

Assessment on Our Own Terms

*This presentation was originally given at the 2007
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“Idealism increases in direct proportion to one’s distance from the problem.”

-John Galsworthy

“I often find that theories are like exquisitely beautiful machines that explode the moment they are all switched on. The virus of life immediately infects the systems and proves far too polymorphous to be contained in its structure.”

-Michael FitzGerald

“He uses statistics the way a drunken man uses lamp posts - for support rather than illumination.”

-Andrew Lang

“When a single boy too often cries “wolf” in the absence of wolves, we disregard his speech. When it becomes the habit of many to cry “wolf” in the absence of wolves, our system of speaking itself is undermined.”

-Nicholas Woltersdorf



“Change the water. Keep the baby.”

-Nancy Smith Fichter

The background is a solid blue color with a subtle, abstract pattern of curved, wavy lines that create a sense of depth and movement. The lines are more pronounced in the lower-left and upper-right areas, while the center is smoother.

By Way of Introduction

By Way of Introduction

Achievement and Quality: Higher Education in the Arts

can be found online at:

[http://aqresources.arts-
accredit.org](http://aqresources.arts-
accredit.org)

By Way of Introduction

A Premise:

The possibility of improvement does not negate the fact of past achievement or current expertise.

By Way of Introduction

Another Premise:

There can be a difference in (a) levels of expert knowledge and (b) ability to communicate that knowledge to the public.

By Way of Introduction

A Distinction:

Musical Logic

and

Speech Logic

By Way of Introduction

- I. Principles of artistic evaluation.
- II. How do we apply these principles in the various forms of evaluation we use?
- III. Why these principles and the way we use them are essential for the progress of the discipline.
- IV. How do we explain our principles, achievements, and methods to others?
- V. How do we debate when necessary?

By Way of Introduction

Our Purpose

To present elements of a
framework for thought and action.

By Way of Introduction

Our Purpose

To present elements of a framework for thought and action.

Our Goal

Keep assessment on our terms -
The terms useful to and productive
for the music profession.

The background is a solid blue color with a subtle, wavy, abstract pattern of light and dark blue lines that create a sense of movement and depth. The lines are curved and flow across the frame, giving it a dynamic, organic feel.

I. Principles of Artistic Evaluation

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“Art is not a thing, it is a way.”

-Elbert Hubbard

I. Principles of Artistic Evaluation

Our Focus:

Artistic Work, especially evaluations of application of the artistic mode of thought, of artistic ways of working.

I. Principles of Artistic Evaluation

Artistic Work:

Making design or “compositional” choices in the creation or presentation of a work.

I. Principles of Artistic Evaluation

Artistic Work:

Making design or “compositional” choices in the creation or presentation of a work.

Making creative, situation-specific choices...

Artistic Work:

Making design or “compositional” choices in the creation or presentation of a work.

Making creative, situation-specific choices...

Not simply applying science-based technical systems designed to work exactly the same way all the time.

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Principles Set 1: Parts/Wholes/Goals

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Evaluations of parts alone are not sufficient.

Principles Set 1: Parts/Wholes/Goals

Evaluations of parts alone are not sufficient.

The parts have value primarily in relation to a particular whole.

Principles Set 1: Parts/Wholes/Goals

Intent sets the goal for the whole.

Principles Set 1: Parts/Wholes/Goals

Intent sets the goal for the whole.

Goals are individual, even unique.

Evaluation requires
knowledge and skill to
understand:

- Many specific goals
- Use of elements to reach each goal

Principles Set 1: Parts/Wholes/Goals

The parts/wholes/goals relationship
in the arts means:

The parts/wholes/goals relationship
in the arts means:

Individual evaluation trumps
standardized assessment.

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Principles Set 2: Technique

Principles Set 2: Technique

Technique

Principles Set 2: Technique

Technique

is essential,

Principles Set 2: Technique

Technique

is essential,

and must be maintained.

Principles Set 2: Technique

Technique

Technique

Goes beyond physical ability to encompass interpretative knowledge and skills.

Principles Set 2: Technique

Technical accuracy can be evaluated in yes/no terms,

Principles Set 2: Technique

Technical accuracy can be evaluated in yes/no terms, but comprehensive artistic technique is best evaluated in terms of specific goals.

Principles Set 2: Technique

Technical accuracy can be evaluated in yes/no terms, but comprehensive artistic technique is best evaluated in terms of specific goals.

Technical Mastery, though essential, is not enough for artistry.

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Principles Set 3: Structural Frameworks and Systems

Principles Set 3- Structural Frameworks and Systems

Structural Frameworks

Structural Frameworks

Compositional forms, for example.

Principles Set 3- Structural Frameworks and Systems

Common Frameworks,

Common Frameworks,

but widely varying
applications of them.

Principles Set 3- Structural Frameworks and Systems

Framework is not a scientific law, chemical formula or technical machine.

Principles Set 3- Structural Frameworks and Systems

Systems

Systems

tonal harmony, for example.

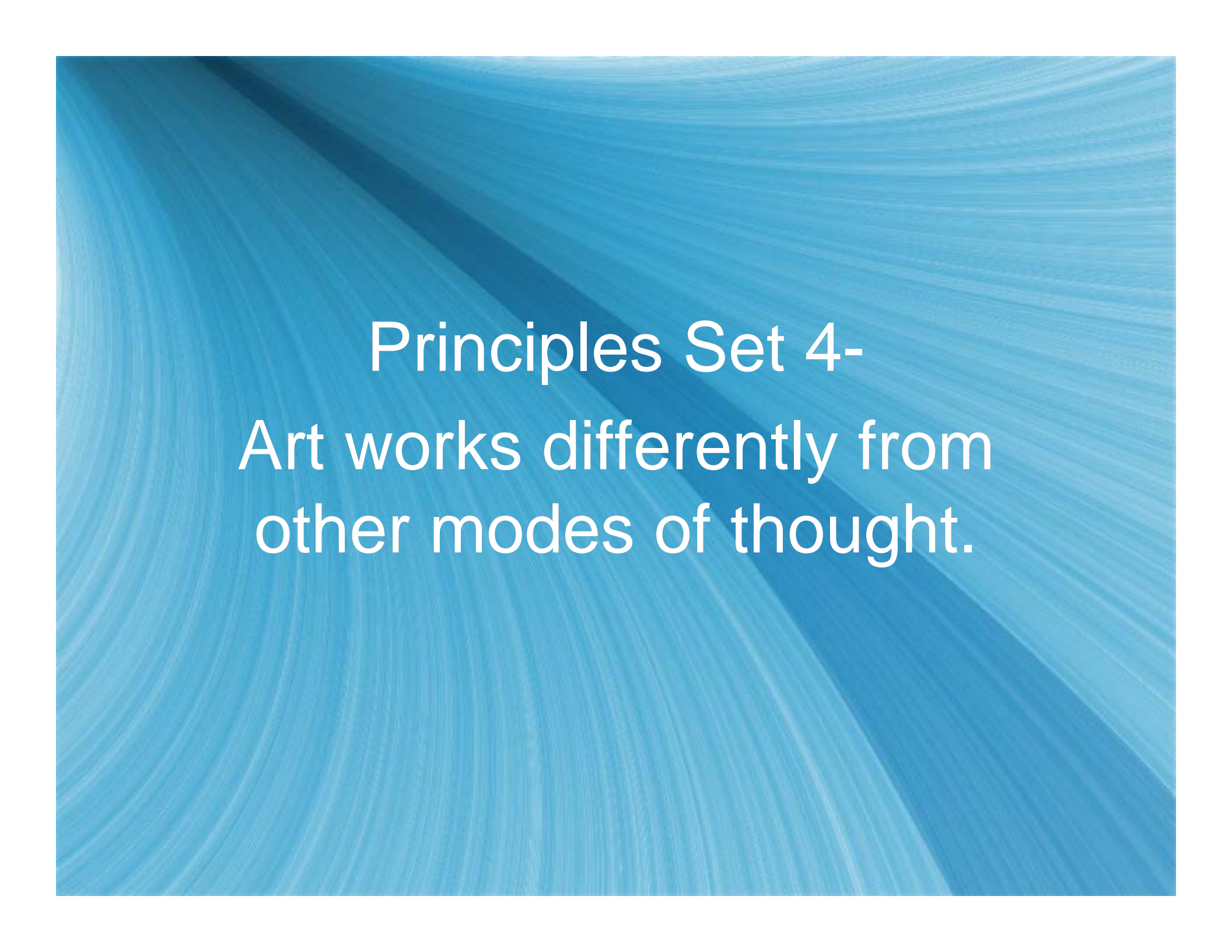
Frameworks and systems
are means and forms – not
ends.

Frameworks and systems
are means and forms – not
ends.

In artistic applications, they
too are goal driven.

Principles Set 3- Structural Frameworks and Systems

Effective artistic evaluation-
requires the sophisticated
ability to consider integration
of goals, wholes, parts,
frameworks, systems,
technical means.



Principles Set 4-
Art works differently from
other modes of thought.

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Art

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Art

Discovery

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Art

Discovery

by individual creation.

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Science

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Science

Discovery

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Science

Discovery

by empirically-based
research.

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Science-Universal Answer

Art-Unique Answer

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

For the Arts:

**The kinds of evaluations
used in the sciences are not
enough.**

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Science: One answer is
correct or best.

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Science: One answer is
correct or best.

Art: Many answers are
correct.

*Principles Set 4- Art works differently
from other modes of thought.*

Science: One answer is
correct or best.

Art: Many answers are
correct.

There are many superlatives
but no single best.

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Principles Summary

Principles Summary

Wholes Trump Parts

Principles Summary

Goals Trump Rules

Goals drive applications of
conceptual and technical
means.

Sophistication: knowledge, skills, experience - underlies both achievement and full recognition of achievement

Principles Summary

An Important Wrinkle: The Level of our Students

Principles Summary

We are not starting at the
beginning,

Principles Summary

We are not starting at the
beginning,
thus,

We are not starting at the
beginning,
thus,
many of our evaluations
need to address high levels
of complexity.

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II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

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“A writer is somebody for whom writing is harder than it is for other people.”

-Thomas Mann

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Our Focus:

Artistic work, especially
evaluations of:

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Our Focus:

Artistic work, especially
evaluations of:
educational goals,

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Our Focus:

Artistic work, especially
evaluations of:
educational goals,
set and described in many ways.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

NASM standards are
frameworks,

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

NASM standards are
frameworks,

not blueprints.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Goal setting becomes more precise as we move from NASM standards, to institutional expectations, to individual artistic objectives and decisions.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

The more sophisticated the
application of music logic,

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

The more sophisticated the application of music logic, the harder it is to express them in speech logic or math logic.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Failure to express music logic in words or numbers is not an indicator of failure to express music logic in music.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Quality - in terms of the individual artist:

- Basic professional-level knowledge and skills
- Personal vision evident in work
- Conceptual acuity and creative virtuosity at multiple levels of complexity
- Imagination and ability to channel it go reach artistic goals
- Technical virtuosity
- Conceptual and technical command of integration and synthesis

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Important Elements and Conditions of Institutional Quality:

- Meet NASM standards and beyond
- Purposes carefully crafted and regularly fulfilled
- Clear focus and sustained effort
- Realistic analyses and thoughtful decision-making connected to the pursuit of excellence in the art form
- High levels continuously pursued and raised overtime in terms of personnel, teaching and learning, areas of work defined by purposes
- Supportive, challenging environment

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Self-evaluation is critical for
artistic work.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

External evaluations are
constant.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

Auditions

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

Auditions

Public performances

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

Auditions

Public performances

Peer criticism

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

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Public performances

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Private lessons

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

Auditions

Public performances

Peer criticism

Private lessons

Rehearsals

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

Auditions

Public performances

Peer criticism

Private lessons

Rehearsals

Self-evaluation against
superlative work.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

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Private lessons

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Self-evaluation against
superlative work.

Coursework examinations

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

Auditions

Public performances

Peer criticism

Private lessons

Rehearsals

Self-evaluation against
superlative work.

Coursework examinations

Journalistic criticism

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

Auditions

Public performances

Peer criticism

Private lessons

Rehearsals

Self-evaluation against
superlative work.

Coursework examinations

Journalistic criticism

Project assessments

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

Auditions

Public performances

Peer criticism

Private lessons

Rehearsals

Self-evaluation against
superlative work.

Coursework examinations

Journalistic criticism

Project assessments

Summary exams

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Common Assessment Mechanisms

Juries

Competitions

Auditions

Public performances

Peer criticism

Private lessons

Rehearsals

Self-evaluation against
superlative work.

Coursework examinations

Journalistic criticism

Project assessments

Summary exams

Achievement and aptitude
tests

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Student Achievement Goals – Indicators/Evidence Analysis

Competence in basic arts techniques:

- Entrance, continuation, and graduation requirements
- Achievement tests
- Course evaluations
- Class or laboratory examinations

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Student Achievement Goals – Indicators/Evidence Analysis

Basic understanding of the history of the art form in Western and other civilizations:

- Course requirements
- Syllabus content
- Class examinations

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Student Achievement Goals – Indicators/Evidence Analysis

Basic general education at the college level, including the ability to understand distinctions and commonalities regarding work in artistic, scientific, and humanistic domains:

- Transcript analysis
- Curricular requirements
- Syllabus review
- Achievement tests
- Class and laboratory examinations

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Student Achievement Goals – Indicators/Evidence Analysis

Entry-level competence in the major field of study:

- Juried Examinations
- Placement records

Ability to enter graduate study in the major field:

- Graduate school acceptances
- Records of completion of graduate work

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Student Achievement Goals – Indicators/Evidence Analysis

A coherent set of artistic/intellectual goals evident in each student's work and the ability to achieve these goals as an independent professional:

- Assessment of student projects
- Content of final papers
- Faculty and peer assessment of final projects

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Student Achievement Goals – Indicators/Evidence Analysis

Ability to form and defend defined judgments:

- Project assessments
- Master class evaluations

Ability to communicate in spoken and written language:

- Syllabus review
- Project assessments

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Student Achievement Goals – Indicators/Evidence Analysis

Ability to communicate ideas in a specific art form in professional circumstances:

- Internship reports
- Employee ratings of performance
- Employment records

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Different mechanisms tell us different things.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

A return to parts and wholes.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

A different concept:

No pure correlation between
discrete knowledge and technical
skills,

THE PARTS

and artistry,

THE WHOLE

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

Much of arts evaluation is about things that are extremely hard to evaluate.

II. Applying Principles in Evaluation

If anyone is truly interested in “outcomes,” our outcomes prove the validity of our approaches to evaluation.

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III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

“I like the way I do it better than I like they way you don’t do it.”

-Dwight L. Moody

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

Change for changes sake is
foolish and wasteful.

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

Not all change is for the better.
What are the prospects for real
improvement.

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

It is imprudent to replace
what works with what simply
sounds good.

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

Ramifications and unintended consequences can do tremendous damage.

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

Our Challenge:

To resist change from evaluation on our terms to evaluation on other terms centered on:

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

Our Challenge:

To resist change from evaluation on our terms to evaluation on other terms centered on:

- The general rather than the individual

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

Our Challenge:

To resist change from evaluation on our terms to evaluation on other terms centered on:

- The general rather than the individual
- Blueprints rather than frameworks

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

Our Challenge:

To resist change from evaluation on our terms to evaluation on other terms centered on:

- The general rather than the individual
- Blueprints rather than frameworks
- The technical and science-based over the artistic, the universal over the specific

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

Our Challenge:

To resist change from evaluation on our terms to evaluation on other terms centered on:

- The general rather than the individual
- Blueprints rather than frameworks
- The technical and science-based over the artistic, the universal over the specific
- Numbers and images they produce

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential


Our Challenge:

To resist change from evaluation on our terms to evaluation on other terms centered on:

- The general rather than the individual
- Blueprints rather than frameworks
- The technical and science-based over the artistic, the universal over the specific
- Numbers and images they produce
- Standardization for the purposes of comparison

III. Why the Principles and Applications are Essential

What happens if these terms
are forced upon us?

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The Consequences of Assessment on Other Terms

The Consequences of Assessment on Other Terms

Alien evaluation environment

The Consequences of Assessment on Other Terms

Time requisitioned

The Consequences of Assessment on Other Terms

Expertise basis shifts from
music to assessment

The Consequences of Assessment on Other Terms

Loss of local curriculum
control and individual
goal-setting


The Consequences of Assessment on Other Terms

Reduced productivity

The Consequences of Assessment on Other Terms

“An [uninformed] idealist is one who, in noticing that a rose smells better than a cabbage concludes that it will also make better soup.”

-H.L. Mencken

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IV. How do we explain our principles, achievements and methods to others?

IV. How to Explain

“In politics, the loser is the one who lets himself be swayed by the other’s arguments and who judges his own actions through his adversary's eyes.”

-Karel Kosili

IV. How to Explain

How should our field work on
this problem?

IV. How to Explain

There is no silver bullet.

IV. How to Explain

Creating explanations is an
artistic project.

IV. How to Explain

We must all develop the ability to produce site and situation specific responses and answers.

IV. How to Explain

A prerequisite for
effectiveness:

IV. How to Explain

A prerequisite for effectiveness:

You must believe and communicate that “our terms” are better than any “other terms” that we know of.

IV. How to Explain

Who is the audience?

What is their orientation?

IV. How to Explain

They must prove us wrong or
inadequate,

IV. How to Explain

They must prove us wrong or
inadequate,
or,

IV. How to Explain

They must prove us wrong or
inadequate,
or,
they want to understand
what we do,
and connect it to something
larger.

IV. How to Explain

What do they want or need to be satisfied?

IV. How to Explain

What do they want or need to be satisfied?

Don't provide more than necessary.

IV. How to Explain

What values will be used to interpret information.

IV. How to Explain

What level of complexity is appropriate?

IV. How to Explain

If you don't know the game,
you can't really play.

IV. How to Explain

What is the next question
likely to be?

IV. How to Explain

What ideas and tools do we have?

IV. How to Explain

Undergraduate competencies in music specializations:

- Go to <http://aqresources.arts-accredit.org>
- Click on Evaluating Elements and Conditions in Institutions
- Click on Basic Competency Index by Discipline and Specialization-Undergraduate
- Click on Music

**ACHIEVEMENT AND
QUALITY: HIGHER
EDUCATION IN THE
ARTS**
**Achievement and
Quality: Composite
Text**
Executive Summary
**Introductory
Information**
**Basic Conceptual
Information**
**General Observations
on Quality,
Achievement, and the
Natures of the Art
Forms**
**Evaluating
Achievement and
Quality**
Resource Documents

 > Basic Competency Index
by Discipline and
Specialization:
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 > Basic Competency Index:
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Basic Competency Index By Discipline and Specialization -- Undergraduate Degrees

Music

A list of specializations for baccalaureate degrees in music follows, with each linked to a parallel downloadable PDF enumerating detailed competencies for that specialization. In this way, users of these resources may download only the specific information of interest.

Please note: The lists of competencies are derived from accreditation standards for the professional and liberal arts undergraduate degrees in music.

Essential Note: Competencies provided for each specialization are excerpts from the *Handbook* for the arts discipline specified. Items in each set of competencies indicate the content and natures of the competencies expected of those graduating with the specified degree, or recommendations for competency development.

Only the *Handbook* in its entirety contains all standards and guidelines applicable to and used by all phases of NASAD, NASD, NASM, or NAST membership reviews.

In the competencies texts for each specialization, "H." indicates the location of the excerpted text in the *Handbook*; the term "(All)" indicates standards applicable to all professional or liberal arts undergraduate degrees in the specified field including the specialization; "[Area of Specialization]" indicates specific standards for that major.

MUSIC (professional undergraduate)

(Review or print the [Table of Contents](#) excerpt from the *NASM Handbook 2007-2008*)

- ⊗ [Performance](#)
- ⊗ [Music Theory](#)
- ⊗ [Composition](#)
- ⊗ [Music History and Literature](#)
- ⊗ [Sacred Music](#)
- ⊗ [Jazz Studies](#)
- ⊗ [Pedagogy](#)
- ⊗ [Music Therapy](#)
- ⊗ [Teacher Preparation - Music Education](#)

MUSIC (liberal arts undergraduate)

(Review or print the [Table of Contents](#) excerpt from the *NASM Handbook 2007-2008*)

- ⊗ [General](#)

IV. How to Explain

What aspects or elements of student work can be discussed in terms of the results of instruction?

IV. How to Explain

What aspects or elements can you identify that cannot be discussed easily in terms of their direct correlation with various other forms of instruction?

IV. How to Explain

What elements and conditions of instruction contribute most directly to the level of student achievement?

IV. How to Explain

How do we determine that the elements and conditions of instruction that contribute most directly to the level of student achievement are working?

IV. How to Explain

What are the areas or levels about which most professionals in the field are likely to agree on the relative quality or value of the work?

IV. How to Explain

What are the areas or levels where there is likely to be disagreement about the relative quality and value of work?

IV. How to Explain

Outline Example

The _____ School/Department/etc... of Music

- How music works-the artistic mode of thought
- How our field defines achievement in the music disciplines we teach
- How we set goals for achievement
- How we evaluate student achievement
- How we evaluate faculty achievement
- How we evaluate our department/school
- How we consider external perceptions
- The competencies of students we accept
- The competencies expected of students we graduate
- Why our evaluation concepts work and support our purposes

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V. How do we debate
when necessary?

V. How do we debate when necessary?

“The real danger is not that computers will begin to think like men, but that men will begin to think like computers.”

-Sidney T. Harris

V. How do we debate when necessary?

Choose debate conditions
carefully.

V. How do we debate when necessary?

Probing Debate Questions

Probing Debate Questions

1. What empirical proof do you have that the assessment system and approach you are proposing will work better for our field than the system we use now?

Probing Debate Questions

2. What evidence can you provide that the world of higher education or our discipline is structured, operates, or is organized conceptually in ways that makes your proposed approach more effective than ours?

Probing Debate Questions

3. How can you prove to us that putting results in a form that you define as measurable will lead to improvement in student learning, or to advancement and innovation in our field?

Probing Debate Questions

4. What proof is there that all quality in every dimension of life can be engineered through the application of massive large-scale assessment systems, or that the larger and more centralized the assessment system, the higher the quality will become?

Probing Debate Questions

5. How is it possible to call for a deeply integrated system of standardization so that results can be compared, and at the same time call for innovation or a climate of innovation?

Probing Debate Questions

6. Do you believe that students carry a great deal of responsibility for what they learn?

Probing Debate Questions

7. Isn't a model always a diminished version of the original?

Probing Debate Questions

8. Can you prove that if we fashion a program that specifically works for us, we will fall behind?

Probing Debate Questions

9. Can you prove that any numbers we collect about specific performance indicators can predict for anyone the level of quality of education an individual student will receive, or the success of that person after graduation?

Probing Debate Questions

Usually, music faculties and administrators are not in a position to ask these questions.

Probing Debate Questions

What are the philosophical and programmatic situations of your senior administrators at your institution?

Probing Debate Questions

The institutional accreditation
issue.

Probing Debate Questions

Compliance, not debate.

Probing Debate Questions

When we can't debate, what
can we do?

What can we do?

1. Demonstrate and explain what we have in place and why it works.

What can we do?

1. Demonstrate and explain what we have in place and why it works.
 - a. We have many forms of evaluations.

What can we do?

1. Demonstrate and explain what we have in place and why it works.
 - a. We have many forms of evaluations.
 - b. They are informed and disinterested in the personal sense.

What can we do?

1. Demonstrate and explain what we have in place and why it works.
 - a. We have many forms of evaluations.
 - b. They are informed and disinterested in the personal sense.
 - c. Their purpose is improvement, not measurement for its own sake.

What can we do?

“The truth is more important than
the facts”

-Frank Lloyd Wright

What can we do?

2. Counter assertions that professionals cannot conduct fair or objective assessments within their fields.

What can we do?

2. Counter assertions that professionals cannot conduct fair or objective assessments within their fields.
 - a. Music professionals are more qualified than assessment professionals.

What can we do?

2. Counter assertions that professionals cannot conduct fair or objective assessments within their fields.
 - a. Music professionals are more qualified than assessment professionals.
 - b. Experts are internally driven to improve their fields.

What can we do?

2. Counter assertions that professionals cannot conduct fair or objective assessments within their fields.

- a. Music professionals are more qualified than assessment professionals.
- b. Experts are internally driven to improve their fields.
- c. Conflict of interest argument are usually not about quality.

The background is a solid blue color with a subtle, wavy, and textured appearance. A prominent diagonal band of a slightly darker shade of blue runs from the top-left towards the bottom-right, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is clean and modern.

A Few Final Points

A Few Final Points

“We have sunk to a depth where restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men.”

-George Orwell

A Few Final Points

What is obvious to us is not
obvious to others.

A Few Final Points

We need to make what is obvious to us more other obvious to others.

A Few Final Points

We are not alone.

A Few Final Points

The outcomes ideologies
have turned on their former
friends.

A Few Final Points

We do not know where the drive for centralization of power will lead, or who will prevail.

A Few Final Points

Our job is to advocate,
defend, and improve what is
necessary for assessment in
our field.

A Few Final Points

No one else can do it for us.

A Few Final Points

We dare not cede the
information battleground to
others.


Be positive, direct and clear.

Music and its nature must
drive what we do.

A Few Final Points

Thank you for your attention
and consideration.

For more information, go
to: [http://aqresources.arts-
accredit.org](http://aqresources.arts-
accredit.org).



“Always do what is right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”

-Mark Twain