Local Reviews of Music Content for Liberal Arts Degrees in Music

Question Set II: Action Plans for Change

National Association of Schools of Music

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

Introduction

- The questions that follow are intended to assist institutions engaged in reviewing their music content for liberal arts music programs. Answers to the questions will necessarily be institution specific.

- Question Set II is a tool kit and users are intended to draw from it and combine elements as necessary to their work. It is particularly useful after work with Question Set I.

- Question Set I focuses on content.

- The focus in Question Set II is a process for developing content and curricular change proposals.

- A primary purpose is to consider various elements, areas, and issues associated with changing effectively for the better.

- For each topic, there are many additional questions that could be asked.

- Faculty and administrators are encouraged to alter or expand the questions consistent with their specific review needs.

- The questions may be used to consider one part, subject, or aspect of the curriculum, or specific combinations of parts, or the curriculum as a whole.

- 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 four sections:

    I.   Setting Parameters – Defining a Focus

II. Situation Analysis/Self Reflection

III. Considering Specific Changes

IV. Implementing Change

In each section, you will find

- A set of questions intended to assist in developing a comprehensive picture of what needs to be considered and accomplished.

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.

- Allot plenty of time for discussion, consultation, and analysis; do not short-change deliberations about values, content, and expectations for student learning in relationship to developing discussions about change.

- Develop a communication and consultation plan, especially if the inquiry is to be conducted or supervised by a small group.

Question Set II: Action Plans for Change

Where there is an interest in reviewing liberal arts music programs, the following questions may help provide a framework for considering, approaching, instituting, and evaluating changes. In most cases this question set is most effective after engaging the issues in Question Set I, or engaging in another type of content-based review.

Action Plans for Change

I. Setting Parameters – Defining a Focus

A. Choose a focus; for example, the music program as a whole, specific curriculum, course or curricular sequence within the liberal arts degree program.

B. Choose one primary or prioritize two or more secondary purposes for this review, for example:

1. Adjust and refine what we are doing;

2. Fix a perceived current or future problem;

3. Respond to external mandates;

4. Concentrate on the career-entry needs of our students;

5. Deal with the internal relationships among parts of our curriculum;

6. Consider the place of your chosen focus within the grand scheme of a student's career — short and long term needs;

7. Start from scratch;

8. Connect the work of your focus area to other areas in the music or institutional curriculum;

9. Connect the work of the entity to the practice of musical appreciation, performance, etc.;

10. Develop a new concept — new for us or just new;

11. Work with new content — new for us or just new;

12. Track and/or lead trends in music education.

C. Choose a time frame or planning period, e.g. our program over the next 5 years.

II. Situation Analysis/Self Reflection

Ask the following questions or variations on them that you create, about the entity you have chosen to review:

A. What are our strengths? What have we done right up to this point?

   1. Where are we most effective, productive, even renowned?

   2. What are the sources of the strengths we have?

   3. Why are we strong where we are?

   4. What strengths have we and our predecessors created?

   5. What advantages do we enjoy?

B. How are our strengths related to the purpose of this review?

C. What are the several absolute make-or-break fundamentals necessary to remain as strong as we are, particularly as the basis for further improvement or development (see Notes 1 and 2)?

D. What is the nature and scope of our ability to influence others on our own behalf?

E. Where do we see problems, challenges, or opportunities affecting our area of focus?

   1. What change factors and change mechanisms influence or may influence our work?

      Examples of *change factors* include ideas and values related to music; available information, knowledge, and technology; existing economic, political, and cultural conditions and demographics; educational and cultural governance patterns; and the presence, will, and commitment of visionaries.

      Examples of *change mechanisms* include funding patterns, reward systems, legislation/regulation, governance/administrative systems, standards-setting mechanisms, policy-analysis/development mechanisms, consultant/advisory systems, industry decisions,

technological applications, advertising, publications/studies/research reports, content of formal education, and path-breaking conceptual work.

2. What probable changes are on the horizon that we need to consider?

F. How can we be assured that the assumptions, information, projections, concepts, etc. that we are using to create our analysis are accurate or valid for our specific situation and local context?

G. What can we change, and what cannot be changed by us? Where do we have control, and where do others have control? What areas or situations are beyond the control of any single individual or entity?

H. Are there opportunities for leadership in one or more aspects of our field or in our locality that are appropriate for us to consider?

I. Are there areas of vulnerability that need watching or immediate attention?

J. What can and cannot be changed in the focus area we are considering without harming its capacities to meet old and new challenges effectively?

III. Considering Specific Changes

A. Based on our previous conversations, what changes do we want to consider? As appropriate, refer to work with Question Set I and Question Set II thus far.

B. Choose and articulate the specific change, or changes.

C. What do we need to evaluate what we want to do? What do we need to evaluate the extent to which we can do it?

1. What must we accomplish ourselves? Where must we convince others to help? Consider organizational needs, research and projective studies, planning, financing, resource issues, initial and sustained commitment prospects, and so forth.

2. How much time is needed for

   a. study,
   b. consideration and approval, and
   c. implementation?

3. To what extent can the necessary expertise and resources be found, obtained, deployed, and managed?

4. With whom do we need to consult along the way beyond our immediate group? How do we avoid surprises for ourselves and others?

D. What information and evidence do we need to collect regarding the impacts of what we propose

1. on the entity we are considering, and

2. on larger entities of which it is a part?

E. Where is our project vulnerable? What conditions, actions, and reactions do we need to watch?

F. What about viability?

1. Is our proposal substantive and meaningful?

2. Is our proposal sufficient – good enough for now?

3. Practical in our current or projected circumstances?

4. Sustainable?

5. Does our proposal fix a problem or make improvements?

6. Is it worth the implementation cost?

G. What results are we expecting? When?

1. To what extent can we probe to discover the possibility of results that we are not expecting? How can we best avoid unintended negative consequences?

2. Have we made provisions to make adjustments if circumstances warrant?

3. As we begin, what are the major indicators that what we have proposed is or is not working at least as well as intended?

4. What means do we have to test unfolding developments against make-or-break fundamentals?

IV. Implementing Change

A. Based on our review thus far, what is the specific change we are seeking?

B. How can we best articulate it to others? What is the best and most accurate wording?

   Who are our best spokespersons in various settings?

C. How will we build support for change? Within music? Outside music?

   1. What are our most persuasive arguments?

   2. What objections or proposals for adjustments can we anticipate?

   3. How can we communicate our rationale and implementation plan effectively?

   4. Who do we need to persuade? In what order?

   5. Who needs to be informed? In what order?

D. What is needed in terms of advocacy and organization to ensure successful passage through the governance structure at various applicable levels (e.g. department, college, institution)?

E. How will we accommodate current students or programs through the change? Are there specific transition issues we need to address in advance?

F. Who will do what?

G. What is our immediate course of action toward implementation?

H. What is our timeline for next steps in implementation from now until the process is complete?

*This question set is derived from and is a variation of Question Set IV of the NASM publication *Optional Supplemental Questions for Self-Study*

Notes

Note 1: These are the things that we cannot give up under any circumstances if the entity we are considering is to continue to function. Consider intangibles as well as tangibles. For example, in most circumstances, one such fundamental intangible is the institution's belief that the program is necessary, important, or valuable.

Note 2: It is important to be able to separate functions from conditions. Function: facilities that support the teaching and learning aspects of the program. Condition: new building. The condition may fulfill the function, but the condition is not the function.