

Assessment Cycle 2022 - 2023

Program: Bachelor of Music (BM) (242)

Division: College: Arts and Sciences

Prepared by: Malena McLaren

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Approved by: Dr. Francene Lemoine

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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 bachelors 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.

Student Learning Outcomes:

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 the 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,

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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: The target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was met. Both Fall and Spring semesters had a 100% passing rate for the Qualifying Jury. The 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%. The ability to return to meeting applied lessons and rehearsals in person proved 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.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2021-2022 results, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. The faculty assessed current available resources used in virtual applied lessons in order to streamline those strategies that proved beneficial. The faculty also reviewed those changes made to, and incorporated further, individualized practice plans addressing weaknesses. In addition, faculty reviewed the current benchmarks leading to the Qualifying Jury to assess if earlier benchmarks would be helpful. Small live performing opportunities (master classes, studio class, elective recitals, MUS 1500 performances) were encouraged for all levels (freshman through senior), and discussions of musicians' physical and mental wellness were increased in master classes and applied lessons—including a department-wide workshop in Alexander Technique and a full yoga class during Studio Class time.

As a result of these changes in 2022-2023, the target was met. The passing rate for Fall Qualifying Juries was 85% (6 out of 7 total Qualifying Juries attempted) and the passing rate for Spring Qualifying Juries was 92% (22 out of 24). All recitals attempted were successfully passed. The total passing rate for all Qualifying Juries and Recitals was

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93%. This is an improvement from last year. The faculty noticed some improvement this year in students' ability to balance mental health, living situations/finances, and academic responsibilities. Campus and departmental resources were valuable in the faculty's ability to refer and assist students in need of help. These resources can be used more frequently. The modes of applied teaching are largely returning to a pre-pandemic model where most events are in person. However, the addition of a virtual option for lessons and attending live performances has been helpful in keeping students engaged should they need to quarantine.

Decision or Recommendation: In AC 2022-2023, the target was met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2022-23 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. Faculty plan to seek campus resources (counseling, advising, etc.) earlier for students that may need the assistance. In addition, faculty plan to be more directly involved with advising their freshman and sophomore music education majors, which allows for more in-depth discussion of any issues outside of their applied lessons. Because they are more readily available and are a positive addition to the traditional in-person applied lesson curriculum, faculty will seek more options for on-line/virtual webinars/lectures/master classes/performances, both on and off campus, and will incorporate those into their teaching. The faculty are also reviewing those changes made to, and will incorporate further, individualized practice plans addressing weaknesses. In addition, an ad-hoc committee has been formed charged with reviewing the current benchmarks leading to the Qualifying Jury to assess whether earlier benchmarks would be helpful. The committee will lead discussion with the music faculty to further this discussion and review. Small live performing opportunities (master classes, studio class, elective recitals, MUS 1500 performances) are being more actively encouraged for all levels (freshman through senior), and discussions of musicians' physical and mental wellness are being planned and increased in master classes and applied lessons. Finally, a new course will be piloted focusing on career preparedness for musicians. This course will focus on resources and skills as they enter the job market after college, particularly for those students who are Music Performance and Music Business students.

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.

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

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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. Acceptable target: 90% of students passing 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 final exam and final composition project (in MUS 2160).

Implementation Plan (timeline): each semester/ongoing

Key/Responsible Personnel: Music Faculty

Findings: The target was met.

Analysis: 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 was 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 the transition difficult. The faculty were not alarmed at this slight decline in passing rate this year; however, students' progress was closely monitored for any necessary adjustments needed to help them succeed.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2021-2022 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. In order to proactively assist students, the Department Chair and Music Theory Coordinator piloted a lab course (MUS 1700 X1N) 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 was an on-line class that was separate from the existing music theory/aural skills classes. It was taught by the Music Theory Coordinator so that he could closely assess its effectiveness. The purpose of the lab was to monitor the progress and identify specific needs of those developmental students. It also allowed for this cohort of students to stay on track with the course rotation. Additional opportunities for student composition projects and further development of student

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research/analysis papers were also explored. Two students chose the research paper option.

As a result of these changes in AC 2022-2023, the target was met for both the final project (100%) and the final exam (93%). This is an improvement from the previous year. Those students directly affected by the pandemic have moved through the theory rotation, so the students in Theory IV this year had the benefit of meeting all their Theory I-IV classes largely in person. However, the use of virtual classes remains an option when needed, which is an asset to the theory curriculum. Students at this level seem to be reaching out earlier when they need help, which allows for theory faculty to assist students while there is time for improvement during the semester. 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 2022-2023, the target was met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2022-23 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Department Chair and Music Theory Coordinator will assess and further develop the lab course (MUS 1700 X1N) 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. The purpose of the lab (to monitor the progress and identify specific needs of those developmental students) remains. However, the Coordinator will explore other areas that the lab course may benefit. 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:

MUSIC 2030 – Music History/Literature I

MUSIC 2040 – Music History/Literature II

MUSIC 3030 – Music History/Literature III

MUSIC 3040 – Music History/Literature IV

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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 students 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. 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: The target was met.

Analysis: 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 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 appeared to be working, as students were 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 required the student to demonstrate competence in these areas before continuing to the next level.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, faculty made the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Music History professor assessed the post-virtual learning format change for exams to be responsive to student needs post-pandemic. Music History faculty also provided options for shorter research/writing assignments, as this approach allowed for more frequent feedback.

As a result of these changes in AC 2022-2023, the target was met. The passing rate for Music History II was 90%, an increase of 5%, while the passing rate of the Music History IV class was 98%, an increase of 6%. Providing smaller and more frequent writing assignments in the form of chapter essays and short essays on exams is proving to be successful. These shorter assignments allow the professor to assess and address any issues in students' ability to write and research. These changes improved 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.

Decision or Recommendation. In AC 2022-2023, the target was met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2022-23 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Music History professor will evaluate the test format to assess the success of post-virtual

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changes. If needed, sections requiring longer or more detailed answers will be reinstated. This is necessary to ensure that all students are sufficiently prepared for Praxis and/or graduate entrance exams. The shorter research/writing assignments will remain, as these have proven to be quite successful in measuring students' abilities to write and more frequently address any issues.

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 4th 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 simply re-take the course. Acceptable target is 90% of students passing each proficiency level.

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: The target was not met.

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Analysis: 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.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, faculty made the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. Piano faculty explored further options for including more ensemble/accompaniment playing in class piano. They also assessed the ability and need for rearranging the piano classroom to allow the professor to more easily monitor all students' hand placement/position/fingerings.

As a result of these changes in AC 2022-2023, the target was not met. Ninety-three percent (93%) of the total students passed all levels of the proficiency exams. While this is a decrease of 3%, it is not an alarming drop for faculty. Of the 29 total students enrolled in the Piano IV class, only 2 did not pass all proficiency levels. It is expected that those students will re-take the class and pass. There was some difficulty implementing ensemble playing as much as the piano faculty would have liked due to too many keyboards having issues with the pairing function. Students were having difficulty hearing each other. Piano faculty are seeking a solution, as the grant for a new keyboard lab was not funded this time. The changes outlined 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.

Decision or Recommendation. In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2022-23 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. Piano faculty will revise and resubmit the grant for a new keyboard lab on the next Board of Regents cycle. In the meantime, they will seek other options to fix the pairing issues with many of the keyboards. While the idea to rearrange the classroom was explored, it proved to not be a viable option at this time. Therefore, for better monitoring of students, piano faculty plan to move around the classroom more often to check the students' individual understanding of material. This allows the faculty to learn more quickly which students need more individual help and provide that help to them with more frequency.

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 AC 2021-2022 which resulted in improved student learning and program improvement in AC 2022--2023.

- Discussions of musicians' physical and mental wellness were increased in master classes and applied lessons—including a department-wide workshop in Alexander Technique and a full yoga class during studio class time.

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- Small live performing opportunities (master classes, studio class, elective recitals, MUS 1500 performances) were encouraged for all levels (freshman through senior).
- Faculty provide highly personalized practice plans for each student who did not pass the Qualifying Jury in the 1st attempt and included more discussion of musicians' physical and mental wellness.
- Faculty reviewed the current benchmarks leading to the Qualifying Jury to assess whether earlier benchmarks would be helpful.
- The Department Chair and Music Theory Coordinator piloted a lab course (MUS 1700 X1N) 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.
- Several small writing assignments were introduced. This option allowed for students to have even more flexibility in completing these shorter research assignments.
- A combination of chapter assignments, essay assignments, and essay test questions were assessed allowing for more frequent feedback regarding research and writing skills.
- The Piano faculty met again to review the proficiency exams and evaluated on how classes were to be supervised and monitored.
- The Piano faculty explored more options for including additional ensemble/accompaniment playing in class piano.
- Rearrangement of the piano classroom was explored to allow for better instructor view of students' hands.

Plan of Action for Moving Forward:

Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2022-2023 and will take steps to continue to improve student learning in AC 2023-2024:

- Faculty plan to seek campus resources (counseling, advising, *etc.*) earlier for students that may need the assistance.
- Faculty plan to be more directly involved with advising their freshman and sophomore music education majors, which will allow for more in-depth discussion of any issues outside of their applied lessons.
- 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 performing opportunities in front of a small audience.

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- A new course will be piloted focusing on career preparedness for musicians. The course will focus on resources and skills as they enter the job market after college, particularly for those students who are Music Performance and Music Business students.
- Additional opportunities for student composition projects and further development of student research/analysis papers will be explored.
- Faculty will continue to provide options for shorter research/writing assignments, as this approach allows for more frequent feedback.
- The Music History professor will re-evaluate the format of exams to assure that all students are sufficiently prepared for Praxis and/or graduate entrance exams.
- For better monitoring of students, piano faculty plan to move around the classroom more often to check the students' individual understanding of material.
- Piano faculty will revise the grant submitted this year for a new Keyboard Classroom and seek alternate opportunities for funding, as the grant was not funded this cycle.