

Information

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

Introduction

The major activities of the National Association of Schools of Music are the accreditation of educational programs in music and the establishment of curricular standards and guidelines. NASM is the only accrediting agency covering the entire field of music recognized by the United States Department of Education. The Association is composed of approximately 645 member institutions, including conservatories, public and private colleges, universities, and music schools. All NASM member institutions meet the standards and uphold the Code of Ethics of the Association as stated in the *NASM Handbook*.

In addition to the accreditation function of the Association, NASM holds an annual meeting and other forums, and provides information to leaders of music programs; pursues an analysis and publications program on issues in music, the arts, education, accreditation, and cultural development; compiles and publishes statistics associated with the operations of music schools and departments; publishes a variety of resources for the music and education communities; and provides information to the general public about educational programs in music.

A Brief History of the Association

In 1924, individuals representing six music schools met in Cincinnati to discuss the problems related to transfer of credits among institutions of higher education in music. At the meeting, the participants came to realize that they faced other common problems, primarily in the broad area of ethics as related to music training. It was decided that an association should be formed to secure a better understanding among schools of music; to establish a more uniform method of granting credit; and to develop and maintain basic threshold standards for the granting of degrees and other credentials. The organizational meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music and Allied Arts was held October 20-21, 1924, in Pittsburgh. Individuals representing sixteen institutions attended the first meeting.

During the early years, the membership of the Association consisted of individuals representing music institutions. In 1928, after the initial standards for the Bachelor of Music degree had been developed, institutional membership was established. The thirty-two schools that had applied for Membership in the Association at that time became the charter members of NASM.

The Association has grown from those thirty-two charter members in 1928 to include over 630 baccalaureate and graduate degree-granting institutions, community colleges, and non-degree-granting institutions today. NASM opened a national office in Washington, D.C., in 1965; the office is now located in Reston, Virginia, fifteen miles west of Washington.

General Statement of Aims and Objectives of NASM

1. To provide a national forum for the discussion and consideration of concerns relevant to the preservation and advancement of standards in the field of music, particularly in higher education.
2. To develop a national unity and strength for the purpose of maintaining the position of music study in the family of fine arts and humanities in our universities, colleges, and schools of music.
3. To maintain professional leadership in music training and to develop a national context for the professional growth of individual musicians as artists, scholars, teachers, and participants in music and music-related enterprises.
4. To establish threshold standards of achievement in music curricula without restricting an administration or school in its freedom to develop new ideas, to experiment, or to expand its program.
5. To recognize that inspired, creative teaching may rightly lead to new content, methodologies, and results.

6. To establish that the prime objective of all educational programs in music is to provide the opportunity for every music student to develop individual potentialities to the utmost.

The Association's Role as a Specialized, Professional Accrediting Agency

Accreditation is the process whereby an association or agency recognizes an institution as having met certain qualifications or standards. In NASM, the process focuses upon two principal concerns: educational quality and institutional probity.

The review of educational quality is made according to nationally recognized standards developed by the Association with the full participation of its member institutions.

The review of probity is made by determining whether the institution is indeed providing the educational services it says it is offering to the public, and whether its own stated operational procedures are being followed.

In its role as an accrediting agency, the Association develops and maintains educational standards, provides counsel and assistance to established and developing institutions and programs, and furnishes information to the public about accreditation as it relates to educational programs in music.

Procedures for NASM Membership

The two basic procedures for Membership in NASM are institutional self-study and peer evaluation. The self-study is designed to produce a comprehensive effort on the part of the institution to evaluate its own programs while considering its objectives. Peer evaluation provides professional, objective judgment from outside the institution, and is accomplished through an on-site visitation, a formal Visitors' Report, and Commission review.

NASM publishes procedural documents. Institutions seeking Membership in NASM should visit the [website](#), or [contact the National Office](#) for appropriate materials.

Consultative Visits

During preparation for application for Membership, an institution may wish to request a [consultative visit](#). From a slate provided by NASM, the institution may select a consultant experienced in the accreditation process in music to visit the campus for one or more days to assist the institution in developing or revising degree programs, to determine the readiness of an institution to apply for Membership in NASM, or to provide other appropriate services. The consultant is hired by and works for the institution. Since the consultant is barred from acting as an NASM evaluator for the institution when application is made, a consultant's recommendations are purely advisory in nature, and do not control later accreditation decisions.

Individual Membership

NASM maintains an [individual membership](#) category open to interested individuals. It is a useful, optional service provided by NASM. Individual members are informed about, but have no vote in, the activities of the Association.

Individual Membership is designed especially for music executives and faculty members of institutions preparing for NASM accredited institutional Membership. The music executive is encouraged to become an individual member during the application phase of the process.

Accredited Institutional Membership

Institutions meeting Association standards for accreditation shall be accredited following review under applicable NASM procedures.

It is the policy of the Association to re-examine accredited institutional members on a regular cycle, the period of which shall not exceed ten years. However, the Commission on Accreditation and the Commission on Community College Accreditation have the authority to require reexamination at any time upon prior notification to the institution.

Institutions eligible to apply for Membership include independent music schools, colleges, universities, two-year institutions, and institutions offering graduate work only. Institutions may be degree- and/or non-degree-granting.

Associate Membership may be granted to baccalaureate and/or graduate degree-granting institutions, community colleges, and non-degree-granting institutions applying for the first time that meet all curricular standards and all other applicable standards of the Association, and which are developing in areas related to purposes or operations. Accreditation with Associate Membership is valid for up to five years. At the end of this period, such institutions will be required to satisfy all criteria for Membership in the Association.

Membership is granted to baccalaureate and/or graduate degree-granting institutions, community colleges, and non-degree-granting institutions which meet all of the standards of the Association. Institutions approved for Membership are granted five-year periods of accreditation. At the end of five years, the institution is expected to apply for renewal of Membership. Institutions approved for renewal of Membership are granted ten-year periods of accreditation.

Community colleges are eligible for Membership if their curricula and resources are equivalent to the first two years of four-year member institutions, and if their programs and curricula meet the NASM standards for community colleges.

Non-degree-granting institutions are eligible for Membership if their programs and curricula meet the NASM standards for non-degree-granting institutions.

Complete standards for institutional Membership are published annually in the NASM [Handbook](#). When applicable, new or amended standards that have been ratified by the NASM Membership and/or the Board of Directors are available as addenda to the *Handbook*.

The Development of the Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation

In presenting its standards and guidelines for member institutions, NASM reaffirms its special commitment to those principles of voluntary accreditation that encourage differences among institutions and respect for operational integrity within institutions.

The development of standards and guidelines for accreditation has been continuous since the formation of the Association in 1924. In 1927, NASM first published standards for the Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees.

In the 1950s, NASM began to recognize earned doctoral degrees in music for performance, composition, scholarship, and music education. Gradually, statements also have been developed for other specific options within the Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degree programs. In 1973, the Association first published standards in the form in which they exist today, combining curricular structure, recommended areas for general study, and essential competencies, experiences, and opportunities.

Since Membership in the Association in 1928 was open only to institutions offering at least the Bachelor of Music degree, no standards for the Bachelor of Arts degree in music were developed until the mid-1930s, when eligibility for Membership in the Association was extended to all postsecondary institutions offering degree programs in music. The first published standards for the “liberal arts” degree (1936) required that approximately one-third of the total course work be in music, the same distribution considered appropriate today.

The standards of the Association, as published in the *Handbook*, are continually examined and revised. Although the

basic curricular framework for various degrees has changed little over the years, there have been significant specific changes that reflect the changing needs of the profession.

Today, the ratification of standards is accomplished by vote of the entire membership. Prior to that vote, drafts are circulated for comment among member institutions and the national music community. The Association encourages comment on its established standards at any time.

Standards and Guidelines of the Association

The standards and guidelines of NASM, which are published in the *Handbook* of the Association, provide a basic framework for the accreditation process, thus allowing objective analysis of curricula. They are meant to be the basis for dialogue (1) within an institution as the self-study is being developed, (2) between an institution and the Association (the visiting evaluators and the Commissions) and (3) between the Association and the public as a whole.

The Association does not attempt to develop detailed formulas, plans of course work, or other inflexible specifications that might impinge on the freedom of institutions to develop individual programs. Instead, NASM has developed standards and guidelines specific enough to ensure a certain level of educational quality, but not so restrictive as to stifle experimentation, innovation, and individuality of program content. Therefore, “standards” do not imply standardization.

Standards are published in the *Handbook* for:

- Baccalaureate and Graduate Degree-Granting Institutions;
- Community Colleges,
- Non-Degree-Granting Institutions.

The standards cover areas such as the following:

Basic Criteria for Membership. The institution must first demonstrate compliance with a series of ten to fifteen short threshold statements designed to show institutional and/or program viability. These cover such areas as basic curricular elements; length of time an institution or program has been operating; presence of qualified faculty and adequate facilities; publication of accurate admissions, program, and cost information; and compliance with state and local codes and other accrediting agencies.

Operational and Curricular Standards. In addition to the Basic Criteria for Membership noted above, the *Handbook* contains standards and guidelines for programs in music in the following areas:

- *Standards for Purposes and Operations such as Purposes of the Institution and Music Unit; Size and Scope; Finances; Governance and Administration; Faculty and Staff; Facilities, Equipment, Technology, Health, and Safety; Library and Learning Resources; and so forth*
- *Music Program Components such as Credit and Time Requirements; Time on Task, Curricular Proportions, and Competencies; Forms of Instruction, Requirements, and Electives; Independent Study; Distance Learning; and so forth.*
- *Undergraduate Programs in Music*
- *Admission to Undergraduate Study*
- *Two-Year Degree-Granting Programs*
- *The Liberal Arts Degree with a Major in Music*
- *All Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Music and All Undergraduate Degrees Leading to Teacher Certification*
- *Specific Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Music*
- *Graduate Programs in Music*
- *Admission to Graduate Study*
- *Master’s Degrees*
- *The General Master’s Degree*
- *Specific Master’s Degrees*

- *Specialist Programs*
- *Doctoral Degrees in Music*
- *Non-Degree-Granting Programs in Music*
- *Admission to Professional Postsecondary Non-Degree-Granting Programs*
- *Community Education and Precollegiate Non-Degree-Granting Programs*
- *Specific Operational Standards for Free-Standing Music Institutions of Higher Education*
- *Specific Operational Standards for Proprietary Institutions of Higher Education*

Code of Ethics

NASM member institutions have agreed to abide by the Code of Ethics of the Association containing statements in areas such as faculty appointments, financial aid, advertising, and the school's responsibility to the student. The Association has formal procedures for reviewing complaints directed against member institutions. All formal complaints regarding ethics are reviewed by the Committee on Ethics, which is composed of NASM representatives elected by the membership.

The Governance of the Association

The officers of the Association are the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and nine Regional Chairs, all of whom are elected by the membership. These individuals, along with the immediate Past President, the leadership of the accrediting commissions, and three representatives of the general public, make up the Board of Directors. The Executive Director of NASM is an officer and an *ex officio* member of the Board.

The executive body of the Board of Directors is the Executive Committee, whose members are the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Chair and Associate Chair of the Commission on Accreditation, and Executive Director (*ex officio*).

NASM maintains two Commissions with responsibilities for accreditation reviews:

- Commission on Accreditation
- Commission on Community College Accreditation

Members of the Commissions are elected by the membership of the Association from among individuals officially representing member schools.

The Association also maintains a Committee on Ethics and a Nominating Committee.

Other Services of the Association

Website. NASM maintains extensive information and current materials on its website.

National Office. NASM maintains a professional staff of 15 at its National Office in Reston, Virginia. The staff provides technical services, information, and assistance to members of the Association and interested individuals in areas related to music training, education, and the arts. Staff members also carry out the administrative functions of the Association, including accreditation coordination, accounting, correspondence, and policy analysis. The Association offers a comprehensive list of publications on its website. It also collects and makes available comprehensive data regarding music programs and institutions.

Directory. The Association publishes a searchable, online directory list that provides the names of all member institutions, their addresses, telephone numbers, music executives, and degree programs. The *Directory* is the official accreditation listing for NASM member institutions. The Association also makes [mailing labels](#) available for purchase through its website.

Handbook. The *Handbook*, published annually in electronic form, includes NASM standards for non-degree-granting,

community college, baccalaureate, and graduate programs in music, as well as the Association’s Constitution, Bylaws, Code of Ethics, and Rules of Practice and Procedure. When applicable, new or amended standards that have been ratified by the NASM Membership and/or the Board of Directors are available as addenda to the *Handbook*.

Statistical Services. NASM participates annually in the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) project, an ad hoc coalition designed to gather statistics on the arts in higher education. HEADS provides yearly statistical compilations about enrollment, degrees awarded, admission, graduation, faculty, administration, operational expenditures, credit hour production, fees, and student demographics, organized by size and type of institution. Statistics are stored on computer for use in “Special Reports,” a service that allows schools to compare themselves to a selected group of other institutions. “Special Reports” provide comparative statistics for samplings as small as ten institutions in most categories of HEADS data.

Notices. During the academic year, NASM publishes various items of information, annual meeting content and registration, reports of Commission actions, drafts of proposed changes to the *Handbook*, descriptions of activities of interest to music executives, discussions of national arts policy issues, and so forth. Such notices can be found under [About NASM](#) on the NASM website.

Annual Meeting

NASM holds an [Annual Meeting](#) on the Sunday through Tuesday immediately prior to Thanksgiving. Sessions at the Annual Meeting are designed to include topics of interest to individuals concerned with education in music. There are regional meetings for each of the nine NASM regions, meetings by size and type of institution, interest group sessions, and workshops. Papers presented at the meeting, when available, are published in the [Past Annual Meetings](#) section of the NASM website, and in the [Proceedings of Annual Meetings](#).

A Summary of Benefits of Institutional Membership

NASM offers many services to member institutions:

- Constructive evaluation of programs through the accreditation process.
- Advice and counsel concerning new curricula.
- Periodic research and policy studies of topics pertinent to education in music.
- Information concerning developments in music, the arts, education, and related matters.
- Data compiled from the annual reports of member institutions giving a comprehensive picture of music in postsecondary education.
- Publications containing information and basic standards for the education of musicians.
- Regional and national forums for discussions of issues, concerns, and opportunities.

For further information, please contact:

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