

## General Standards for Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Music

### Excerpts from the National Association of Schools of Music Handbook 2005-2006

**PLEASE NOTE:** The standards texts quoted here address the professional undergraduate music degree in the United States, normally titled Bachelor of Music. Beyond the standards stated in item V. below, standards for the liberal arts undergraduate degree, normally titled Bachelor of Arts, may be found in the NASM *Handbook* under item VI. of the standards for undergraduate degrees.

#### V. GENERAL STANDARDS FOR GRADUATION FROM CURRICULA LEADING TO BACCALAUREATE DEGREES IN MUSIC

Musicians work in many contexts. Music influences and is influenced by ideas, events, and trends. Musicians influence culture both through the practice of music and through interactions with musicians, other professionals, and the public. All undergraduate curricula should provide the basic foundation for addressing these conditions and responsibilities.

##### A. Musicianship

1. **Purpose.** Musicianship is the body of knowledge, skills, practices, and insights that enables music-making at any level. To some extent, every musician functions regularly as performer, listener, historian, composer, theorist, and teacher. Completion of an undergraduate program in music indicates acquisition of sufficient musicianship to perform these functions appropriate to the areas of concentration and to communicate effectively across the specializations of musical practice.

For this reason, certain subjects, learning processes, and approaches to creativity are common to all baccalaureate programs in music. The particular format and details of the curricula utilized to achieve such breadth are the responsibility of each institution. Goals, objectives, size, scope, and resources shape the means used to fulfill this responsibility. Specific means will vary from institution to institution.

2. **Content.** Musicianship begins with acquisition of fundamental competencies such as aural and rhythmic skills, the reading of notation, and the use of musical terminologies. Development then proceeds through constant use and expansion of previously acquired skills.

The content of traditional course work in musicianship such as sight-singing, ear-training, harmony, keyboard harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, conducting, and music literature is important. However, this content can be organized and taught in a variety of ways to produce comprehensive musical competence.

Consequently, undergraduate musicianship studies focus on: (1) conceptual understanding of musical components and processes; (2) continued practice in creating, interpreting, presenting, analyzing, and evaluating music; (3) increasing understanding of various musical cultures and historical periods; (4) acquiring capacities to integrate musical knowledge and skills; and (5) accumulating capabilities for independent work in the music professions.

## **VII. COMPETENCIES COMMON TO ALL PROFESSIONAL BACCALAUREATE DEGREES IN MUSIC AND TO ALL UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES LEADING TO TEACHER CERTIFICATION**

Students must acquire the common body of knowledge and skills that constitutes a basic foundation for work and continuing growth as a music professional. While emphases and balances among these competencies appropriate for particular degree programs are a prerogative of the institution, each has the responsibility of ensuring basic competence in all areas of the common body of knowledge and skills outlined below. Institutions shall make clear the levels of competency in each of the areas necessary to graduate. Institutions are responsible for providing sufficient lessons, classes, ensembles, repertory requirements and opportunities, performance attendance requirements, and other experiences to develop the common body of knowledge and skills.

Institutions are also responsible for defining how development of essential competencies will be assigned among various curricular offerings and for determining student evaluation procedures. These standards do not require a course for each competency. Institutions are encouraged to be creative in developing courses and other formal experiences that engage and integrate several or all of the requisite competencies.

### **A. Performance**

Students must acquire:

1. Technical skills requisite for artistic self-expression in at least one major performance area at a level appropriate for the particular music concentration.
2. An overview understanding of the repertory in their major performance area and the ability to perform from a cross-section of that repertory.
3. The ability to read at sight with fluency.
4. 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.
5. Keyboard competency. Experiences in secondary performance areas are recommended.
6. 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.

## **B. Aural Skills and Analysis**

Students must acquire:

1. An understanding of the common elements and organizational patterns of music and their interaction, and the ability to employ this understanding in aural, verbal, and visual analyses.
2. Sufficient understanding of musical forms, processes, and structures to use this knowledge in compositional, performance, scholarly, pedagogical, and historical contexts, according to the requisites of their specializations.
3. The ability to place music in historical, cultural, and stylistic contexts.

## **C. Composition and Improvisation**

Students must acquire:

1. Rudimentary capacity to create derivative or original music both extemporaneously and in written form.
2. The ability to compose, improvise, or both at a basic level in one or more musical languages, for example, the imitation of various musical styles, improvisation on pre-existing materials, the creation of original compositions, experimentation with various sound sources, and manipulating the common elements in non-traditional ways.

## **D. History and Repertory**

Students must acquire:

1. A basic knowledge of music history through the present time.
2. An acquaintance with repertoires beyond the area of specialization. All students must be exposed to a large and varied body of music through study and attendance at recitals, concerts, opera and musical theatre productions, and other performances

With regard to specific content, music has a long history, many repertoires, and multiple connections with cultures. Content in and study of these areas are vast and growing. Each institution is responsible for choosing from among this material when establishing basic requirements. Each is responsible for breadth and depth, and for setting proportions between them. Content choices and emphases, as well as means for developing competency, reflect institutional mission, areas of concentration offered, and the goals of the music unit.

## **E. Technology**

Students must acquire:

1. A basic overview understanding of how technology serves the field of music as a whole.
2. Working knowledge of the technological developments applicable to their area of specialization.

## F. Synthesis

While synthesis is a lifetime process, by the end of undergraduate study, students should be:

1. Working independently on a variety of musical problems by combining their capabilities in performance; aural, verbal, and visual analysis; composition and improvisation; and history and repertory.
2. Forming and defending value judgments about music.
3. Acquiring the tools to work with a comprehensive repertory, including music from various cultures of the world and music of their own time.
4. Understanding basic interrelationships and interdependencies among the various professions and activities that constitute the musical enterprise.

## VIII. COMPETENCIES, STANDARDS, GUIDELINES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC BACCALAUREATE DEGREES IN MUSIC

The Bachelor of Music degree is the initial professional degree in music. Its primary emphasis is on development of the skills, concepts, and sensitivities essential to the professional life of the musician. In any of many possible roles, the professional musician must exhibit not only technical competence, but also a broad knowledge of music and music literature, the ability to integrate musical knowledge and skills, sensitivity in musical style, and an insight into the role of music in intellectual and cultural life.

While admission to a program leading to the degree will be subject to broad institutional admission policies, emphasis should be on evidence that the candidate possesses exceptional talent, the potential to develop high-level musicianship, artistic sensibilities, and above all, a strong sense of commitment. Students should be evaluated and screened for continuation periodically throughout the degree program.

The standards, guidelines, and recommendations that follow focus on common goals. Individual institutions and their faculty members should be encouraged to experiment with curricular patterns and modes. Experimentation might lead to major programs of study not specifically included below. Innovation in method and course organization is encouraged.

Regardless of their objectives or formats, all professional undergraduate degree programs must:

- § Meet the operational and curricular standards presented in the *NASM Handbook* that are applicable to all programs of their type.
- § Ensure that curricular programs with majors in specific areas of specialization are represented and taught by faculty with appropriate training and experience in that area of specialization.

For all Bachelor of Music degrees except those in music education, music therapy, and certain combined curricula, regardless of the specific distribution, normally at least 65% of a typical 120-124 semester hour degree program is in music courses.

The areas of specialization below share certain common goals. Upon completion of any specific program:

- § Students must demonstrate achievement of professional, entry-level competence in the area of specialization, including significant technical mastery, capability to produce work and solve professional problems independently, and a coherent set of artistic/intellectual goals which are evident in their work. Studies in the area of specialization must continue throughout the degree program.
- § Students must demonstrate their competence by developing a body of work for evaluation in the major area of study. A senior project or presentation in the major area is recommended.
- § Students must have the ability to communicate musical ideas, concepts, and requirements to professionals and lay persons related to the practice of the major field. Such communication may involve musical, oral, written, and visual media.
- § Students must have opportunities to build musicianship to an advanced level and to broaden knowledge of musical elements, structure, repertoires, and contexts.

Other goals for the Bachelor of Music Degree are strongly recommended:

- § Student orientation to the nature of professional work in their major field. Examples are: organizational structures and working patterns; artistic, intellectual, economic, technological, and political contexts; and developmental potential. Students should be especially encouraged to acquire the entrepreneurial skills necessary to assist in the development and advancement of their careers.
- § Student experience with broadly based examples of excellence in various musical professions.
- § Opportunities for students to develop teaching skills, particularly as related to their major area of study.
- § Opportunities for continuous development of improvisational skills whether as an aspect of composition, musicianship, or performance studies.
- § Opportunities for students to explore areas of individual interest related to music in general or to the major. Examples are: music bibliography, notations, aesthetics, acoustics, performance practices, and specialized topics in history, musicology/ethnomusicology, and analysis. Some provision should be made for independent study, defined as learning activities with a minimum of guidance but with appropriate evaluation of completion. Independent studies should emphasize individual creativity and synthesis of a broad range of musical knowledge and skills.

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**Please Note:** There follow specific standards for specializations or major programs of study in the areas of performance, composition, music theory, music history and literature, sacred music, jazz studies, pedagogy, music therapy, and music education. The degrees awarded for completion of these courses of study are Bachelor of Music in Performance, Bachelor of Music in Composition, and so forth.