

Local Reviews of Music Content for Liberal Arts Degrees in Music

Question Set I: Curricula

National Association of Schools of Music

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Introduction

- The content areas, premises, and questions that follow are intended to assist institutions engaged in reviewing the music content for liberal arts degrees in music. Answers to the questions will necessarily be institution specific.
- Question Set I is a tool kit and users are intended to draw from it and combine elements as necessary to their work.
- The focus in Question Set I is content, the “why” and “what” of a curriculum, and the arrangement of content within the curriculum.
- A primary purpose is to consider connections between time devoted to the study of specific content, local values, and what our students need to achieve during their program.
- Question Set II places content decisions in an operational planning framework that addresses “how” and “who” issues.
- For each topic, there are many additional questions that could be asked.
- Faculty and administrators are encouraged to alter or expand the list of premises, competency areas and questions consistent with their specific review needs.
- The questions may be used to review one part, subject, or aspect of the curriculum, or specific combinations of parts, or the curriculum as a whole.
- The questions may be used twice in each application: first to determine what is current, second to determine what is desirable or projected.
- It is important to remember that everything cannot be addressed at the baccalaureate level. Some music students will choose to continue their education. Those who go on to work professionally will gain further experience in the field.

- These Question Sets have been developed as resources for professional discussion and development. They are not associated with the accreditation function of NASM, nor do they represent a policy position of the Association.

Notes about Structure

The questions are organized in five sections:

- A. Overall Purposes, Futures, Priorities
- B. Knowledge and Skills
- C. Content, Capabilities, Attributes, and Relationships Specific to Musicians
- D. Practice
- E. Creative Exploration

Appendix

- At the end of this question set is an appendix which lists expected or desirable, or possible, competency areas derived from NASM materials and discussions. It is provided for reference for those working with the questions. (You may wish to work from a list of institutional competencies instead.)
- Do not let the specific competencies take you away from your broader conversation about curricular change. The competencies are there as a resource and are not meant to limit creativity or impose restrictions. Remember, NASM standards are about content, and not about how this content is structured within the music programs of individual institutions.

Suggestions about Local Application

- Edit and add to this material as necessary to meet your needs.
- Strive for diversity of opinions; search for outside perspectives; consider applicable research. Consider the work of recent graduates, and bear in mind their potential employers.
- Allot plenty of time for discussion, consultation, and analysis; do not short-change deliberations about values.
- Develop a communication and consultation plan, especially if the inquiry is to be conducted or supervised by a small group.

A. OVERALL PURPOSES, FUTURES, PRIORITIES

Premises and Questions for Local Reviewers

Liberal Arts Music Programs

Premises:

Our first purpose is to help individuals become musicians who have the basis for entering and functioning in the field and also for working and maturing in a dynamically evolving field for 40 – 50 years. This means preparing students to work in conditions we cannot fully predict, with things we don't fully understand, and with challenges we cannot fully anticipate. Our goals for our art form and thus the artistic goals for our programs have significant influence on goals in other areas.

Questions:

1. Based on our goals for music studies and liberal arts education, what content and levels of knowledge and skills are:
 - a. essential no matter what the future brings? Why?
 - b. important, especially short term – the period we can reasonably predict? Why?
 - c. desirable? Why?
2. To what extent do our answers change depending on
 - a. areas of emphasis in music, if applicable?
 - b. location?
 - c. how general or specialized our preparation goals are?
 - d. cultural contexts and expertise in our institution?
 - e. realities in our institution?
3. What do our answers reveal about content priorities?
4. What challenges emerge when we compare our answers to questions 1, 2, and 3 with what we are doing?

B. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Premises and Questions for Local Reviewers

Liberal Arts Music Programs

Premises:

Knowledge and skills are essential. They provide the content for all else. There is no substitute. The body of knowledge and skills is large and constantly expanding. However, time is not. This necessitates content and associated choices about what is absolutely basic. Basic does not mean simple or easy. These choices are difficult; there is no single right or best answer for every institution or situation.

Questions:

1. What specific capabilities—content-based knowledge and skills—do we expect graduating music students with liberal arts degrees to have?
2. Given content decisions, what are our goals for the relationship between breadth and depth in each area?
3. When we combine our answers regarding specific content areas, what kind of knowledge and skills tool kit results? To what extent do the items it contains fulfill the goals for basic musical competencies we have set, wish to set, or are contemplating?
4. If we see a problem, what answers do we get if we look for solutions in content expansion or in contraction?

What happens if we expand? What happens if we contract and concentrate more on a smaller number of essential tools well learned?

If we determine that less is more, what constitutes the “less?” If we determine more is needed, what specifically constitutes “more?”

Within and across fields of study, how much of what is enough to provide the basic tools for career entry and professional growth?

C. CONTENT, CAPABILITIES, AND ATTRIBUTES RELATIONSHIPS SPECIFIC TO MUSICIANS AND TEACHERS

Premises and Questions for Local Reviewers

Liberal Arts Music Programs

Premises:

Holders of liberal arts degrees apply content knowledge, technical skill, and application capabilities in various aspects of music and cultivate the dispositions to know when and how to apply the knowledge and skills. Cultivation includes the development of various connections between certain attributes and content. While cultivation continues over a lifetime, during undergraduate study there are ways to begin cultivating attributes along with knowledge, skill, and application capabilities.

Questions:

1. Where in our curriculum do we prepare students to use the knowledge and skills they acquire in particular competency areas in their work as musicians?
2. For individual music graduates, what are our goals for general attributes that require synthesis such as:
 - a. Communication—the ability to articulate ideas, concepts, facts, and rationales effectively?
 - b. Creativity—the ability to use knowledge, skills and available resources or conditions to develop new or different things in music?
 - c. Versatility—the ability to use various aspects of music and musical action in various settings, to initiate and deal with change productively?
 - d. Virtuosity—the ability to correlate, synthesize and apply knowledge and skills quickly and successfully in real time, to continue to develop them musically?
 - e. Flexibility—the ability to work effectively to achieve different kinds of goals in different kinds of settings, to move from one type of musical environment to another?
 - f. Complexity—the ability to understand the natures of complexities associated with music and its contexts, to apply this understanding in decision-making?

3. For individual graduates, what are our goals for specific attributes such as:
 - a. Personal commitment to the art of music?
 - b. An understanding of music as an art form, as a means of communication, and as a part of their intellectual and cultural heritage?
 - c. The ability to continue with advanced study in one or more aspects of music?
 - d. Inclinations toward the development of an effective work process and a coherent set of ideas and goals to accomplish specific work in music?
 - e. The ability to work productively within varied musical settings and maintain positive relationships with individuals engaged in various types of musical efforts?
 - f. The ability to evaluate ideas, methods, and policies in the arts and humanities and view their impact on the musical and cultural development of others?
 - g. The ability and desire to remain current with developments in the art of music, to make independent, in-depth evaluations of their relevance, and to use the results to improve their work in music?
4. To what extent are we meeting our goals for knowledge and skills acquisition, capability to use knowledge and skills acquired, and the development of attributes?
 - a. What are our priorities? What weight do we give each of these elements in terms of success upon graduation? How are we allocating time?
 - b. How consistent is what we are doing with what we think we should be doing now, or in the near future?
 - c. How do we develop student capabilities through modeling, teaching, experiences, time allocations, assignments?

D. PRACTICE

Premises and Questions for Local Reviewers

Liberal Arts Music Programs

Premises:

1. Regular, sustained, and mindful practice in fields such as music performance, composing, improvising, listening, analyzing, and teaching is important.
2. Practice and the acquisition of knowledge and skills have a strong relationship, but one is not a substitute for the other.
3. Time to practice alone, under guidance, and in public is important in developing these complex capacities to synthesize, apply, and gain knowledge and skills.
4. Normally, there is a correlation between the extent to which some capability is valued and the time devoted to practicing it.
5. Mindful practice involves a cycle of experience, reflection, and learning.

Questions:

1. What role does practice play in the structure of our program with regard to knowledge and skill development in various areas of musicianship?
2. What profile is revealed? Where in the curriculum is practice emphasized and not emphasized?
3. How does this profile reveal priorities regarding abilities to apply musical knowledge and skills:
 - a. in specific content areas?
 - b. in situations requiring transfer, synthesis, integration, implementation?
 - c. in terms of our goals for attribute development?
4. Are the priorities revealed the priorities we want? Do these priorities align with desired goals?
5. Based on our answer to 4, are adjustments necessary?

E. CREATIVE EXPLORATION

Premises and Questions for Local Reviewers

Liberal Arts Music Programs

Premises:

1. Creative exploration with curricular elements and their relationships and purposes is essential for the positive evolution of liberal arts music programs.
2. The purpose of this section is to encourage creative exploration of program structure and alignment with the values articulated in previous discussions.
3. Creative exploration may lead to:
 - a. finding new ways of working with content;
 - b. addressing emerging content, needs, or priorities; addressing emerging content, needs, or priorities
 - c. revealing new patterns, methods, or means for engaging in music;
 - d. accomplishing multiple objectives at the same time;
 - e. infusing specific learning aspirations into multiple courses, curricula, and experiences;
 - f. giving special emphasis to one or more specific goals;
 - g. developing different time allocations and patterns;
 - h. maintaining a self-regenerating climate of learning in an institution.

Questions:

1. What interests, knowledge, skills, attributes, and aspirations are entering students bringing with them? What are these students practicing and conceptualizing before we begin working with them? What can they do independently?
2. What interests, knowledge, skills, attributes, and aspirations are graduating students taking with them? What can they do independently in specific areas, in synthesis and in applying knowledge

and skills in dynamic musical situations? How prepared are they for “in-flight” decision making as musicians?

3. What do the answers to questions above reveal about our approaches to admission?
4. What do the answers to these questions reveal about program content and process, particularly related to issues such as:
 - a. the purpose/content/method relationship in the preparation of musicians?
 - b. single method or multiple methods?
 - c. teaching one or more single methods in contrast to teaching students to “compose” with elements of many methods?
 - d. laying the foundation for personal or situation specific methods development?
 - e. packaging and curricular ordering of knowledge, skill, synthesis, and application expectations?
 - f. treating disciplines and specializations as both discreet professions and as parts of and thus in service to a larger whole (example: theory as field, and as an essential part of general musicianship)?
 - g. any specific knowledge, skills, attribute development, methodologies, or combinations thereof in general or within our curriculum that can grow musical capabilities from average to exceptional in a significant number of students?
5. What about time issues such as:
 - a. correlations of sequence and time allocations to our specific purposes—goals and objectives—for musician competence?
 - b. time prioritization to ensure our students acquire what we have determined is essential, followed by what we have determined is important, and then, desirable?
 - c. decisions about breadth and depth in various areas, subjects, and aspects of subjects derived from our answer to b. above?
 - d. length of time to acquire fundamental information such as overviews of principles, facts, techniques? Can this time be shortened? How much breadth or depth is needed here?

- e. time allocations in direct relationship to the major and what musicians in that specialization are expected to do?
- f. ratios of time devoted to content and to applications of content?
- g. creative ways to apportion time in the credit hour system?
- h. time and priority adjustments within class sessions, courses, ensembles, relationships of courses, and sequences of courses in curricula?
- i. time to practice in areas where capability is gained primarily by practice?
- j. use of different time patterns such as short bursts of intensive learning, self-paced technology provided learning, customized education based on tutorial models, problem-based learning, allocations of core music courses to post-baccalaureate or distance learning, and so forth?

APPENDIX

Competency Areas for Reference

Liberal Arts Degrees in Music

A. Musicianship Competencies

1. The ability to hear, identify, and work conceptually with the elements of music such as rhythm, melody, harmony, structure, timbre, and 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. Performance in Music Studies

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 membership appropriate to the individual's needs and interests, and consistent with the purposes of the specific liberal arts degree program being followed.

C. Other possible content components

1. Advocacy
2. Entrepreneurship
3. Musician's health
4. Technology
5. Pedagogical issues

D. Attributes Requiring Synthesis (see question C.2)

1. Communication
2. Creativity
3. Versatility
4. Virtuosity
5. Flexibility
6. Capabilities with complexity