

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**

**Policies and Procedures for  
NASM Substantial Equivalency Reviews**

September 2023 Edition

## **National Office**

### **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**

11250 Roger Bacon Drive, Suite 21  
Reston, Virginia 20190-5248

**Telephone: 703-437-0700**

**Facsimile: 703-437-6312**

**E-mail: [info@arts-accredit.org](mailto:info@arts-accredit.org)  
or use [staff directory](#)**

**Web Site: <http://nasm.arts-accredit.org>**

*This document has been approved by the Executive Committee of the National Association of Schools of Music and is reviewed by the Executive Committee on an ongoing basis.*

---

In addition to the *Policies and Procedures for NASM Substantial Equivalency Reviews* (this document), the following are necessary to apply for substantial equivalency: *NASM Membership Procedures* documents: *Procedures for Institutions*, *Procedures for the Self-Study Document: Format A*, and *Instructions for Preparing Curricular Tables in the NASM Format*, as well as the latest edition of the *NASM Handbook* and any current addenda. These texts are available on the NASM Web site.

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 in whole or in part for use in the substantial equivalency review process.

# Policies and Procedures for NASM Substantial Equivalency

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 1

Applicable Documents ..... 2

Process Initiation ..... 2

Selection of Visiting Review Teams ..... 2

Review Process ..... 2

Reports ..... 3

Review Actions ..... 3

Confidentiality ..... 4

Public Release..... 4

Fee Schedule..... 4

Consultative Assistance ..... 4

Joint Visits to Institutions with Art/Design, Dance, and Theatre Programs..... 4

Appendix I: Selection of International Program Reviewers..... 5

Appendix II: Fee Schedule ..... 6

*This page is intentionally blank.*

# Policies and Procedures for Substantial Equivalency Reviews

## Introduction

Reviews of music programs leading to degrees and other credentials at all levels are conducted by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) upon request by institutions outside the United States and its territories. While these reviews follow evaluative policies and procedures used for accreditation, no accreditation action will be taken, nor will there be any inference that a program is undergoing an accreditation review or will be accredited as a result of such review. The activity is a process in which NASM, through selected representatives, conducts a program review which may lead to an assessment of “substantial equivalency” of the program under review with accredited programs in the United States.

*Substantial equivalency* refers only to educational programs, including all resources associated with the delivery of educational programs, and means comparable in program content and educational experience. However, such programs may not be absolutely identical in format or method of delivery. It implies reasonable confidence that graduates possess the competencies expected of those holding particular U.S. degrees and credentials, or needed to begin professional practice at the entry level.

*Substantial equivalency* does not indicate equivalency in matters of institutional organization, governance, and other operational matters. All issues considered are associated with program reviews.

As a general rule, NASM will review only programs offered in English. Under certain special conditions, a program offered in a foreign language may be reviewed if translation and related services are judged adequate to allow an appropriate review despite language differences.

It should be recognized that the individuals chosen to comprise an international visiting review team are acting on behalf of NASM and the music professions as a whole. The team members are also acting as representatives of the United States and its culture. They carry a serious responsibility at a high professional level. They are expected to provide knowledge concerning music and the preparation of professionals, careful preparation and skill to determine relevant facts, sound judgment, and breadth of outlook in order to understand the institution’s objectives and the relation of these objectives to the unique environmental and cultural context within which the institution operates. They are expected to maintain a full sense of responsibility to the welfare of the institution, that of the National Association of Schools of Music, and to their own professional ideals. International visiting reviewers must be prepared to give time and effort to their task but can expect to find the international review activity to be a challenging, stimulating, and rewarding experience.

The NASM Executive Committee is responsible for oversight of all international activities of NASM. The NASM Executive Director is charged with management of this program under policies, as described in this document and elsewhere, established by the Executive Committee.

## Applicable Documents

Except as noted in this document and as necessary to adapt to local conditions, international reviews will be guided by four existing official NASM documents:

1. *NASM Membership Procedures: Procedures for Institutions;*
2. *NASM Membership Procedures: Procedures for the Self-Study Document: Format A;*
3. *NASM Membership Procedures: Instructions for Preparing Curricular Tables in the NASM Format;* and
4. The latest edition of the *NASM Handbook* and any current addenda.

Generally speaking, the basis for the review will be adapted to the special needs of local practice, as related to NASM expertise and experience.

## Process Initiation

An institution wishing to have its programs reviewed may request such a review in writing to the Executive Director of NASM. The Executive Director will communicate with the host institution and assist the institution to develop its review dossier. The institution should note that the self-study materials included in its review dossier must be completed and returned to the NASM National Office no later than two months prior to the date of the on-site visit.

NASM normally will not undertake a “substantial equivalency” review without written concurrence from the highest possible administrative level of the requesting institution or government of the country.

## Selection of Visiting Review Teams

Following standard NASM practice, the Executive Director will propose to the institution to be visited the visiting review team membership and appoint the team members and a team chair. Guidance for the selection of qualified persons to serve as members of international visiting review teams is given in Appendix I of this document. Priority consideration will be given to those visitors with the requisite experiences who most nearly match the needs of the institution to be visited, but without regard to race, color, gender, creed, or national origin. All visiting reviewers and the institution are required to avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance thereof.

Normally, there shall be at least two team members for each institution to be reviewed including a team chair. On occasion, because of cultural or diplomatic considerations or because of the size and scope of the institution, additional members may be added. Similarly, additional reviewers may be added due to unusual and/or expansive program features. In special circumstances, the Executive Director may recognize the necessity to select an appropriately qualified person from outside the current NASM visitor pool.

## Review Process

The team and its chair will follow NASM review and visit procedures applicable to U.S. accreditation visits with due consideration given to the cultural sensitivities and unique circumstances of the institution being reviewed. NASM procedures, as published from time to time, also govern substantial equivalency reviews and provide details of the substantial equivalency review process. The review process will include a Self-Study, an on-site visit lasting a minimum of three days, an exit interview, and a report to the institution, all prior to a review by the NASM Commission on Accreditation and/or Commission on Community College Accreditation, as appropriate. On-site visits will be scheduled at a time mutually convenient for the visiting team and the host institution. The team chair, in cooperation with the chief officer for music or a designated academic officer of the host institution, will establish the agenda for the on-site visit.

Upon receipt of an invitation to serve, evaluators should make contact with appropriate and credible agencies, such as the U.S. Department of State, to gather information about the country to be visited including (1) precautions and guidance as to the personal safety of the visitors, (2) country entry requirements, and (3) recommended/required vaccinations necessary to protect the visitors' health and well-being. Consideration of these and any other pertinent information should guide an evaluator in his/her decision to accept/decline an invitation to serve.

The host institution must agree that each visitor, and staff member if attending, will be given the freedom to make travel arrangements that best fit his/her schedule and geographic location without incurring unreasonable expenditures to the host institution, and that at the expense of the institution, each visitor/staff member will secure and be covered by professional liability and travel accident insurance not to exceed \$1M for each visit. The institution may request that visitors secure travel insurance. The Executive Director will oversee all the necessary logistical arrangements.

The team members may be asked and may be available to make short presentations to the faculty and students on topics related to NASM activities.

Observers may accompany on-site reviewers at the discretion of the institution and with the approval of the team chair and the Executive Director of NASM. Expenses of such observers are not included in the NASM "substantial equivalency" fee schedule.

## **Reports**

Within three weeks after the completion of the visit, each reviewer will submit to the team chair his or her completed writing assignments in keeping with NASM guidelines. The team chair is responsible for receiving feedback from each visitor, compiling the report with the assistance of each visitor, and submitting the report to the National Office within six weeks of the conclusion of the on-site review. Care should be taken that no accreditation action is implied in the report. The report should contain appropriate statements as to the "substantial equivalency" of the program being reviewed.

Upon receipt, the report will be reviewed and processed by the NASM Executive Director and, once completed, will be submitted to the institution. The institution may provide comment regarding errors of fact, conclusions based on errors, and any documented changes made since the conclusion of the visit. Any comment must be submitted to the National Office in triplicate no later than May 1 for a June review, and October 15 for a November review.

The appropriate NASM Commission will review the Self-Study, the Visitors' Report, and any comment to the Visitors' Report submitted by the institution.

## **Review Actions**

"Substantial equivalency" of a program will be granted by the appropriate NASM Commission only when the result of the review so warrants. "Substantially equivalent" status will be granted if current conditions are judged to be meeting or exceeding the NASM requirements. The term of equivalency status will be subject to review for cause at any time.

An institution filing a successful initial application is granted a five-year period of substantial equivalency status. After the first five-year period, the institution will be reviewed for continuation on a ten-year cycle.

To maintain substantial equivalency status, the institution must schedule and conduct re-evaluation as required by NASM.

## **Confidentiality**

Information supplied by the institution is for the confidential use of the on-site reviewers, the appropriate Commission, and the NASM National Office staff, and will not be disclosed without the specific written permission of the institution concerned. Statements to the institution are confidential. Direct quotations in whole or in part from any equivalency statement are not authorized. Correspondence and reports between NASM and the institution are confidential documents and should be released only to authorized personnel of the institution. Wherever institutional policy or governmental laws require the release of a confidential document, the entire document must be released.

## **Public Release**

With written concurrence from the highest possible level of the host institution or government of the country, programs deemed “substantially equivalent” will be listed in public documents and communicated to interested parties, as appropriate, for as long as the period of recognition remains in effect. The length of the recognition period is published. Because “substantial equivalency” is program-specific, all statements made by the institution regarding “substantial equivalency” must refer only to those programs that are evaluated by NASM and approved as “substantially equivalent.”

## **Fee Schedule**

It is NASM policy that the “substantially equivalent” review process will be self-sustaining financially from fees charged to the requesting institution; no NASM funds will be used to support this operation.

The fee schedule for international visits is shown in Appendix II of this document and is subject to changes reflected in economic conditions. The fee schedule also covers annual expenses related to the maintenance and upkeep of the administrative process that supports “substantially equivalent” programs.

To comply with U.S. Internal Revenue Service laws, all payments shall be made to NASM in U.S. currency which will, in turn, be used to reimburse on-site reviewers for travel expenses and pay honoraria. NASM will issue IRS Form 1099 to all reviewers receiving honoraria as appropriate.

## **Consultative Assistance**

Apart from “substantial equivalency” reviews, and on occasion, NASM is requested to provide one or more consultants to conduct seminars, provide general information on accreditation, and offer other similar services. In such cases, it is NASM policy to charge a fee of U.S. \$800 per day per consultant (\$750 for the consultant, \$50 National Office administrative fee), plus travel expenses for the consultant(s). Consultant visits will follow typical NASM procedures for such visits. All requirements regarding travel and insurance for reviewers described herein apply as well to NASM consultants.

## **Joint Visits to Institutions with Art/Design, Dance, and Theatre Programs**

Joint visits can be arranged with teams from the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, National Association of Schools of Dance, and/or the National Association of Schools of Theatre. For further information, contact the NASM Executive Director.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **SELECTION OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM REVIEWERS**

#### **International Reviewers List**

The NASM Executive Director will maintain a list of appropriately qualified persons to serve as members of international review teams.

The NASM Executive Director will be guided by the following parameters in selecting persons for international visits:

1. Demonstrated interest in international reviews;
2. Demonstrated competence in music accreditation;
3. Substantial experience in music in higher education, including appropriate international experience;
4. Substantial experience in accreditation matters as an NASM program evaluator or as an NASM Commission member;
5. Clear commitment to a high level of professional responsibility and practice; and
6. Fulfillment of all other qualifications for NASM evaluators.

The objective of the qualification parameters is to assure that persons of a high caliber, whose reputations are more than strictly local in character, are selected to represent NASM in the international review process.

Such evaluators should have an understanding of the nature of international reviews, combined with the ability to understand the institution's objectives and the relation of these objectives to the environment and unique national culture in which the particular institution operates.

## APPENDIX II

### FEE SCHEDULE

#### Review Fees

The following fees and expenses normally will apply to all international “substantial equivalency” reviews and are the responsibility of the host institution:

1. Travel and associated expenses for all reviewers and staff (if attending), including air fare at business-class level with the exception of visits to Canada and Mexico. Air travel within the United States and to/from Canada and Mexico shall be booked at economy plus class level or its equivalent. Ground transportation, such as railroad, will be first-class or its equivalent. Associated expenses include, but are not limited to, all housing/lodging, meals, transportation, appropriate insurances, taxes, tariffs, and related incidentals, such as the cost of visas.
2. An honorarium of U.S. \$1,000 per reviewer and U.S. \$1,500 for the team chair. NASM staff, if any, involved in “substantial equivalency” reviews, will receive no honorarium.
3. An administrative fee of U.S. \$1,000 per review.
4. A deposit, to be set by the NASM National Office staff and confirmed to the host institution, sufficient to cover all reasonable direct and indirect costs of the review, including translation expenses and those outlined in items 1. and 2. above not including staff. The total deposit amount charged to the host institution will not exceed U.S. \$12,500 unless actual costs are anticipated to exceed this amount substantially. In such cases, the institution will be informed in advance. In all cases, an invoice(s) will be sent to the institution which must be addressed prior to the processing of the institution’s *Notice of Intention to Apply* form. Should actual costs exceed the amount of the deposit paid, the host institution will be billed for any/all remaining costs. After all costs related to the review have been paid, should the actual costs be less than the deposit on hand, the remaining balance of funds will be returned to the institution.
5. The administrative fee and deposit will be billed to the host institution after NASM has received the institution’s request to apply and confirmed its eligibility. Applications will be processed only upon receipt of invoiced fees.

#### Substantial Equivalency Annual Maintenance Fee

For 2023–2024, a fee of U.S. \$1,793 per institution is required to cover expenses related to the continuing maintenance of “substantially equivalent” data files, review of institutional materials, and the publication and distribution of an annual listing of “substantially equivalent” programs. Institutions will be billed annually by NASM.

**Fee Increases.** The annual maintenance fee will rise each year by the same percentage as institutional dues for NASM accredited member institutions.