

**Local Reviews of Core and Specialization Requirements for
Professional Undergraduate Degrees in Music**

Question Set I: Curricula

National Association of Schools of Music

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Question Set I: Curricula

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

Introduction

- The content areas, premises, and questions that follow are intended to assist institutions engaged in reviewing their professional-degree undergraduate music programs. 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. Requirements and Expectations for Specific Areas of Specialization
- D. Practice
- E. Creative Exploration

Appendix

- At the end of this question set is an appendix that 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

Undergraduate Professional Degree 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 musicians, 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. area of specialization?
 - b. location?
 - c. how general or specialized our core studies 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

Undergraduate Professional Degree 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 musicians with professional undergraduate music 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 professional achievement 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. REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR SPECIFIC AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Premises and Questions for Local Reviewers

Undergraduate Professional Degree Music Programs

Premises:

Professionals apply content knowledge, technical skill, and application capabilities 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 graduates as entering professional musicians, 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, the area of specialization, and their contexts, to apply this understanding in decision-making?

3. For individual graduates entering the music profession, what are our goals for specific attributes such as:
- a. Personal commitment to the art of music and the ability to find success as an independent professional?
 - b. Development of a personal vision and/or purpose – sometimes called “artistic voice” – that is evident in terms of work produced in the discipline or specialization? “Work” includes creation, performance, and other manifestations of musical effort. Visions or purposes can change from work to work.
 - c. Conceptual acuity and ability to:
 - (1) create, sustain, realize, and evolve personal vision or purposes;
 - (2) identify and achieve specific and associated ideas and/or goals at various levels of scope and complexity;
 - (3) work creatively with relationships among ideas, structure, and expression;
 - (4) understand multiple perspectives;
 - (5) create using the process of discovery inherent in making a work?
 - d. Ability to:
 - (1) use imagination as a means of creation and discovery with regard to specific content or subject matter and as a means for communicating through the art form what is created or discovered;
 - (2) channel imagination to reach specific artistic goals;
 - (3) apply imagination to all aspects and levels of a work in ways that enhance its communicative power?
 - e. Technical ability to:
 - (1) create, sustain, realize, and evolve a personal vision and/or purposes;
 - (2) realize specific works or projects or elements of concepts at an advanced or professional level;
 - (3) analyze one’s own work with sophistication using various methods and perspectives?

- f. Ability to combine knowledge and skills, personal vision and/or purpose? Conceptual acuity and clarity, imagination, and technical ability to function independently in the creation and production of high-level work in the area of specialization, including but not limited to the capability and capacity to:
 - (1) define, analyze, and solve problems;
 - (2) make effective choices;
 - (3) evaluate critically and effectively work in process;
 - (4) understand and work with layers of structure and meaning;
 - (5) combine, integrate, and synthesize elements into works with internal, conceptual, and structural integrity?
 - g. The ability to work productively within varied musical settings and maintain positive relationships with individuals engaged in various types of musical efforts?
 - h. 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 musicianship and their work in music?
 - i. The ability to evaluate ideas, methods, and policies in the arts and the humanities and view their impact on the musical and cultural development of others?
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 career entry? 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

Undergraduate Professional Degree Music Programs

Premises:

1. Regular, sustained, and mindful practice is important in the area of specialization *and* in fields such as music performance, composing, improvising, listening, analyzing, and teaching.
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 and in the areas of specialization we offer?
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

Undergraduate Professional Degree Music Programs

Premises:

1. Creative exploration with curricular elements and their relationships and purposes is essential for the positive evolution of core and specialization studies for professional undergraduate degrees in music.
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;
 - c. revealing new patterns, methods, or means for engaging in the profession;
 - 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 Professional Undergraduate Degrees in Music

A. Common Body of Knowledge and Skills

1. Performance

- a. Technical skills requisite for artistic self-expression in at least one major 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.

2. Musicianship Skills and Analysis

- 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. A rudimentary capacity to create original or derivative music, included but 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.

4. History and Repertory. 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.
 5. Synthesis. Work on musical problems by combining, as appropriate to the issue, capabilities in performance; aural, verbal, and visual analysis; composition/improvisation; and history and repertory.
- B. Area of Specialization (performance, music theory, composition, etc. See *NASM Handbook*, Section IX.)
- C. Results
1. Achievement of professional, entry-level competencies in the major area.
 2. 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.
- D. Other possible content components
1. Advocacy
 2. Entrepreneurship
 3. Musician's health
 4. Technology
 5. Pedagogical Issues
- E. Attributes Requiring Synthesis (see question C.2)
1. Communication
 2. Creativity
 3. Versatility
 4. Virtuosity
 5. Flexibility
 6. Capabilities with complexity