

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**

## **Procedures for Visiting Evaluators**

**Membership Procedures  
September 2016 Edition**

**Applicable for Visits:  
2016-2017 through 2025-2026**

## **National Office**

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Users of the *NASM Procedures for Visiting Evaluators* also will need the *NASM Procedures for the Self-Study Document* (*Format A, Format B, Format C, or Custom*) used by the institution, and the latest edition of the *NASM Handbook* and any current addenda. All texts are available on the NASM website, except for Custom Formats, each of which must be approved in advance by NASM and provided by the institution in its Self-Study.

Information contained herein concerning programs, procedures, requirements, standards, and fees is subject to change without notice by the appropriate body of NASM.

Permission is hereby granted to copy this document for use in the accreditation process.

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# Procedures for Visiting Evaluators

## I. ORIENTATION

The following instructions are intended to serve as guidelines for NASM visiting evaluators to institutions seeking Membership or renewal of Membership. In addition to the detailed instructions provided, three points of paramount importance are provided as overall guidance.

### A. Responsibilities of the Visiting Evaluators

1. The primary functions of the visiting evaluators are (a) to verify the Self-Study, (b) to gather and assess information in a comprehensive manner, (c) to review student work, and (d) to prepare a factually based evaluative report that enables thorough Commission review of the total music program.
2. Evaluators must have detailed knowledge of standards and guidelines and their application, and must develop thorough understanding of an institution's Self-Study.
3. The observations and written evaluations of visitors are particularly important in areas such as performance and reviews of student work, and the relationship of student work to curricula.
4. In carrying out these functions, visitors are expected to reflect the service-oriented accreditation philosophy of NASM and thus to produce an appropriate context for the institution's receipt of Commission action.
5. In all phases of the process, evaluators work together as a team. Fulfilling specific responsibilities does not preclude common effort and shared decision-making.
6. The visiting evaluators do not accredit, make definitive accreditation judgments, or make official recommendations to the institution on behalf of NASM. Visiting evaluators shall not speak on behalf of a Commission or suggest an anticipated Commission action. These functions are served only by the Commissions on Accreditation.
7. In their contacts at the visited institution, visiting evaluators may be able to serve as consultants to a limited extent, but this is a secondary role. It should be confirmed as consultative at the time, and should not interfere with the primary function of the visit. Advisory comments must be clearly identified as such, so they are not construed as official positions of NASM.

### B. Concerns of the Visiting Evaluators

1. In addition to particular standards issues, visiting evaluators consider the larger issues, such as the effectiveness of teaching, artistic goals and quality, curricula, competencies being developed by students, administration of the program, validity of information and conclusions reached through self-study, and crucial futures issues.
2. The Visitors' Report reflects careful attention to these significant factors. It presents an objective analysis that summarizes (a) the state of the music unit, (b) the extent to which NASM standards appear to be met, (c) strengths and areas for improvement, (d) major futures issues for the music unit, and (e) constructive suggestions for future development of the music unit.

## **C. Protocols**

1. Evaluators shall base their reviews on NASM standards, guidelines, and procedures in the context of the visited institution rather than on personal opinions, favored methodologies, or practices at their home institutions.
2. In accordance with NASM policies on institutional autonomy, evaluators shall not enter local debates on the merits of specific approaches to particular issues or concerns.
3. NASM visiting evaluators are asked to comport themselves at all times with dignity, courtesy, kindness, and professionalism, and should exhibit attitudes of encouragement.
4. Visiting evaluators are asked to devote their entire attention to the institution during an on-site review. Professional and personal business, and use of various electronic means should be avoided during the review and in the presence of institutional representatives.
5. Visitors are to show respect for all individuals and to refrain from any appearance of harassment, substance abuse, or any other behavior that would raise questions about the integrity or objectivity of the process, or otherwise shift focus from evaluation and improvement of the music unit.

## **II. PROCEDURES FOR THE VISIT**

### **A. Invitation and Response**

1. Invitations to serve at specific institutions come from the NASM Executive Director. The invitation communication describes the specifics of the visit.
2. Each visiting evaluator is asked to respond as requested in the invitation letter as quickly as possible and no later than two weeks after considering (a) the proposed time frame; (b) whether his/her service would be, or could be, construed as a conflict of interest; and (c) whether his/her schedule permits requisite attention to the Self-Study, the on-site visit, and timely preparation of the Visitors' Report.
3. The minimum visit period is two full working days. Evaluators are requested to arrive the evening before the first day of the visit and to leave no sooner than the morning following the second day of the visit. Time may be extended due to the size and scope of the music program.

### **B. Combined Visits**

NASM visiting evaluators may be involved with other accrediting agencies in one of the following ways.

#### **1. NASM Evaluators Serving Multiple Purposes at the Institution**

In this case, NASM evaluators conduct a regular NASM evaluation and at the same time or with additional time, serve another review purpose for the institution. Protocols for each such visit must be approved in advance by the NASM Executive Director. Reporting responsibilities are to NASM and to the institution. Planning for these visits will include specific decisions about reporting timetables and formats and particular attention to avoiding conflicts of interest. For example, NASM visitors may not receive compensation from institutions for work done jointly, concurrently, or in sequence with the NASM on-site review.

## 2. Concurrent Accreditation Visits

In this case, the NASM evaluators conduct a regular NASM visit at the same time as that of another accrediting agency, but are not members of the other agency's team. Although impressions may be shared with the other team, the NASM evaluators devote their full time and attention to NASM accreditation procedures. Their reporting responsibilities are solely to NASM.

## 3. Joint Accreditation Visits

- a. In this case, the NASM evaluators join with those from another accrediting body for the purpose of conducting a joint review. Visitors serve both as evaluators for NASM and as team members for the other agency. Joint visits typically require more than two days in order to fulfill the responsibilities of NASM and the other agency.
- b. Joint visits may also be conducted at institutions wishing to gain accreditation and/or reaccreditation of their degree-granting and community education units.
- c. During the planning stage, a decision will be made concerning the format of the Visitors' Report(s). Information and instructions will be provided to all visiting evaluators in advance of the on-site review.

## 4. NASM Evaluators Serving Other Agencies

In this case, the NASM evaluators are not acting in any capacity for NASM. At the request of either the institution or another agency, the Executive Director of NASM nominates NASM evaluators to serve solely as representatives of the other agency. The other agency shall be responsible for all arrangements and shall provide all appropriate instructions and guidelines to the visiting evaluators.

## C. Special Instructions for Visitors to Degree-Granting Institutions that Operate Community Education Programs in Music

1. Many degree-granting music units offer non-degree-granting programs of study for children, youth, and adults in their communities. These range from private lessons with collegiate instructors to large, institutionalized programs with specialized professional faculty and administration. *Community music school, preparatory program, laboratory school, and community division* are among the many titles used to designate such programs when they have a specific published identity.
2. If a community education program does not (a) serve individuals in the community in a pre-professional or avocational context; (b) have a specific published identity; (c) have at least one specifically designated administrator; and (d) operate on an academic year or year round basis, the institution will comment on the program only in the Self-Study section titled "Community Involvement," and in Section III. as applicable. The institution will not provide information in a separate Self-Study section.

In this case, primary comments regarding the program, if any, are discussed in "K. Community Involvement; Articulation with Other Schools" of the Visitors' Report.

3. If a community education program (a) serves individuals in the community in a pre-professional or avocational context; (b) has a specific published identity; (c) has at least one specifically designated administrator; and (d) operates on an academic year or year round



basis, and the institution is not seeking Full Listing of its curricular offerings in NASM publications, the institution will comment on the program only in the Self-Study section titled “Non-Degree-Granting Programs for the Community,” and in Section III. as applicable.

In this case, primary comments regarding the program are discussed in “L. Non-Degree-Granting Programs for the Community” of the Visitors’ Report. Such programs should be listed in the Self-Study, Visitors’ Report and their corresponding cover pages as seeking Basic Listing or renewal of Basic Listing, as appropriate.

4. If a community education program (a) serves individuals in the community in a pre-professional or avocational context; (b) has a specific published identity; (c) has at least one specifically designated administrator; and (d) operates on an academic year or year round basis, and wishes to seek Full Listing of its curricular offerings in NASM publications, the program will be discussed in every section of the Self-Study or in a separate Self-Study.

In this case, comments regarding the program are considered applicable in every section of the Visitors’ Report except those titled “Community Involvement” and “Non-Degree-Granting Programs for the Community.” Also, one or more team members will be assigned specific but not exclusive duty to review the community education program.

5. For further information, see *NASM Handbook*, Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II. Accreditation, Article I. Institutional Membership, Section 3. Curricular Requirements, and Section 4. Separate Accreditation for Community or Precollegiate Divisions of Postsecondary Institutions.

For assistance in ascertaining the category of submission, please contact the NASM National Office.

#### **D. Preliminary Arrangements**

The visiting evaluators should make and confirm the following arrangements before arriving on campus:

1. Establish dates for the NASM visit
  - a. Contact the music executive of the institution to be visited, arrange mutually convenient dates for the visit, and consult with the music executive concerning the agenda for the visit. See *Procedures for Institutions*. The institution shall provide the visiting evaluators with the opportunity to visit every music program.
    - (1) *For applications reviewed by the Commission on Accreditation*, the latest date for the visit is June 1 for consideration in November, or February 15 for consideration in June.
    - (2) *For applications reviewed by the Commission on Community College Accreditation*, the latest date for the visit is June 1 for consideration in November.
  - b. The institution shall inform the NASM National Office of the dates for the visit.
2. In degree-granting institutions, determine the status and structure of reviews for any non-degree or community education programs.
3. Require that the music executive send a copy of the Self-Study and one copy of all supportive materials to each evaluator. These materials must be received by the visiting evaluators at least four weeks before the visit.

4. Ensure that arrangements have been made to provide (a) opportunities to visit classes/lessons; (b) opportunities to hear student performers and review student work as indicated in the Visitors' Report outline; (c) opportunities to meet with administrators, faculty, staff, and students (in the case of free-standing/independent institutions, a meeting with representative members of the trustees/board must be arranged); (d) efficient access to student transcripts; lists of graduates; theses; projects; appointment, promotion, and tenure guidelines; course syllabi, and compilations of recital programs; and (e) a location for visitors to work.
5. Complete plans and reservations for travel to the institution and inform the institution of arrival and departure times. Team members travel as inexpensively as possible, and when feasible, schedule travel on days that allow the greatest savings.
6. Confirm housing and other logistics with the music executive. Separate, non-dormitory, overnight accommodations should be made available for each evaluator. Accommodations shall be safe, accessible, comfortable, and professional in character and nature.
7. Ensure that the Self-Study includes all required parts, including curricular charts in the NASM format. Note that Self-Studies may be prepared according to different overall formats recommended or agreed to by NASM.
8. Analyze the Self-Study thoroughly as soon as it is received, noting issues to be covered during the visit. The team chair confers with members of the team about arrangements and preliminary impressions of the Self-Study.

In fulfilling these functions, the visiting evaluators determine:

- a. The extent to which the Self-Study contains all information required for review by the Commission, including curricular information in the NASM format for on-ground and distance learning programs, and evidence that all programs document artistic and educational results.
  - b. The extent to which the Self-Study is sufficiently evaluative and projective.
  - c. The extent to which there is consistency among information in various parts of the Self-Study, and among the Self-Study and supporting materials such as the institutional catalog and the *Management Documents Portfolio*.
  - d. The extent to which NASM operational and curricular standards appear to be met.
  - e. Issues that need further information or clarification.
  - f. Functions, operations, or program areas that seem to require special attention either to preserve their effectiveness or to address the need for improvement.
  - g. Strategies for addressing areas of concern.
  - h. Key persons to interview.
9. Maintain an even perspective. Although the Self-Study document carries great weight in the review, visiting evaluators should evaluate the Self-Study document and the music unit independently. An insufficient or ineffective Self-Study document does not necessarily indicate a weak music unit. The reverse is also true.

10. If the visitors conclude that further documentation or clarification is needed before the visit, contact should be made with the National Office staff before making a request to the institution.

## **E. The Visit**

The visitors do the following, all in relation to the purposes and size and scope of the institution, in order to produce a comprehensive and effective Visitors' Report addressing issues contained in NASM standards:

All curricular programs that fall under the purview of NASM (i.e., community education, non-degree, undergraduate, and graduate; on ground, distance learning) must be reviewed as applicable in each of the following areas. Student work in each degree/program must be reviewed and evaluated. Please see Appendix I of this document for the advisory entitled "Evaluating Student Work in NASM Reviews."

### **1. Content**

- a. Undertake a thorough review of all music major programs (i.e., non-degree, undergraduate, and graduate; on-ground, distance learning) irrespective of where the programs are administered or housed within the institution. Recall that accreditation is granted to an institution, not to a unit, curricular programs, or individuals. Arrangements should be made to do this in a manner that causes as little disruption as possible to artistic and educational routine.
- b. Observe classes, lessons, and rehearsals. The evaluators should select at random certain classes, lessons, and rehearsals to visit. As applicable, all levels of instruction must be reviewed. Classes within the major should be visited, as should, as possible, at least one in each of the following categories: (1) basic musicianship, (2) performance—individual (or group) studio lessons, small ensemble rehearsals, large ensemble rehearsals, (3) composition, (4) theory (critical analysis), (5) teacher preparation, (6) history and literature, and (7) music for the general college student.
- c. Review scores, recordings, videos, documents, and other materials demonstrating the quality of student work in each degree or program offered, including documentation supportive of final projects required for degree completion.
- d. As necessary, consider course syllabi, compilations of recital and event programs, etc.
- e. Audition a sampling of student performers. Attend performance(s), dress rehearsal(s), or (preferably) a recital by several representative students at various levels. If the institution offers professional degrees or programs in performance at one or more levels (i.e., associate, baccalaureate, master's, doctoral), hear a sampling of performers at each level, either in person or on recording.
- f. Consider the effectiveness of institutional policies and procedures for ensuring that student competencies are met.
- g. Consider the total performance program (student, faculty, guest) and its quality and comprehensiveness in relation to the goals and objectives of (1) the music unit or a whole area, and (2) specific curricular programs.
- h. Verify transcripts. Paper or electronic access to transcripts or copies thereof for graduates

from each undergraduate or graduate degree or undergraduate (requiring 30 or more semester hours) or graduate (requiring 15 or more semester hours) postsecondary non-degree-granting program for the past three years must be available to the visiting evaluators.

If a program has had no graduates in the past three years, transcript access for the past five years must be provided.

Transcripts or copies must be arranged or clearly identified by program title.

Visitors must be able to select and review at random from among all or a selection of transcripts from each degree or postsecondary non-degree-granting program offered. Ideally, two (for graduate) or three (for all others) transcripts for each program are chosen and considered by the visitors.

If the institution requires that permission be granted by each graduate for the review of transcripts, this must be accomplished prior to the visit.

Section 438(b)(1)(G) of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 stipulates that institutions may release without threat of loss of federal funding, student records to “accrediting organizations in order to carry out their accrediting functions.”

The institution should provide on-site assistance to the visitors in comparing transcripts with NASM standards and the institution’s program requirements.

*Current Member Institutions Only:*

Member institutions requesting in the Self-Study (1) Final Approval for Listing (FAL) for one or more programs that currently hold Plan Approval (PA) and are listed in italics by NASM, or (2) Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing (PA/FAL) for one or more programs that have not been previously reviewed by NASM, must do the following:

Provide as requested in Section II.B.16 of *Format A* or Section II.B.16 of *Format B* or Section I.B.16 of *Format C* two transcripts for each graduate program, and/or three transcripts for each program in any other category. The Commission cannot take action on requests for Final Approval for Listing unless it reviews the requisite number of transcripts in person.

For such programs, separate on-site review of transcripts beyond those contained in the Self-Study would be helpful but is not required.

Member institutions submitting continuing programs listed in regular type by NASM for renewal of Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing, and in all other categories except FAL and PA/FAL as mentioned above, need not provide transcripts for those programs with the Self-Study. These transcripts will be reviewed by the evaluators on-site.

- i. Evaluate the institution’s student complaint policy and the institution’s effectiveness with regard to its application and effectiveness, including the institution’s ability to address and rectify issues that arise as a result of any review. Review the procedures for filing student complaints and any record of student complaints with regard to a specific issue which, offered in substantial number over an extended period of time, indicate concern with regard to an institution’s stated purposes, ongoing operations, and/or curricular programs.

- j. Observe student intern teachers, and other internships when possible.
- k. Consider community education programs according to NASM procedures and as presented in the Self-Study. See “Special Instructions for Visitors to Degree-Granting Institutions that Operate Community Education Programs in Music,” found in Part II.C. of this document.

## **2. Operations**

- a. Inspect libraries (books, periodicals, scores, recordings, information technologies, ensemble music, etc), and consider collection development in relation to the size, scope, and objectives of the music unit.
- b. Consider financial support for the music unit.
- c. Inspect physical plant and equipment and consider repair, maintenance, and replacement policies and plans.
- d. Consider documentation and conditions associated with health and safety, including: (1) policies and practices regarding the provision of information to students, faculty, and staff, and injury prevention, and (2) compliance with local health and safety codes.
- e. As necessary, consider documentation concerning appointment, promotion and tenure; and governance.
- f. Review policies and procedures for evaluation, planning, and making projections, and review the extent to which they influence thoughtful exchange.

## **3. Meetings**

- a. Meet with the music executive at the beginning of and during the visit to discuss visit plans, share issues, and gain perspective.
- b. Meet with the chief executive (or a designee) of the institution and with other senior administrators as requested by the institution. This provides an opportunity to gain insight into their views of (1) the music unit’s role in the institution; (2) general institutional philosophy, goals, objectives, resource issues; and (3) future plans. Visitors to free-standing schools of music also meet with trustees/board members to review these matters.
- c. Interview faculty members, professional staff, and students, both individually and in groups, in pre-arranged meetings and, if requested, in appointments arranged on site. In large programs where it may be impossible to meet with all faculty, visitors should ensure contact is made with a representative cross-section.
- d. Hold an exit interview with the music executive, and also concluding conferences with the chief executive and other senior administrators if requested by the institution. (These conferences may be held jointly if requested or if deemed appropriate.) In these conferences, the visiting evaluators should pose any final questions, report general observations, review the overall findings that will be included the Visitors’ Report, and describe the next steps in the accreditation process, including the institution’s opportunity to provide an Optional Response to the Visitors’ Report. In addition to these presentations, the visitors provide opportunities for questions and dialogue. The visitors shall not suggest or attempt to predict the action of the Commission(s).

- e. During exit interviews, as well as in previous discussions, the visiting evaluators must make clear distinctions between (1) assessments concerning threshold operational and curricular standards for accreditation; and (2) analytical results in other categories such as strengths and areas for improvement, short- and long-term futures issues; and (3) if requested, consultative advice that are beyond threshold accreditation standards. See section V., items P. and Q. of this document for further guidance.
- f. The visiting evaluators should remind the institution's representatives that NASM visitors do not suggest a final accreditation action to the Commission.

#### **4. Synthesis**

Consider the extent to which various operational, educational, and programmatic components (a) have an interrelationship sufficiently viable to achieve the music unit's purposes both at present and in the future; (b) meet NASM standards; and (c) can continue to meet NASM standards during the projected accreditation period.

#### **F. Expense Reimbursement**

1. All evaluators send their expense forms with all receipts to the NASM National Office.
2. Evaluators are asked to consolidate all expenses related to the visit into a single expense form to be submitted to the National Office with all receipts in a timely fashion.
3. If one consolidated expense form is not possible for any reason, evaluators should contact the NASM National Office staff. NASM reimburses the visiting evaluators directly and invoices the institution for visiting evaluators' expenses.
4. The following expenses are considered customary and reasonable:
  - a. Public transportation by air or surface, or by private automobile at mileage rate consistent with GSA norms. These costs shall be noted on the expense reimbursement form. Air travel is expected to be at minimum fare class unless this is unavailable. If minimum fare class is not available, high travel costs should be discussed with the music executive before tickets are purchased/expenses are incurred. Mileage claimed may not exceed the cost of economy air travel between the same two points. Typically, it is unnecessary for evaluators to rent automobiles, and therefore, automobiles are to be rented only with permission from the institution.
  - b. Food and lodging
  - c. Taxi or bus fares
  - d. Cost of typing and duplicating the report
  - e. Tips
5. Among expenses not covered are: First Class air travel, extra days not associated with the visit, laundry, movies and other extra activities, home/child/pet sitting, and substitute teachers.

### **III. PROCEDURES FOR COMPLETING AND FILING THE VISITORS' REPORT**

#### **A. Team and Staff Responsibilities**

1. Visiting evaluators are encouraged to complete as much of the Visitors' Report as possible during the visit. Should the visiting evaluators wish to stay an additional day to complete the report, this request may be posed to the music executive of the visited institution.
2. The Visitors' Report must be submitted to NASM by the team chair as one, single-voice report. If team members responsibilities were divided given the nature and size of the institution, each section of the report should (a) reflect the thoughts of the team, and (b) be presented in a cogent, clear, and consistent voice.
3. The team chair, after consultation with team members, and the National Office staff as necessary and appropriate, is responsible for submitting on behalf of the visiting team one copy of the final report electronically to the NASM National Office.
4. The NASM staff will review the report, contact the team chair as necessary if questions arise, and ensure that the final report meets NASM requirements.
5. Once finalized, a copy of the Visitors' Report will be sent to the institution by the NASM National Office. The visiting evaluators shall not send reports directly to institutions.
6. Once the Visitors' Report is forwarded to the institution for review and comment in the form of an Optional Response, the visitors' work is completed; no further communication about the process or report shall take place between the institution and the visiting evaluators. Any questions raised by the institution once the Visitors' Report has been received should be addressed to the NASM National Office staff.

#### **B. Format and Filing Deadline**

1. All Visitors' Reports must be submitted in the format found in section V. "Specifications for the Visitors' Report" of this document. Visiting evaluators are asked to review the specific reporting requirements outlined for each item in the report. Although the *Handbook* should be consulted throughout the report preparation, its layout and presentation must not be used as a template for the Visitors' Report. NASM has provided a helpful template for use in creating reports, which may be found at the end of section V. of this document. However, visitors are reminded to review report requirements outlined in this document, particularly those included in section V., prior to each on-site visit.
2. All Visitors' Reports must be submitted to the NASM National Office within six weeks of the on-site visit. Staff will offer kindly reminders if reports are not in hand within this timeframe.

#### **C. Disposition of the Self-Study**

To ensure confidentiality, the Self-Study shall be destroyed or forwarded to the NASM National Office after the Visitors' Report has been submitted and accepted by the National Office staff.

## IV. PROTOCOLS AND DEFINITIONS FOR WRITERS OF THE VISITORS' REPORT

### A. Requirements and Guidelines

1. The Visitors' Report is a presentation of facts, observations, and discussion of the institution's apparent compliance with standards.
2. If the visited institution offers programs in music at various levels, all levels must be reviewed thoroughly during the on-site visitation and discussed by level, major, and track/concentration/area of emphasis (if applicable) in the Visitors' Report.
3. Although the staff will review each report to ensure that required procedures and protocols are followed, and that each report is free from format, typographical, and grammatical errors, each Visitors' Report must be so written that it can be transmitted without change, editing, or deletion. Team chairs are asked to serve as the final editors, and to ensure the accuracy, flow, and single-voice of each report.
4. The Visitors' Report should be as succinct as possible, but it must contain sufficient substantive information to enable the Commission to take action.
5. Information presented in the Self-Study should not be repeated; however, Self-Study material may be referenced, citing specific page, section, and item numbers.
6. Although the Visitors' Report considers separate operational and curricular issues, all sections of the report should show a focused relationship to the educational and artistic purposes of the music unit. The primary focus is student competency development, and the institutions ongoing ability to provide appropriate resources that enable this development.

### B. NASM Standards

1. In each section of the Visitors' Report, the text should reflect thorough consideration of all standards contained in the most recent NASM *Handbook* and any current addenda. Concerns with regard to apparent non-compliance with standards should be clearly identified, explained, and referenced to the appropriate sections of the NASM *Handbook* and/or any current addenda. The questions posed in section V., items A. through P. below provide a starting point for consideration of issues.
2. The overarching question to be addressed in section V., items A. through P. of the Visitors' Report is the extent to which the institution appears to meet NASM standards for purposes, operations, program components, curricula, and competency development published in the *Handbook*, including any current addenda. Therefore, the *Handbook* standards take priority over questions and issues posed in the outline below that reflect but do not replicate the *Handbook*. In all cases, a review of the pertinent section(s) of the *Handbook* is necessary.
3. All references in the Visitors' Report regarding apparent non-compliance with standards must be referenced to the *Handbook*, including any current addenda. When citing the *Handbook*, please include the specific section, item, paragraph (i.e., NASM *Handbook* [date], Standards for Accreditation II.B.1.c.). Please do not cite page numbers.
4. There are many ways to develop the text of a Visitors' Report; however, regardless of the approach or style used, readers at the institution and on the Commission must be able to distinguish between the following two distinct types of items in every area of the Visitors' Report:



- a. **Type 1.** Issues raised about threshold compliance: the presence of conditions and efforts essential to meeting fundamental requirements of applicable NASM standards now or during the projected accreditation period.

When discussing issues of apparent compliance or non-compliance, language noted below must be used. Please note that each point should focus on the institution's apparent compliance or non-compliance with standards, as accreditation is granted to an institution rather than the faculty or students. As an example, wording such as "the students do not appear to meet...", "the faculty does not appear to meet..." would not be appropriate.

- (1) The institution appears/does not appear to meet...
- (2) The institution appears/does not appear to meet...with the (possible) exception of...
- (3) The institution appears/does not appear to meet...now, but may/may not by [a specific time period] due to...
- (4) More information/explanation/documentation is needed [and may be provided in the Optional Response].

Explanations and *Handbook* references must be provided in the body of the Visitors' Report each time standards questions are raised. Each bulleted point in item P. must also include the appropriate *Handbook* citation(s). It is important to connect both operational and curricular concerns to the development of student competencies.

- b. **Type 2.** Issues discussed for other purposes, for example: follow-up reports, background information, strengths, areas for improvement beyond threshold compliance, guidelines, recommendations to help the institution reach its aspirations, futures issues, matters critical to maintaining or enhancing the quality or reputation of the program, etc.

Such information should be offered using a conversational, storytelling approach and should not contain language which speaks to an institution's apparent compliance or non-compliance with standards.

### C. Definitions of Curricular Status

NASM uses the following terms to assign review status to all degrees, certificates, diplomas, and programs:

1. Institutions applying to NASM for the first time:
  - Programs that have been in existence and that have requisite transcript evidence (two transcripts for graduate programs, and three transcripts for all other types of programs) are to be submitted for **Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing**.
  - Programs approved by the institution that either have not yet begun enrolling students or have not met the requisite transcript evidence as stated above are to be submitted for **Plan Approval**.
2. Accredited Member Institutions:

- Programs that have previous Final Approval for Listing from NASM are to be submitted for **Renewal of Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing**.
- Programs having Plan Approval that do not yet have requisite transcript evidence (two transcripts for graduate programs, and three transcripts for all other types of programs) are to be submitted for **Renewal of Plan Approval**.
- Programs in existence that have requisite transcript evidence (two transcripts for graduate programs, and three transcripts for all other types of programs) but that have not been reviewed by NASM are to be submitted for **Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing**.
- Programs approved by the institution that have not been reviewed by NASM and are not yet enrolling students are to be submitted for **Plan Approval**.
- Programs approved by the institution that have begun enrolling students, but that have not been reviewed by NASM and do not yet have requisite transcript evidence (two transcripts for graduate programs, and three transcripts for all other types of programs) are to be submitted for **Plan Approval**.
- Programs having Plan Approval that now have requisite transcript evidence (two transcripts for graduate programs, and three transcripts for all other types of programs) are to be submitted for **Final Approval for Listing**.

## V. SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE VISITORS' REPORT

### Stylistic Requirements:

Each Visitors' Report should adhere to the following stylistic conventions:

- **Margins:** Top 1 inch; bottom 1 inch; left 1.25 inches; right 1 inch.
- **Font and Size:** Times New Roman, 11 point.
- **Headings:** Bold uppercase using Times New Roman, 14 point font.
- **Subheadings:** Bold uppercase using Times New Roman, 12 point font.
- **Footer:** Inclusion of the institution's name (left), page number (center), and "NASM Visitors' Report" (right) on all pages except the cover page as follows.

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Name of Institution

1

NASM Visitors' Report

- **Tabs:** Consistently placed and used throughout the Visitors' Report.
- **Emphasis markings:** Bold type, characters (such as an exclamation mark), and sensational language used for emphasis should be avoided.
- **Full sentences:** Rather than a short, bulleted summary, issues should be described using full and complete sentences.
- **Handbook Citations:** Issues of apparent non-compliance must be referenced to all applicable *Handbook* citations. *Handbook* citations should include the specific section, item, paragraph

(e.g., *Handbook 2015-16*, Standards for Accreditation II.B.1.c.). *Handbook* page numbers should not be included.

- **Discussion of apparent compliance:** Writing must reflect the institution’s ability to comply with standards.
  - Correct approach: The institution appears to comply with standards regarding faculty and staff qualifications (see *NASM Handbook 2015-16*, Standards for Accreditation II.E.1.).
  - Incorrect approach: The faculty appears to comply with standards regarding faculty and staff qualifications (see *NASM Handbook 2015-16*, Standards for Accreditation II.E.1.).
- **Usage of Common Terms:** The following terms should be used as appropriate consistently throughout the Visitors’ Report (please note use of upper and lowercase)
  - **“Visitors’ Report”** – the report prepared by the visitors
  - **“Self-Study”** – the document prepared by the institution
  - **“self-study”** – the process of studying oneself
  - **“visitors”** – the individuals conducting the NASM review
  - **“standards”** – NASM standards as found in the *NASM Handbook*
  - **Unit under review** – e.g., “School of Music,” “Department of Music,” etc. should be referenced consistently throughout the report

### **Reminders:**

- *Avoid use of first person writing (I, we, our, us).*
- *Headers for all items (A. through Q.) must be included. If an item does not apply, please indicate with language such as “Not Applicable” or “N/A.”*
- *Item “N. Programs, Degrees, and Curricula” must include an evaluation of student work for every area of each major program offered (see Appendix I., *Evaluating Student Work in NASM Reviews*).*
- *Refer to, use and cite only the latest edition of the [Handbook](#) and any current addenda.*

### **The Visitors’ Report Format:**

#### **TITLE PAGE (REQUIRED, PLEASE INCLUDE)**

**Reminder:** *Please check the Self-Study and the institution’s published materials and recent curricular changes. Be precise in the listing of degree and program titles, majors, and tracks/concentrations/areas of emphasis. If there are any discrepancies among these listings, please provide an explanation. Degree and program listings should not be copied verbatim from the Self-Study title page or the institution’s current listing in NASM publications if the visitors have found discrepancies in either listing. Any such discrepancies should be explained.*

The first page of the Visitors’ Report must include the following information:

- A header with the title, “National Association of Schools of Music Visitors’ Report”
- Name of institution
- Location
- Name, title, administrative unit of music executive
- Date of visit

- Names of the visiting evaluators, noting team chair
- Degrees/Programs and their category of submission as exemplified below. Programs or degrees (including all tracks/concentrations/areas of emphasis) must be listed on the title page under the appropriate headings and subheadings as follows:

For Institutions Seeking Membership for the First Time

- Programs or degrees for which Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing are sought.
- Programs or degrees for which Plan Approval is sought.
- Programs for which Basic Listing is sought.

For Institutions with Membership or Associate Membership

- Programs or degrees for which renewal of Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing are sought.
- Programs or degrees for which renewal of Plan Approval is sought
- Programs or degrees for which Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing are sought at the same time.
- Programs or degrees for which Plan Approval is sought.
- Programs or degrees for which Final Approval for Listing is sought.
- Programs for which Basic Listing is sought
- Programs for which renewal of Basic Listing is sought

**DISCLAIMER (REQUIRED, PLEASE INCLUDE)**

The following report and any statements therein regarding compliance with NASM accreditation standards represent only the considered opinion of the visitors at the time of the visit. Definitive evaluation of compliance and the accreditation decision will be made by the appropriate Commission following a complete review of the application, including the Self-Study, the Visitors' Report, and any Optional Response to the Visitors' Report submitted by the institution.

**OPTIONAL RESPONSE (REQUIRED, PLEASE INCLUDE)**

*Reminder: Should additional information be necessary such as transcripts, amended curricular tables, etc., the visitors should suggest that the institution include such information in an Optional Response, but should not include such documentation as part of the Visitors' Report.*

It is strongly recommended that each institution submit an Optional Response to the Visitors' Report, which may be used to correct (1) errors of fact, (2) conclusions based on such errors, and (3) any documented changes made in the program since the on-site review. In particular, information in the Optional Response should address noted issues of apparent noncompliance, such as those included in item P. of this report, and any areas where the provision of further information has been deemed advisable by the institution.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (RECOMMENDED, MAY BE INCLUDED)**

*Reminder: The acknowledgments section is the only section in which names can be stated. Visitors may acknowledge the hospitality and courtesy of the host institution. It is appropriate to indicate individuals by name and/or by title that were interviewed or otherwise provided*

assistance. Please avoid use of earned degrees unless such designations are known for all individuals mentioned.

**DISCUSSION (ALL REMAINING SECTIONS REQUIRED, PLEASE INCLUDE)**

**Reminders:**

- Please do not include general citations such as “Self-Study,” “NASM Handbook 2015-16, Standards for Accreditation II.,” or “On-Site Conversation” beneath each heading. Instead, please include specific citations within the body of the Visitors’ Report.
- Beneath all items below “questions” and “information” will be provided to assist visitors as they craft wording. The final Visitors’ Report should include the required headings in bold but should not include the “questions” or “information.”
- Text should be crafted only after a thorough review of the associated and relevant standards in the Handbook. As an example, when crafting item E. Faculty and Staff, please review the NASM Handbook 2015-16, Standards for Accreditation II.E.1.

**A. Purposes**

**B. Size and Scope**

**C. Finances**

How compatible and effective are relationships among purposes, size and scope, and financial resources? (Purposes statements normally indicate expectations and aspirations for student learning.)

1. The visiting evaluators should note any inappropriate purposes or any discrepancies between the stated purposes and the evaluators’ impression of what the actual purposes are.
2. Indicate briefly the extent to which the institution has sufficient enrollment to cover the size and scope of music programs offered, including (a) an appropriate number of faculty and other resources; (b) sufficient advanced courses in music appropriate to major areas of study at degree or program levels being offered; and (c) requisite ensemble experience (1) at an advanced level and (2) consistent with major areas of study and degree or program levels.

*Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:*

- a. *non-degree-granting programs*
  - b. *associate programs*
  - c. *baccalaureate programs*
  - d. *graduate programs*
3. If the information in the Self-Study does not cover the enrollment breakdown for the academic year in which the visit is made, please review on-site, discuss in the Visitors’ Report, and suggest to the institution that the information be submitted as part of the Optional Response.
4. The visiting evaluators should note the extent to which the annual budget is adequate to support the music unit’s purposes and the size and scope of its curricular and other programs. The visitors should also comment on (a) long-range financial planning; (b) prospects for sustaining the programs of the music unit during the projected term of accreditation; (c) the involvement of the music executive in the budget development

process; and (d) if applicable, the fund-raising and development program for the music unit.

#### **D. Governance and Administration**

- 1. Overall Effectiveness.** How effective is the institution's governance structure (a) in serving applicable purposes, and (b) in relation to the size and scope of the music unit? How effective is the administration? Discuss such issues as support of student learning, continuity, stability, and long-range planning.
- 2. Policy-Making.** How are curricular and educational policies established? To what extent is the faculty involved? Are meetings of the full music faculty held? How often? By what means are salary, promotion, and tenure decisions made? Is the present policy-making structure understood by the faculty? Is it effective? Consider the general characteristics of the institution and the specific practices in the music unit.

*Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:*

- a. non-degree-granting programs*
  - b. associate programs*
  - c. baccalaureate programs*
  - d. graduate programs*
- 3. Music Executive's Load and Responsibilities.** What is the music executive's total load during the current term? Does the executive have time, energy, and staff to execute effectively his or her administrative duties and teaching responsibilities, if any? Are responsibilities clearly delineated and understood, and is authority commensurate with responsibility?
  - 4. Communication.** How effective is communication among various components of the music unit and, if applicable, between the music unit and the institution as a whole?

#### **E. Faculty and Staff**

Summarize your impressions of (1) faculty education and competence; (2) the number of faculty and distribution of faculty expertise in relation to purposes; curricular offerings; and to size and scope; and (3) the effect of the full-time/part-time faculty ratio on the education of students and fulfillment of academic functions such as counseling and project guidance. What is your impression of faculty morale? Describe the extent to which the following policies are working effectively: (1) appointment, evaluation, and advancement; (2) teaching loads; (3) student/faculty ratio; and (4) faculty development. Comment on the effectiveness of contributions by graduate assistants and support/technical staff.

#### **F. Facilities, Equipment, Technology, Health, and Safety**

Are facilities and equipment adequate for the music programs offered in terms of floor space, lighting, temperature and humidity control, audio equipment, sound control, technological currency, etc.? Are the facilities and equipment sufficient to support all curricular and associated activities, including lectures, laboratories, studio instruction, individual practice, ensemble rehearsals, and performance? Are facilities and equipment safe and secure? Has the institution received all appropriate and necessary federal and state approvals pertaining to health and safety issues? Are there any conditions that appear to merit a review by qualified building or safety professionals, especially to verify that local codes are being met? Are there

adequate plans and provisions for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of technology and equipment?

Are there documented policies and means for informing students and others regarding health and safety issues, hazards, and procedures inherent in practice, performance, teaching, and listening both in general and as applicable to their specialization, including but not limited to hearing, vocal, and musculoskeletal health and injury prevention?

Are all music majors, faculty, and staff provided with basic information about the maintenance of health and safety within the contexts of practice, performance, teaching, and listening, including the maintenance of hearing, vocal, and musculoskeletal health and injury prevention in these three areas? Is there a system for providing basic information for new personnel? (Please note that basic information means an introductory level orientation to generic music-related health and safety information that can be provided quickly and efficiently and that can be delivered in a variety of ways and from a variety of perspectives to members of each and all constituencies listed. It does not indicate the need for a course.)

For music majors, faculty, and staff, (1) if appropriate to the nature of their specialization, required course, or required experience, is instruction provided on the use, proper handling, and operation of potentially dangerous materials, equipment, and technology, and (2) is any additional health and safety information routinely provided that is correlated with the nature, content, and requirements of various specific areas of specialization or specific courses of study?

Are non-majors enrolled in courses offered by the music unit provided with information concerning (1) hearing health and (2) other health, safety, and injury prevention topics associated with their specific area of study or activity in music pursued under the auspices of the music unit?

With regard to music unit policies, protocols, and operations, how do these address maintenance of health and injury prevention with regard to (1) suitable choices of equipment and technology for various specific purposes, (2) appropriate and safe operation of equipment and technology, and (3) acoustic and other conditions associated with health and safety in practice, rehearsal, and performance facilities?

If the Self-Study does not contain documentation addressing NASM standards regarding health and safety and injury prevention in the main body of the report or in the Management Documents Portfolio, please indicate in the Visitors' Report that such documentation needs to be submitted in an Optional Response prior to Commission review.

## **G. Library and Learning Resources**

Evaluate holdings and electronic access in relation to (1) what is normally needed for the composite curricula offered, (2) the purposes of the music unit and its component programs, and (3) the size and scope of the music unit. To what extent are the annual appropriations for the library adequate? How effective is the library operation? To what extent are the music collections centralized and readily available? To what extent is library equipment such as computers, projectors, microfilm or microcard readers, etc., accessible and adequate? To what extent is use of the library integrated into curricular requirements, course work, and final projects? To what extent do faculty members and students use the music library?

Comment on the effectiveness of the acquisition, preservation, and replacement program, including interactions on these questions between music faculty and library staff.

*Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:*

- a. *non-degree-granting programs*
- b. *associate programs*
- c. *baccalaureate programs*
- d. *graduate programs*

## **H. Recruitment, Admission-Retention, Record Keeping, Advisement, and Student Complaints**

- 1. Recruitment, Admission, Retention.** Evaluate recruitment and admission policies and procedures for the institution and the music unit. Also, evaluate retention policies and procedures for the institution and the music unit. To what extent are these (a) appropriate to purposes of curricular programs, (b) clearly defined, (c) published for students and faculty, and (d) applied with rigor and fairness? Please note: standards regarding admission are found under the Purposes and Operations section of the Standards for Accreditation in the *NASM Handbook*, and also in sections for non-degree-granting, undergraduate, and graduate programs.

*Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:*

- a. *non-degree-granting programs*
- b. *associate programs*
- c. *baccalaureate programs*
- d. *graduate programs*

- 2. Record Keeping.** What is the quality of record keeping in the institution and the music unit? If necessary, clarify what student records are maintained in the music unit.

*Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:*

- a. *non-degree-granting programs*
- b. *associate programs*
- c. *baccalaureate programs*
- d. *graduate programs*

- 3. Advisement.** How effective is the advisement and counseling system? To what extent does it address (a) program content; (b) program completion; (c) careers or future studies; and (d) music-specific student services associated with individual students' programs?

*Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:*

- a. *non-degree-granting programs*
- b. *associate programs*
- c. *baccalaureate programs*
- d. *graduate programs*

- 4. Student Complaint Policy and Its Effectiveness.** Evaluate the institution's student complaint policy and the institution's effectiveness with regard to its application and effectiveness, including the institution's ability to address and rectify issues that arise as a result of any review.



**I. Published Materials and Websites**

Summarize your observations about the clarity, accuracy, comprehensiveness, and effectiveness of the catalog and other published materials.

**J. Branch Campuses, External Programs, Use of the Institution's Name for Educational Activities Operated Apart from the Main Campus or the Primary Educational Program (if applicable)**

To what extent does the institution meet all applicable standards for institutions with programs in these categories as set forth in the NASM *Handbook* and any current addenda?

**K. Community Involvement; Articulation with Other Institutions (if applicable)**

The visiting evaluators should discuss (1) the institution's efforts to be a cultural resource for its surrounding community, and (2) its efforts and procedures regarding articulation with other institutions.

**L. Non-Degree-Granting Programs for the Community (if applicable)**

*Reminder:* See "Special Instructions for Visitors to Degree-Granting Institutions that Operate Community Education Programs in Music" in section II.C. of this document.

To what extent does the institution meet all applicable standards for institutions with programs in this category as set forth in the NASM *Handbook* and any current addenda?

**M. Review of Specific Operational Standards for (1) Free-Standing Music Institutions of Higher Education and/or (2) Proprietary Institutions (if applicable)**

*Reminder:* The visitors must address in this item all standards located in the NASM *Handbook, Standards for Accreditation XXI. if the institution is free-standing (independent).*

To what extent does the institution meet all applicable standards for institutions with programs in these categories as set forth in the NASM *Handbook* and any current addenda?

**N. Programs, Degrees, and Curricula**

**1. Credit Hours**

*Reminders:* Although an institution may cite its compliance with NASM standards by confirmation of compliance with or attention to federal or other review body requirements, each institution must have its own stated and published guidelines pertaining to the award and transfer of credit.

*If this information is not provided in the Self-Study (normally in Section MDP II.A.), please review it on-site, discuss it in the Visitors' Report, and indicate the necessity of its inclusion in an Optional Response to the Visitors' Report to be submitted by the institution.*

**a. Definitions and Procedures:**

- (1) Definition of Credit and Methods of Assigning Credit.** The institution's (a) definition of credit and methods of assigning credit for student work and

achievements, and (b) its policies for granting course credit for transfer students (see *NASM Handbook*, Standards for Accreditation III.A.2., 3., and 4.).

- (2) **Publication of Definitions and Policies.** Institutional publication of (a) current definitions and methods, and (b) transfer of credit policies (see *NASM Handbook*, Standards for Accreditation III.A.4.).
- (3) **Procedures Used to Make Credit Hour Assignments.** The procedures the institution uses to make credit hour assignments for courses, programs (see *NASM Handbook*, Standards for Accreditation III.A.6.), and other requirements consistent with its credit hour policies applicable to its offerings.
- (4) **Means Employed to Ensure Accurate and Reliable Application.** The means employed by the institution to ensure accurate and reliable application of its credit hour policies and procedures (see *NASM Handbook*, Standards for Accreditation III.A.6.).
- (5) **Procedures of Free-Standing Institutions.** For free-standing institutions, the procedures used by the institution to make readily available to enrolled and prospective students a list of any institutions with which it has established an articulation agreement (see *NASM Handbook*, Standards for Accreditation XXI., Section 1.H.).

**b. Evaluation of Compliance:**

Indicate the extent to which institutional definitions and music unit practices seem to comply with NASM standards (see *NASM Handbook*, Standards for Accreditation III.A.) and seem to be within the range of commonly accepted practices in music units, including but not limited to the norms indicated by NASM credit hour standards. For free-standing institutions indicate whether the institution appears to comply with *NASM Handbook*, Standards for Accreditation XXI., Section 1.H. "Publication of Articulation Agreements," making readily available to prospective students a list of any institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement. The results of this evaluation must be stated in the Visitors' Report.

**c. New, Experimental, Atypical Formats or Methods:**

Indicate the extent to which any new or experimental or atypical formats or methods for delivering instruction and awarding credit seems logical, fair, and consistent in applying fundamental principles for establishing verifiable relationships among instructional and study time, achievement, and lengths of courses and programs.

**2. Specific Curricula**

***Reminders:***

- *Please address N.2.b.(1)-(6) below for every track/concentration/area of emphasis within each major offered. As appropriate, discussion of multiple emphases beneath one major may be combined for degrees such as Bachelor of Music in Performance.*
- *The title of each degree should include the level, major, and track/concentration/area of emphasis as appropriate.*

- *Titles offered on the cover page of the Visitors' Report and in this item should be identical. Should the visitors' listing of degree programs not match the NASM Directory List, a discussion of the discrepancies should be provided.*
- *If a curriculum is associated with distance learning, or involves disciplines in combination, or is based in electronic media, visitors must evaluate the extent to which it meets standards set forth in the applicable operational and curricular sections of the NASM Handbook, including any current addenda. The results of this evaluation must be stated in the Visitors' Report. For programs associated with distance learning (see NASM Handbook, Standards for Accreditation, III.H.), this statement must verify that the institution has provided documentation of the processes it uses to (a) establish that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives academic credit, and (b) protect student privacy and notify students of any additional charges associated with the verification of student identity at the time of registration or enrollment. This documentation is normally provided in Section MDP II.C. of the Self-Study and/or Section B.3.c. of the Instructional Programs Portfolio for each distance learning program.*
- *Any significant departures from standards or common practice associated with meeting standards must be noted and evaluated. Visitors should be aware that NASM grants accreditation to institutions only when every curricular program meets the standards of the Association.*
- *The visitors must evaluate student work in each degree (see item N.2.b.(4) below).*

**a. General Content and Competency Standards:**

If applicable, discuss the extent to which general content and competency standards applicable to all degrees or programs of a certain type or level are met. For example, all professional undergraduate degrees in music, all master's degrees in music, etc.

**b. Individual Curricula:**

Discuss each curriculum individually with regard to items (1) through (6) below:

- (1) **Status.** See section IV.C. in this document.
- (2) **Curriculum.** Compare the curriculum with NASM criteria for similar degrees, curricula, and programs as published in the *NASM Handbook* and any current addenda. Focus on content and competency development. Discuss percentages for curricular distribution only in conjunction with the achievement of competencies, and never as the single indicator of quality or compliance with NASM standards. For example, if percentages are low, what content or competency development is missing?
- (3) **Title/Content Consistency.** Evaluate the extent to which degree/program titles are appropriate for and accurately reflect degree/program content. Titles must reflect content.
- (4) **Student Work.** Comment on the quality of student work in the curriculum (see Appendix I.). Reflect on the quality of performance, written work, final projects, etc. To what extent are majors gaining the knowledge, skills, and craft expected, and the abilities to apply them to produce the quality of work in the specialization

appropriate for the purpose and level of the specific credential to be awarded? Focus on knowledge, skill, and craft rather than the specific approach or interpretation in the specific work(s) reviewed.

- (5) **Development of Competencies.** Provide an assessment of the institution's success in evaluating and ensuring the development of requisite competencies and fulfillment of institutional requirements.
- (6) **Overall Effectiveness.** Provide the visiting evaluators' judgment of the effectiveness of each curriculum in relation to its stated goals and objectives. Focus on solid evidence concerning the achievement of results set forth in (a) applicable NASM standards, and (b) levels established by the institution.

*In responding to items N.1.a. and b., consider in separately marked sections as applicable:*

- a. non-degree-granting programs*
- b. associate programs*
- c. baccalaureate programs*
- d. graduate programs*

- 3. **Study of the Transcripts of Recent Graduates and Comparison with Catalog Statements.** For institutional preparation and on-site procedures for visitors, please review "Verify Transcripts" in section II.E.1.h. of this document.

The visitors verify and report using the applicable categories in italics noted below regarding whether the composite set of transcripts reviewed on-site (following guidelines in section II.E.1.h. of this document) demonstrates consistency with program requirements as published in institutional materials.

If inconsistencies are found in specific instances or in such numbers that cannot be explained on-site, these are noted in the Visitors' Report, and the institution is asked to provide further information and transcript or other documentation in an Optional Response to the Visitors' Report.

In reviewing transcripts, evaluators verify the correlation of credit hours granted to the institution's stated curricular requirements. The same policies apply to clock hours.

If institutions holding accredited institutional Membership are applying for Final Approval for Listing (FAL) for a program with Plan Approval (PA), or for Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing (PA/FAL) for a program that NASM has not reviewed previously, requisite numbers of transcripts (two for each graduate program, three each for all other types of programs) must be provided in the Self-Study document. In such cases, visitors comment on these transcripts by specific program in terms of the plan previously approved by NASM and institutional requirements. If transcripts for FAL and PA/FAL applications only are not provided in the Self-Study document, the visitors should note in the report, and ask that the institution provide the requisite number of transcripts and any other appropriate documentation in an Optional Response to the Visitors' Report. Transcripts for programs in other categories need not be provided in the Self-Study, but shall be reviewed by the evaluators on-site and discussed in this section of the Visitors' Report.

*Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:*

- a. non-degree-granting programs*
- b. associate programs*

- c. *baccalaureate programs*
- d. *graduate programs*

4. **Performance.** Comment on the total performance program (student, faculty, guests) that evolves from or supports the work of the music unit. For example, to what extent does the performance program support the achievement of NASM standards and music unit objectives for (a) all students; and (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
5. **Music Studies in General Education.** Comment on (a) the nature of music course offerings to non-major students; (b) the institution's approach to faculty assignments for these courses; (c) the number of non-major students enrolled in music course offerings; and (d) the appropriateness of the program to the music unit's purposes and to its size and scope.

#### **O. Music Unit Evaluation, Planning, and Projections**

1. **Evaluation, Planning, and Projections Development.** Comment on evaluation, planning, and projections development regarding their (a) interrelationships with the achievement of purposes; (b) appropriateness to the size and scope of the music unit; (c) development and use of student achievement indicators; and (d) overall effectiveness and efficiency.
2. **Completeness and Effectiveness of Self-Study.** Comment on the completeness and effectiveness of the Self-Study.

#### **P. Standards Summary**

##### ***Reminders:***

- *The summaries in items P. and Q. are usually the most important written contribution the evaluators can make to the visited institution.*
- *A summary of all issues and questions regarding apparent compliance with standards must be provided in item P. A summary of issues associated with program strengths and recommendations for improvement are provided in item Q. These functional distinctions need to be maintained throughout the Visitors' Report as well as in the texts of items P. and Q. Issues of apparent non-compliance may not be included in item Q.*
- *All issues concerning apparent noncompliance with accreditation standards discussed in the body of the report should be included concisely in this section and referenced to the NASM Handbook.*

Provide a summary of each area of apparent noncompliance with specific NASM standards previously discussed in items A. through O. Use language such as "it is not clear how" or "does not appear to comply."

The summary should list all standards issues by bullet or number and referenced by where they may be found in the text of the Visitors' Report, and in the NASM *Handbook* and/or any current addenda.

Summary statements must be provided in item P.; detailed explanation and discussion are to be provided in items A through O.

If there appear to be no operational or curricular standards issues for the institution as a whole, the Visitors' Report should so state, using language such as "there do not appear to be any operational or curricular issues of apparent non-compliance..."

## Q. Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendations for the Program

### *Reminders:*

- *The summaries in items P. and Q. are usually the most important written contribution the evaluators can make to the visited institution.*
- *A summary of all issues and questions regarding apparent compliance with standards must be provided in item P. A summary of issues associated with program strengths and recommendations for improvement are provided in item Q. These functional distinctions need to be maintained throughout the Visitors' Report as well as in the texts of items P. and Q. Issues of apparent non-compliance should not be included in item Q.*

After careful consideration of the institution's purposes and of the local context, visitors produce an overall analysis that provides:

1. **Strengths.** A list outlining strengths.
2. **Recommendations for Short-Term Improvement.** A list of recommendations for short-term improvement beyond threshold compliance with accreditation standards.
3. **Primary Futures Issues.** An indication of the primary futures issues facing the music unit, perhaps including, but always going beyond, finances.
4. **Suggestions for Long-Term Development.** Constructive suggestions for long-term development during the projected accreditation period, based on the observations contained in the Visitors' Report.

### *The Visitors' Report Template:*

A [Visitors' Report Template](#) is provided for the convenience of the visitors. Prior to use of the template, evaluators are asked to review all of the information included in the NASM *Procedures for Visiting Evaluators*. A fresh copy of the template should be secured and used for each Visitors' Report.

## APPENDIX I

### National Association of Schools of Music Advisory for NASM Visitors

#### EVALUATING STUDENT WORK IN NASM REVIEWS

All NASM on-site reviews must include sufficient and appropriate opportunities within reason for visitors to review student work (1) in music degree programs, and (2) at various levels within music degree programs. In addition and ideally, visitors should have the opportunity to review multiple sections of music coursework offered at the same or similar levels. Student work reveals the results of programs offered by the institution. The primary purpose of reviewing student work is to obtain an understanding of the levels of performance and creation, scholarship, and other specialization proficiencies being achieved by students and whether that level is appropriate to the degree title and major, consistent with NASM Standards, and a fulfillment of the institution's published goals and objectives. Student work, however, can generate other kinds of impressions and evaluations, and it is important to consider how these relate to the NASM review.

Every evaluator is a highly trained music professional. Each carries a set of personal aesthetic and other preferences. It is possible for two evaluators to review work produced by a fully-credentialed professional and agree on the competency of the performer, composer, or scholar, but disagree, even significantly, on whether the work or performance in a particular instance was good or not. One might hear: "there is no question but that X is a fine composer, but in this case, the student's conception was faulty. I do not like the way this effort turned out." Or, "Y is a great performer, but I was really disappointed in the student's interpretation of a particular piece in this performance." Or, "doctoral candidate Z is a renowned scholar, but I disagree with the thesis of the student's article on A." This approach applied to the review of student work in any major during an NASM visit could be problematic.

Because individual preferences can be so strong, for NASM purposes, it is important that visitors keep distinct functions and levels in mind when writing about student work and performances. While it is not always easy to separate craft from aesthetic, content, or philosophical preferences, it is essential that NASM visitors make clear distinctions, qualifications, and connections when commenting on student work.

Failure to be clear can inadvertently mislead the institution and the Commission. Comments such as "The student work was not satisfactory" leave unanswered questions about whether the level of student work was inadequate in some or all areas, or whether some or all of the students showed excellent education and training, but presented work that the visitors did not like on aesthetic or other grounds or in particulars for which the students had no responsibility. Such an approach does not distinguish which aspects of knowledge and skill development are judged to be weak or in need of further attention or explanation in the Optional Response to the Visitors' Report.

In preparing to go on-site, visitors are always asked to work closely with the institution to ensure that: (a) student performances will be presented in various formats appropriate to the offerings of the music unit, (b) the quality of work in each area or major is sufficient to gain a comprehensive sense of student achievement, and (c) work is labeled or identified by level in order to evaluate both the progression through the curriculum and final projects.

In conducting reviews and writing reports, visitors should consider issues such as the following:

1. What does student work reveal about the competence students are developing in the craft of their professional discipline(s)?
2. Are students gaining or have they gained technical and conceptual proficiencies consistent with (a) their program levels and majors, (b) NASM Standards, and (c) the published purposes of the institution with regard to the specific program in which they are enrolled?
3. To what extent does student work appear to (a) be consistent with, (b) provide evidence of, (c) show relevance to, and (d) be supportive of the work seen in the classes and experiences that constitute the required curriculum?
4. If aspects of student work are judged to be problematic, do the works presented reveal generic pedagogical or other problems that could impact the specific or overall education of students?

Such questions are important because NASM visitors are the eyes and ears of the Commissions. Only they view student performances and other work that show the levels of student achievement. Only they can correlate the quality of student work and student learning. Their Report is critical in exploring, explaining, and clarifying the extent of the institution's educational success in preparing students to create and perform works of music and/or to function as teachers, scholars, etc., at the level implicit in the degree(s) or program(s) being offered. This major responsibility creates a context for considering the student work the visitors see during the course of a visit.

Questions about reviewing student work before, during, or after visits should be forwarded to the Executive Director in the National Office.