

Assessment Cycle 2021 - 2022

Bachelor of Music (BM) (242)

Division: College: Arts and Sciences

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

College of Arts and Sciences' Mission. College of Arts and Sciences' Mission. The College of Arts & Sciences, the largest college at Northwestern State University, is a diverse community of scholars, teachers, and students, working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. The College strives to produce graduates who are productive members of society equipped with the capability to promote economic and social development and improve the overall quality of life in the region. The College provides an unequalled undergraduate education in the social and behavioral sciences, English, communication, journalism, media arts, biological and physical sciences, and the creative and performing arts, and at the graduate level in the creative and performing arts, English, TESOL, and Homeland Security. Uniquely, the College houses the Louisiana Scholars' College (the State's designated Honors College), the Louisiana Folklife Center, and the Creole Center, demonstrating its commitment to community service, research, and preservation of Louisiana's precious resources.

Department of Music Mission. The Music Department is part of the **Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts** at Northwestern State University and is dedicated to the development of students for roles in academic, leadership, professional, performing, education and research careers in the challenging fields of music, music business, music performance, and music education. Utilizing transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, courses in core musical fundamentals, performances, research and service, the department produces graduates equipped to be productive members of society and professionals in the Arts in which they will help develop and improve the overall quality of life locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. The department delivers the Bachelor of Music degree with concentrations in Performance, Sacred Music, and Music Business, and works collaboratively with the School of Education to offer the Bachelor of Music Education degree. The department also offers the Master of Music degree with concentrations in performance and music education.

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Purpose (optional): The Bachelor's program will prepare students for lives as artistic professionals and educators who are responsive to the artistic demands of the profession.

Methodology: The assessment process for the BM program is as follows:

(1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative, and qualitative) are collected and returned to the program coordinator.

(2) The program coordinator will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes.

(3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program faculty.

(4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty teaching core Music Education courses if required (show cause).

(5) The Program Coordinator, in consultation with the BM faculty and curriculum committee, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, curricula and program changes.

Note. During Assessment Cycle 2020-2021, the COVID-19 virus forced Northwestern State University to reevaluate how to execute its mission. Through deliberate planning, Northwestern substantially modified academic programs, facilities, services, and resources to enhance learning and the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and the public.

Assignments and student learning assessments were modified to maximize the principles of equitable evaluation and assure the highest quality in-person classes, online delivery of courses, and hybrid face-to-face and virtual studies. Technological equipment and resources were updated and expanded to provide high academic quality and flexibility while using lower bandwidth.

Student learning outcomes guide the design and delivery of instruction to ensure student learning. While the assessment process continues, it would be naïve to assume academic program assessments have not been affected – the degree of which is based on individual programs. Because of the tireless efforts of Northwestern's highly accomplished and respected leadership, faculty, and staff, the trust of current and future students in the University's commitment to extraordinary academic and experiential student learning opportunities is evident through increased enrollment, even during these trying times.

Student Learning Outcomes:

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SLO 1. Students will be able to demonstrate excellence as solo and ensemble performers at a level to provide a basis for a professional career as a musician.

Course Map: Tied to Course Objectives:

Applied Study:

MUSIC 1710 – Major Study

MUSIC 3710 – Major Study

MUSIC 4720 – Recital

Ensembles:

MUSIC 1310 – Band

MUSIC 1320 – Men’s Chorus

MUSIC 1330 – Chamber Choir

MUSIC 1340 – Orchestra

MUSIC 1380 – Women’s Chorus

Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge):

Details/Description: Students will demonstrate excellence through performance before a jury of 2-5 faculty each semester; auditions for ensembles at least once a year; and qualifying juries to assess whether they are ready for upper-class applied study. For Performance Majors, a Senior Recital is required, for which a Preview hearing performance in front of the student's Recital Committee must be passed.

Acceptable Target: A rubric for each of these juries is used to evaluate the student and is kept on file. Qualifying jury results are filed and noted in the CAPA offices. Acceptable target is 90% passing the Qualifying Jury and Senior Recital.

Ideal Target: Ideal target is 100% passing Qualifying Jury and Senior Recital.

Implementation Plan (timeline): each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: Music Faculty

Supporting Materials: Jury comment/grading form; Jury repertoire form; Qualifying Jury Assessment form; Recital checklist; Recital Grading Sheet; Recital Preview Hearing Form; Voice Jury Form; Voice Qualifying Jury Form; Voice Recital Preview Hearing Form

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. The passing rate was 87% for all Qualifying Juries and Senior Recitals. The faculty noticed as the year progressed that many students were having to deal with issues outside of their control (family health, uncertainties in living situation and finances, isolation, mental health issues). While some modes of applied teaching had to be modified for student/faculty safety, the faculty felt that many of the strategies implemented for virtual lessons proved beneficial and successful, some of which continue to be used in live applied lessons (recorded portions of the weekly assignments and analysis of those recordings with the student,

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discussions on wellness). The drop in passing rate was not alarming, and the faculty felt that, as students' lives stabilize and classes return to more in-person format, the passing rate would soon be at the acceptable level again.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. As a result of the move to virtual learning, faculty were well-versed in creating highly personalized plans for applied lessons. These plans addressed individual weaknesses and provided performing opportunities in front of small audiences (studio classes, student recital hours, and master classes), and more frequently discussed musicians' health and wellness issues. Faculty were proactive in using various online and virtual resources, which added to the tools available for driving the cycle of improvement in this area.

As a result of these changes, in 2021-2022 the target was met. Both Fall and Spring semesters had a 100% passing rate for the Qualifying Jury. The initial passing rate for Fall recitals was 90%, rather than 100%, due to one student's health issues. However, this recital was rescheduled for Spring, where the passing rate was 100%. These changes had a direct impact on the students' ability to pass recitals and qualifying juries. The ability to return to meeting applied lessons and rehearsals in person has proven to be invaluable in preparing students for these high-level performances. The ability to hear and demonstrate refined tone quality and musicality nuances and details is necessary in preparing students for these performances. Additionally, the use of resources discovered and/or implemented during the pandemic (e.g., more frequent recording of practice sessions and assignments, ability to bring in guest artists for master classes via Zoom/Webex/Teams, more available wellness and pedagogy videos and resources online, etc.), was a valuable contribution and supplement to the in-person applied lessons and studio classes.

Decision or Recommendation. In AC 2021-2022, the target was met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. Faculty will assess current available resources used in virtual applied lessons to streamline those strategies that proved beneficial. The faculty will also review those changes made to, and incorporate further, individualized practice plans addressing weaknesses. In addition, faculty will review the current benchmarks leading to the Qualifying Jury to assess whether earlier benchmarks would be helpful. Small live performing opportunities (master classes, studio class, elective recitals, MUS 1500 performances) will be encouraged for all levels (freshman through senior), and discussions of musicians' physical and mental wellness will increase in master classes and applied lessons.

These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate excellence as solo and ensemble performers at a level to provide a basis for a professional career as a musician, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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SLO 2: Demonstrate specific knowledge in music theory and aural skills at a level to provide a basis for a professional career as a musician.

Course Map: Tied to the Objectives:

Music Theory:

MUSIC 1150 – Music Theory I

MUSIC 1160 – Music Theory II

MUSIC 2150 – Music Theory III

MUSIC 2160 – Music Theory IV

Aural Skills:

MUSIC 1151 – Aural Skills I

MUSIC 1161 – Aural Skills II

MUSIC 2151 – Aural Skills III

MUSIC 2161 – Aural Skills IV

Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill / Ability):

Students will demonstrate knowledge through ongoing assessment and cumulative final exams which require the student to demonstrate competence in these areas before continuing to the next level. Completion of all 4 levels satisfies the requirement.

Acceptable Target: These courses serve as pre-requisites for several upper level required courses. Having this knowledge and these skills is essential to progressing towards the completion of the degree. The acceptable target is 90% of students passing the final exam and final composition project (in MUS 2160), working toward completion of the cycle of these courses.

Ideal Target: Ideal target is 93% passing the final exam and final composition project (in MUS 2160).

Implementation Plan (timeline): each semester/ongoing

Key/Responsible Personnel: Music Faculty

Findings: Target was not met.

Analysis: In AC 2020-2021, the target was met for the final project (94%) but not met for the final exam (81%). Additional opportunities for student composition projects and further development of student research/analysis papers were explored. These changes improved the student's ability to demonstrate and assimilate music theory knowledge, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward. The capstone project and final exam for this course has proven to be a successful measure of students' ability to apply the necessary music theory knowledge as will be expected in the professional environment. In AC 2020-2021 all students chose the composition project, as opposed to research paper assignment. Ninety-four percent of those students passed the project, while only 81% passed the final exam.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, the faculty implemented the

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following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Music Theory Coordinator incorporated the use of on-line music theory skill practice into class and homework assignments. Also, additional opportunities for student composition projects and further development of student research/analysis papers were explored. Two students chose the research paper option this year.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2021-2022 the target was not met for the final project (80%), but the acceptable target was met for the final exam (91%). This is not an alarming change, as the students in their fourth semester of the Music Theory/Aural Skills rotation were those who were directly affected by the pandemic. This cohort of students had to switch to virtual theory and aural skills classes. While the quality of teaching and class structure was excellent, the unexpected change, in addition to the instability of these students' personal lives during the pandemic, made a smooth transition difficult. The faculty are not alarmed at this slight decline in passing rate this year; however, students' progress will be closely monitored for any necessary adjustments needed to help them succeed. These changes impacted the students' ability to demonstrate knowledge through ongoing assessment and cumulative final exams which require the student to demonstrate competence in these areas before continuing to the next level. These changes also provided flexibility and allowed the professor to assess students through varying styles of learning and communicating, providing a more student-oriented assessment process for this important professional skill.

Decision or Recommendation. In AC 2021-2022, the target was not met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Department Chair and Music Theory Coordinator will pilot a lab course to be taken in conjunction with Music Theory I (MUS 1150) for those students who are at a developmental level in music theory and aural skills. This lab will be an on-line class that will be separate from the existing music theory/aural skills classes. It will be taught by the Music Theory Coordinator to closely assess its effectiveness. The purpose of the lab is to monitor the progress of, and identify specific needs of, those developmental students. It will also allow for this cohort of students to stay on track with the course rotation. Additional opportunities for student composition projects and further development of student research/analysis papers will also be explored. These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate specific knowledge in music theory and aural skills at a level to provide a basis for a professional career as a musician, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 3: Demonstrate specific knowledge of music history and demonstrate the ability to write and speak effectively about the art of music.

Course Map: Tied to Objectives:

Music History:

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MUSIC 2030 – Music History/Literature I
MUSIC 2040 – Music History/Literature II
MUSIC 3030 – Music History/Literature III
MUSIC 3040 – Music History/Literature IV

Measure 3.1. (Direct – knowledge)

In each of the Music History courses, students are required to write research papers. In-class essay questions on exams require the student to demonstrate competence in these areas before continuing to the next level. Completion of all 4 levels satisfies the requirement.

Acceptable Target: Students choose subjects, submit proposed topics, submit rough drafts, and after receiving feedback submit final drafts. Some are chosen to make presentations at the University's Research Day. The acceptable target is 60% students receiving a passing grade on the research portion of their grade in the course.

Ideal Target: Ideal target is 70% receiving a passing grade on the research paper portion of their grade.

Implementation Plan (timeline): each semester/ongoing

Key/Responsible Personnel: Music Faculty

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2020-21, the target was met. Small research assignments were given in the form of short chapter essays as homework assignments and short essays on each exam for Fall 2020. For Fall 2020, the passing rate was 81% for the homework assignments, and the passing rate for exam essays was 71%. For Spring 2021, concert reviews were again an option for the short research assignments. This approach was successful in that it resulted in an average passing rate of 84%. The lower-level class (Music History II) was slightly lower (71%), while the upper-level class (Music History IV) had a higher passing rate of 93%.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. In addition to reviewing the shorter research/written assignments for improved writing technique and implementation of research skills, several written concert reviews were added to the assessments of writing style. A combination of essay assignments, essay test questions, and written concert reviews were assessed. In addition, with the return to face-to-face classes, the opportunity for more frequent in-person meetings was helpful in guiding the students' research/writing assignments more closely and frequently. The Music History Professor also re-evaluated the format of exams with the return from on-line to in-person classes. The exam format was returned to one more conducive to an in-person environment. In addition to the short essay questions, a combination of short answer, composer/work identification, and definitions of terms was re-introduced to the exam format.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2021-2022 the target was met. The passing rate for the lower-level class (Music History II) was 85%, an increase of 14%, while the

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passing rate of the upper-level Music History IV class was 92%, a similar passing rate to the previous year. The data suggests that the approach of having smaller writing assignments appears to be working, as students are improving in this learning outcome through the four-semester series of Music History courses. These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to write research papers. In-class essay questions on exams require the student to demonstrate competence in these areas before continuing to the next level.

Decision or Recommendation. In AC 2021-2022, the target was met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Music History professor will assess the post-virtual learning format change for exams to be responsive to student needs post-pandemic. Music History faculty will also provide options for shorter research/writing assignments, as this approach allows for more frequent feedback.

These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate specific knowledge of music history and demonstrate the ability to write and speak effectively about the art of music, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 4. Gain keyboard proficiency sufficient to assist in their professional career as a musician.

Course Map: Tied to the Objectives:

Class Piano:

MUSIC 1800 – Piano Class I

MUSIC 1810 – Piano Class II

MUSIC 1820 – Piano Class III

MUSIC 1830 – Piano Class IV

Applied Study in Piano:

MUSIC 1700A – Minor Study (piano)

MUSIC 1710A – Major Study (piano)

MUSIC 3710A – Major Study (piano)

Measure 4.1. (Direct – knowledge)

Proficiency is demonstrated at the conclusion of each semester of keyboard study (prescribed proficiencies for each level). A cumulative proficiency is administered and required at the completion of the fourth semester - MUS 1830. Skills achieved include playing accompaniments, score-reading, improvisation, transposition, scales major and minor, and melodic harmonization.

Acceptable Target: Students must complete the keyboard proficiency exams in all these areas before they are granted a passing grade in the final course in the sequence. If they do not pass the proficiency exams, they must re-take the course. The acceptable target is 90% of students passing each proficiency level.

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Ideal Target: Ideal target is 95% of students passing each proficiency level.

Implementation Plan (timeline): each semester/ongoing. To be assessed at the end of each academic year.

Key/Responsible Personnel: Head of Keyboard Area/Music Faculty/Department Chair

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2020-2021, the target was met with 96% of students passing the piano proficiency exams. One student opted to take an “incomplete” due to difficult personal circumstances. It is expected that this student will return and pass the proficiency exams.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Piano faculty met to investigate rearranging the piano classroom for better instructor view of students’ hands. However, with the return to full face-to-face classes, this change was deemed not necessary at this time. Piano faculty also investigated options for including more ensemble/accompaniment playing in the class piano setting. With the return to face-to-face classes, this idea was delayed to first focus on a smooth transition back to in-person piano classes.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2021-2022, the target was met with 96% of students passing the piano proficiency exams. Piano group classes and individual proficiency exams were able to be offered as they have in the past (*i.e.*, pre-pandemic). As a result, there was less disruption than anticipated in the cycle of proficiency assessment for keyboard classes. These changes improved the student’s ability to learn, retain, and demonstrate piano proficiency necessary as a professional musician, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Decision or Recommendation. In AC 2021-2022, the target was met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. Piano faculty will explore further options for including more ensemble/accompaniment playing in class piano now that the piano classes are once again meeting in person. They will also assess the ability and need for rearranging the piano classroom to allow the professor to more easily monitor all students’ hand placement/position/fingerings.

These changes will improve the student’s ability to gain keyboard proficiency sufficient to assist in their professional career as a musician, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results.

Program faculty made several decisions after examining results of data analysis from

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AC 2020-2021 which resulted in improved student learning and program improvement in AC 2021-2022.

- Faculty provided highly personalized practice plans for each student who did not pass the Qualifying Jury in the 1st attempt and included more discussion and use of online resources regarding musicians' physical and mental wellness.
- Explored further use of on-line music theory skill practice options for more incorporation into class assignments.
- Several small writing assignments were introduced, as an option to live concert reviews. This option allowed for students to have even more flexibility in completing these shorter research assignments.
- A combination of chapter assignments, essay assignments, essay test questions, and written concert reviews were assessed allowing for more frequent feedback regarding research and writing skills.
- The Piano faculty met to review the proficiency exams and evaluated how classes were to be supervised and monitored.
- Rearrangement of the piano classroom to allow for better instructor view of students' hands was considered.

Plan of Action for Moving Forward:

Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2021-2022 and will take steps to continue to improve student learning in AC 2022-2023:

- Faculty will assess current available resources used in virtual applied lessons in order to streamline those strategies that proved beneficial/successful.
- Faculty will review current performance benchmarks within the program to assess if earlier benchmarks would be helpful.
- Faculty will build upon the students learning experience by incorporating further individualized practice plans to address weaknesses, including more discussion of musicians' physical and mental wellness, and by providing more frequent performing opportunities in front of a small audience.
- The department will pilot a lab course to be taken simultaneously with the Music Theory I course for those students at a developmental level in music theory and aural skills.
- Faculty will provide options for shorter research/writing assignments, as this approach allows for more frequent feedback.
- The Music History professor will also assess the format change of exams with the

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return to face-to-face classes/tests in order to be responsive to student needs post-pandemic.

- Piano faculty will consider rearranging the piano classroom for better instructor view of students' hands.
- Piano faculty will also consider further options for including more ensemble/accompaniment playing in class piano.