals and achievements.

NOTE: Standards for Accreditation IX.O.2.b.(1)–(4) apply to all programs that prepare prospective music teachers. Standards for Accreditation IX.O.3.c.(1)–(5) apply to specializations singly or in combination as determined by the focus and content of specific program offerings determined by each institution.

In addition to those basic competencies outlined in Standards for Accreditation IV. and VIII., the following apply to the preparation of music teachers:

- (1) Conducting and Musical Leadership.** The prospective music teacher must be a competent conductor, able to create accurate and musically expressive performances with various types of performing groups and in general classroom situations. Instruction in conducting includes score reading and the integration of analysis, style, performance practices, instrumentation, and conducting techniques. Laboratory experiences that give the student opportunities to apply rehearsal techniques and procedures are essential. Prospective teachers in programs with less focus on the preparation of ensemble conductors must acquire conducting and musical leadership skills sufficient to teach effectively in their area(s) of specialization.
 - (2) Arranging.** The prospective music teacher must be able to arrange and adapt music from a variety of sources to meet the needs and ability levels of individuals, school performing groups, and in classroom situations.
 - (3) Functional Performance.** In addition to the skills required for all musicians, functional performance abilities in keyboard and the voice are essential. Functional performance abilities in instruments appropriate to the student’s teaching specialization are also essential.
 - (4) Analysis/History/Literature.** The prospective music teacher should be able to apply analytical and historical knowledge to curriculum development, lesson planning, and daily classroom and performance activities. Teachers should be prepared to relate their understanding of music with respect to styles, literature, multiple cultural sources, and historical development, both in general and as related to their area(s) of specialization.
- c. Specialization Competencies.** Institutions and other educational authorities make decisions about the extent to which music teachers will be prepared in one or more specializations. The following competencies apply singly or in combination consistent with the specialization objectives of each teacher preparation program in music.
- (1) General Music.** Listed below are essential competencies and experiences for the general music teaching specialization:
 - (a) Musicianship, vocal, and pedagogical skills sufficient to teach general music.
 - (b) Knowledge of content, methodologies, philosophies, materials, technologies, and curriculum development for general music.
 - (c) The ability to lead performance-based instruction.
 - (d) Laboratory and field experiences in teaching general music.
 - (2) Vocal/Choral Music.** Listed below are essential competencies and experiences for the vocal/choral teaching specialization:
 - (a) Vocal and pedagogical skill sufficient to teach effective use of the voice.
 - (b) Knowledge of content, methodologies, philosophies, materials, technologies, and curriculum development for vocal/choral music.

- (c) Experiences in solo vocal performance and in ensembles. Ensembles should be varied both in size and nature.
 - (d) Performance ability sufficient to use at least one instrument as a teaching tool and to provide, transpose, and improvise accompaniments.
 - (e) Laboratory experience in teaching beginning vocal techniques individually, in small groups, and in larger classes.
- (3) Instrumental Music.** Listed below are essential competencies and experiences for the instrumental music teaching specialization:
- (a) Knowledge of and performance ability on wind, string, and percussion instruments sufficient to teach beginning students effectively in groups.
 - (b) Knowledge of content, methodologies, philosophies, materials, technologies, and curriculum development for instrumental music.
 - (c) Experiences in solo instrumental performance and in ensembles. Ensembles should be varied both in size and nature.
 - (d) Laboratory experience in teaching beginning instrumental students individually, in small groups, and in larger classes.
- (4) Music: All Levels, All Specializations.** Listed below are essential competencies and experiences for programs whose published purpose is to prepare teachers in all or several areas (e.g. general, vocal/choral, instrumental, other). To fulfill this purpose consistent with this and other applicable standards, all of the specialization areas chosen are included in some manner in the curriculum as a whole. Specific forms of inclusion, proportions, and assignments are the responsibility of the institution.
- (a) Knowledge and skills sufficient to teach beginning students on instruments and/or in voice as appropriate to the chosen areas of specialization.
 - (b) Knowledge of content, methodologies, philosophies, materials, technologies, and curriculum development in music education.
 - (c) Experiences in solo vocal or instrumental performance.
 - (d) Experiences in ensembles. Ensembles should be varied both in size and nature.
 - (e) The ability to lead performance-based instruction in a variety of settings.
 - (f) Laboratory experience in teaching beginning students in a variety of specializations.
- (5) Specific Music Fields or Combinations.** Listed below are essential competencies and experiences for music teaching specialization(s) focused on either one or a combination of areas such as composition, electronic and computer music, ethnic music, guitar, small ensembles, jazz, keyboard, orchestral music, music history and theory, music in combination with other disciplines, music technologies, music in multimedia, and popular music; or combinations of one or more of these types of content with aspects of the general, vocal/choral, or instrumental specializations:
- (a) Knowledge and skill in the selected area(s) of specialization sufficient to teach beginning and intermediate students effectively.
 - (b) Knowledge of content, methodologies, philosophies, materials, technologies, and curriculum development for the area(s) of specialization.
 - (c) In-depth experiences with the creative and/or performance and/or scholarly aspects of the selected area of specialization as required by the nature and content of that specialization.
 - (d) The ability to use instruments, equipment, and technologies associated with the area(s) of specialization.

- (e) Laboratory experience in teaching beginning students in the area(s) of specialization, individually, in small groups, and in larger classes.

d. Teaching Competencies. The musician-teacher must be able to lead students to competency, apply music knowledge and skills in teaching situations, and integrate music instruction into the process of P–12 education. Essential competencies are:

- (1) Ability to teach music at various levels to different age groups and in a variety of classroom and ensemble settings in ways that develop knowledge of how music works syntactically as a communication medium and developmentally as an agent of civilization. This set of abilities includes effective classroom and rehearsal management.
- (2) An understanding of child growth and development and an understanding of principles of learning as they relate to music.
- (3) The ability to assess aptitudes, experiential backgrounds, orientations of individuals and groups of students, and the nature of subject matter, and to plan educational programs to meet assessed needs.
- (4) Knowledge of current methods, materials, and repertoires available in various fields and levels of music education appropriate to the teaching specialization.
- (5) The ability to accept, amend, or reject methods and materials based on personal assessment of specific teaching situations.
- (6) An understanding of evaluative techniques and ability to apply them in assessing both the musical progress of students and the objectives and procedures of the curriculum.

e. Professional Procedures. In order to implement programs to achieve the competencies identified in the foregoing sections, the following standards and guidelines apply:

- (1) Program purposes and requirements must be clear to prospective students, the profession, potential employers of graduates, and the public.

A program may focus on an area of specialization as listed Standards for Accreditation IX.O.3.c.(1)–(4). A program may focus on the traditional vocal/choral/general/instrumental combination. A program may have a unique focus or purpose that combines two or more of the many possible specializations as listed in Standards for Accreditation IX.O.3.c.(5). Whatever choices are made about purpose and focus, degree titles and descriptions must be consistent with curricular content and requirements. The following information must be clearly stated for each music teacher preparation program offered by an institution:

- (a) The specific area(s) included in a comprehensive or specialization-focused program;
 - (b) The subject matters to be addressed in the program and in supportive areas;
 - (c) Expectations regarding breadth and depth of study and engagement;
 - (d) Expectations for the development of artistic, intellectual, and pedagogical competencies, and specifically, what students must know and be able to do in order to graduate from the program; and
 - (e) The relationship of program purposes, content, and graduation expectations to licensure requirements.
- (2) Music education methods courses should be taught or supervised by the institution’s music education faculty who have had successful experience teaching music in elementary and/or secondary schools, and who maintain close contact with such schools.
 - (3) Institutions should encourage observation and teaching experiences prior to formal admission to the teacher education program; ideally, such opportunities should be provided in actual school situations. These activities, as well as continuing laboratory experiences, must be supervised by qualified music personnel from the institution and the cooperating schools. The choice of sites must enable students

- to develop competencies consistent with standards outlined above, and must be approved by qualified music personnel from the institution.
- (4) Institutions should establish specific evaluative procedures to assess students' progress and achievement. The program of evaluation should include an initial assessment of student potential for admission to the program, periodic assessment to determine progress throughout the program, and further assessment after graduation.
 - (5) Institutions should provide opportunities for advanced undergraduate study in such areas as conducting, composition, and analysis.

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. (Music Education)

Recommendations for General Studies

See Item 4 above.

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.O.1. Normally, at least 50% of a 120 semester hour program is in music studies, including basic musicianship and performance, to ensure that time is available to develop the requisite competencies.

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