

## National Association of Schools of Music

### **An Advisory for Music Faculty and Administrators: NASM Standards – Performance**

The NASM *Handbook* contains the following standard for all **professional undergraduate degrees in music**—all degrees carrying the title Bachelor of Music, and all undergraduate degrees concerned with teacher preparation that lead to certification as a specialist music teacher, either as part of the baccalaureate degree, or immediately after in a master's program.

NASM *Handbook*, Section VIII.B.1:

#### **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.

#### **Creative Goal**

This standard outlines essential competencies in one of the principal creative areas of music. Acquisition of the knowledge and skills listed enables the realization of musical ideas individually and in groups, a broad understanding of repertory, analysis of musical expression, communication with listeners, and the presentation of individual interpretations. These capabilities for achieving creative goals are essential irrespective of the area of specialization.

## **Levels**

The standards themselves and the creative goals they enable describe essential competencies for musicians engaged in various music professions. Students graduating with the degree, Bachelor of Music in Performance, should demonstrate all of these capabilities for performers at levels necessary to enter, compete, and work successfully in their chosen profession. Individuals majoring in other specializations also need to develop high levels of performance capability.

NASM standards state that “institutions shall make clear the levels of competency ... necessary to graduate” (NASM standard VIII.A.4.). Therefore, to meet NASM standards, institutions are responsible for establishing a level of proficiency and requisite experiences for each curricular program that is offered, i.e., majors in performance, music education, music theory, etc. The levels established for graduation should be regarded as a floor, not as a ceiling. The standard set by each institution should reflect the ways that performance and performance knowledge and skill are used by professionals in each area of specialization offered as a major.

## **Solo and Ensemble**

The standard calls for the competency development made possible through solo and ensemble performance. Each is equally important, and each enables growth of capabilities in the other. In professional life, musicians are regularly judged by their capabilities in solo performance, while institutions are often judged on the quality of their ensembles. These two facts used judiciously can produce the critical balance. Performance teachers and ensemble directors are encouraged to support each other’s work and to expect the highest levels of effort and realization in all types of performance.

## **Rehearsal and Conducting Skill**

Musicians in the profession must be able to bring more to rehearsals than technical fluency. In small groups, each musician takes part in developing the interpretation. At some point in their lives, almost all musicians are required to conduct. In a number of specializations such as music education and composition, significant abilities in conducting are essential. The standard notes that conducting has a different presence in various specializations. It is the prerogative of the institution to establish levels of competence for each specialization offered consistent with the needs of that specialization.

## **Time on Task and Results**

NASM guidelines support sufficient time on task to develop performance competencies needed by graduates as indicated in the NASM standard III.A.2.c.:

It is recommended that one credit hour be given for each three hours per week of practice, plus the necessary individual instruction, with a maximum of six credits per term allowed for the major subject in music performance. It is understood that the credit is not earned unless the final examination is satisfactorily passed.

It is common in music for performance levels to be evaluated by juries. Other means of evaluation may also be used. The particular formats and mixes of methodologies for evaluation are the prerogative of each institution. NASM standards require that the evaluation mechanisms chosen assure that graduates have met threshold competencies established by the institution consistent with what is expected in the profession for the degree program being offered.

### **Approaching Standard VIII.B.**

As is the case with all NASM standards, the goal is to focus on the development of student capabilities, not to set bureaucratic requirements for the operation of music units. Since accreditation is based in large part on the mission, goals, and objectives developed by each institution, perhaps the best place to start is by determining or evaluating present goals and objectives for student competence in performance for each major program offered in light of what is required in the field—in other words, starting with the *what* and the *why* before proceeding to the *how*. Often, when *what* and *why* questions are answered thoroughly, the *how* questions answer themselves.

### **Other NASM Standards Related to Performance in Undergraduate Professional Degrees**

These are applied *in addition to* standard VIII.B. according to area of specialization.

IX.A. Bachelor of Music in Performance

IX.B. Bachelor of Music in Music Theory, item 3.c.

IX.C. Bachelor of Music in Composition, item 3.b.

IX.D. Bachelor of Music in Music History and Literature, item 3.c.

IX.E. Bachelor of Music in Sacred Music, items 3.a. and d.

IX.F. Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies, item 3.a.

IX.G. Bachelor of Music in Pedagogy, items 3.a. and d.

IX.H. Bachelor of Music in Musical Theatre

IX.K. Baccalaureate Degree in Music Therapy, items 3.a., b., c., d., e., and f.

IX.L. Baccalaureate Degree in Music Education, items 3.b.(1) and (3), c. (2) and (3).

Students enrolled in professional music degrees that combine music with other fields (NASM standard IV.C.6.) are expected to gain the basic competencies expected of all professional undergraduate degree holders, including basic competencies in performance outlined in NASM standard VIII.B. above.

**Music units with further concerns about the intent of these standards  
are invited to contact the [NASM National Office staff](#):**

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