

## Assessment Cycle 2023 – 2024

**Program: Master of Music (MM) (542)**

**Department of Music**

**Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts**

**College of Arts and Sciences**

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**Date: June 3, 2024**

**Approved by: Dr. Greg Handel, Dean of Graduate School**

**Date: June 3, 2024**

**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 Department of Teaching, Learning, and Counseling to offer the Bachelor of Music Education degree. The

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department also offers the Master of Music degree with concentrations in performance and music education.

**Purpose (optional):** The master'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 MM 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 (Graduate Program Coord.) will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes; coordinator communicates with Graduate Faculty in the program on a regular basis to discuss findings.

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

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

(5) The Program Coordinator, in consultation with the MM 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 the ability to conduct research, comprehend scholarly readings, and apply this knowledge in a scholarly document.**

**Course Map:** Tied to Course Objectives:

MUS/MUED 5900 - Research Methods in Music

MUS 5150 - Pedagogy

MUS/MUED 5400 - Special Problems

MUS 5970 - Performance Document

### Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge): Research Paper (Student Artifact)

Completion of these courses demonstrates acquisition of these abilities. Completion of the scholarly document is the actual product resulting from this learning.

**Acceptable Target:** The final document must be approved by a committee of the Music Graduate Faculty of at least 3 members and then submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. Acceptable Target is 93% of students receiving approval of their final document.

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**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 97% of students receiving approval of their final document.

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** Every semester

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Graduate Music Faculty/Major Professors for each student submitted a final document.

**Findings:** The target was met.

**Analysis:** In AC 2022-2023 the target was not met. Of the six students scheduled to complete their final scholarly document, only five successfully did so, resulting in 83% of these students successfully completing the document. However, the sixth student is planning to complete the document in the summer, and faculty are optimistic that he will do this. The student acknowledged that he did not plan effectively, resulting in the recital hearing, final scholarly document draft due to his committee, and comprehensive exams all being due in the same two-week time period. The Department Chair, Graduate Advisor, and major professor have discussed this situation and are confident that it is an isolated situation. The updated curriculum checklists and streamlined help sheet detailing guidelines, requirements, and deadlines provided to all graduate faculty in August 2022 was quite helpful. Major professors were clearer on the expectations of committee members and there was more consistency in the process for students. Additionally, most graduate students enrolled in MUS or MUED 5400 in their penultimate semester with their major professor to work on the final document.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2023-24 to drive the cycle of improvement. The role of Coordinator of Graduate Advising was implemented. This person updated the departmental Graduate Faculty help sheet, focusing on timelines and planning of the final semester and distributed to all faculty in August 2023. As individual graduate faculty members prepared to begin advising the students for whom they are the major professor, the Department Chair and Coordinator of Graduate Advising provided assistance where needed to ensure a smooth transition to this advising model. In addition, the professor for MUED 5900 Intro to Research (required course for all Music graduate students) addressed planning and timelines as a part of the research/writing assignments in this class.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-24 the target was met. All students scheduled to complete their final scholarly document successfully did so (12 out of 12 students). In addition, the student from the previous year completed his scholarly document in the summer of 2023. The addition of Applied Faculty/Major Professor also acting as Advisor allowed for more frequent discussion between the graduate student and their major professor/advisor. The frequent conversations of class schedule planning, final proposal/final document planning, and course rotations proved quite helpful for each individual graduate student. Also, each music faculty member was required to update and/or renew their Graduate Faculty status. This helped to ensure that there were Graduate Music Faculty in each area who could serve as major professors and on graduate committees.

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These changes improved the student's ability to conduct research, comprehend scholarly readings, and apply this knowledge in their preparation of a scholarly document, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

**Decision:** In AC 2023-2024, the target was met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2023-24 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Coordinator of Graduate Advising will update the help sheet, focusing on streamlining instructions for registration, course rotations, and preparation for the final scholarly project/document. This updated help sheet will be distributed to faculty in August 2024 and will also be available on the Music Department Moodle Shell. The professor for MUED 5900 (required of all Music graduate students) will address planning, timelines, and preparation of the final project/document. The Department Chair will explore ways to ensure that each student's graduate committee can be determined and solidified at the end of the first semester of study.

These changes will improve the student's ability to conduct research, comprehend scholarly readings, and apply this knowledge in their preparation of a scholarly document, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

### **SLO 2: Demonstrate professional competency in such disciplines as performance or music education.**

Course Map: Tied to Course Objectives:

MUS 5700, 5710 - Applied Study  
MUS 5230 - Advanced Conducting  
MUED 5000 - Seminar in Music Education  
MUS 5720 - Recital

### **Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill / Ability): Capstone Experience**

Students will be evaluated on one significant capstone experience as it pertains to their chosen concentration. Examples include solo recital, conducting recital, or significant written projects.

**Acceptable Target:** Because these are Capstone experiences, they are evaluated and approved under the supervision of the Major Professor with the approval of the student's graduate committee. Acceptable target is 93% of students passing the final recital, as this is the capstone event for the courses listed.

**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 97% of students passing the final recital.

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** Each semester

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Graduate Music Faculty and Major Professor for each student giving a final recital.

**Findings:** The target was met.

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**Analysis:** In AC 2022-2023 the target was not met. 83% of students (5 out of 6) scheduled to complete their final degree recital successfully passed. The same student who did not successfully complete his final scholarly document did not pass his recital hearing. He did, however, pass his comprehensive exams. The student took an incomplete in his recital, and he successfully completed his recital in the summer of 2023. The completion of this student's recital brought the passing rate to 100%.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-24 to drive the cycle of improvement. Each student's major professor also became their advisor, which allowed for more involvement by the major professor in the student's overall degree timeline. This also provided earlier and more frequent discussions regarding effective time management in preparing a full professional-level recital in the final semester. In addition, graduate students were encouraged to perform an elective recital in their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> semester to learn how to prepare effectively before the final degree recital. More frequent live performances, earlier assessment of performances, and discussion/resources pertaining to musician's health issues were well-received by the graduate students. Discussions on overall wellness, mental health, physical health, and performance anxiety while preparing for major performances have been a positive addition to the music graduate student experience.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-24 the target was met. 100% of students (12 out of 12) scheduled to complete their final degree recital successfully passed. With each student's major professor also becoming their advisor, they had more involvement in the student's overall degree timeline and were able to more closely and frequently monitor the student's progress as well as identify any concerns. Concerns in writing and performing were addressed early, and resources were put into place/use quickly to help where needed.

**Decision:** In AC 2023-2024, the target was met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2023-24 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. Each student's major professor/advisor will receive updated information (Graduate Faculty Help Sheet) and guidance from the Department Chair and Coordinator of Graduate Advising as they continue to transition into this role. The major professor/advisor will continue to have more involvement in their overall degree timeline which will allow for earlier and more frequent discussions regarding planning and overall wellness in preparing a full professional-level recital in the final semester. Graduate students will be encouraged to perform often in small settings (MUS 1500, elective recital, chamber music) in their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semesters to allow for frequent performance opportunities. A shared folder will be updated and made available to all graduate music faculty where they can access degree plan worksheets, curriculum guides, and other information to help with advising.

These changes will improve the students' ability to perform a full recital at a professional level, as well as help to prepare a student to do the same, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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**SLO 3: Demonstrate the potential to solve current problems in various aspects of music or music education. (Classroom Assessment)**

**Course Map:** Tied to Course Objectives:

MUED 5010 - Foundations of Music Education

MUED 5020 - Current Issues and Trends in Music Education

MUS 5150 - Pedagogy

MUS 5390 - Performance Literature

### **Measure 3.1. (Direct – knowledge)**

Students make presentations in class, research, write papers, lead discussions, and facilitate dialogue on a variety of pertinent issues.

**Acceptable Target:** Students will be assigned culminating or final projects which ask them to research and offer solutions to a specific problem. Acceptable target is 90% of students receiving a passing grade of B or better of the final presentation and/or project for the above courses, as the presentation and/or project are culminating assignments that apply the knowledge gained throughout the above courses. The implementation of the knowledge gained is paramount, and the presentation and/or final project allows the student to showcase and implement this knowledge.

**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 95% of students receiving a grade of B or better on the final presentation/project.

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** Each semester/ongoing

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Graduate Music Faculty

**Supporting Document:** MUED 5010 Syllabus

**Findings:** The target was met.

**Analysis:** In AC 2022-2023 the target was met. 100% of students who submitted final project/research papers successfully completed this capstone project. Students are poised to succeed with several benchmarks in place to appropriately and responsively assess their progress in this area throughout the process. The graduate music faculty assessed and solidified the current rotation of graduate music courses in order to provide more accurate planning of coursework. The Department Chair, in conjunction with senior graduate faculty, communicated with all graduate faculty members more frequently to assure knowledge of deadlines, guidelines, and requirements. In addition, graduate faculty were encouraged to remain active and current in their field(s) through regional and national performances/presentations and/or publication opportunities.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-24 to drive the cycle of improvement. Two Music Education faculty positions were filled this year through a national search. The Department Chair worked closely with the two new faculty members to assess the current graduate music education course rotation and curriculum. All ideas and suggestions for ways in which to update and ensure the degree plan is effective and relevant for the music education field were explored. In addition, graduate faculty were encouraged to remain active or to re-

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energize their professional activity, where needed, by seeking out opportunities for regional and national performances, presentations, and/or publication submission opportunities.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-24 the target was met. 100% of students who submitted final projects/research papers successfully passed this capstone project. The addition of more frequent contact and communication with their advisor/major professor, as well as having several benchmarks in place in multiple classes has helped faculty more effectively and responsively assess students' progress in this area. These changes have had a direct impact on the student's ability to seek out, analyze, and creatively solve current issues in music/music education thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

**Decision:** In AC 2023-2024, the target met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2023-24 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Department Chair and two Music Education faculty who have just completed their first year will communicate and work with the College of Education more frequently to ensure that the graduate music education students are receiving all necessary information and are up to date in both departments. This has begun to happen already and is proving to be very helpful for our graduate students. The Music Department will submit Final Plan Approval from NASM for the MM: Mued concentration to offer virtual classes. Final Approval is expected, which will designate NSU as a Distance Learning Campus. This will allow for any course to be offered as a distance-learning course, which will help us to be more responsive to the needs of potential graduate students who also work full-time. This also will provide the opportunity for virtual classes to be offered to our resident students where appropriate and helpful. In addition, graduate faculty will be encouraged to remain active or to re-energize their professional activity, where needed, by seeking out opportunities for regional and national performances, presentations, and/or publication submission opportunities.

These changes will improve the student's ability to seek out, analyze, and creatively solve current issues in music/music education thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

### Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results.

Based on the results of AC 2022-2023, the following were implemented in AC 2023-2024:

- In Measure 1.1, The role of Coordinator of Graduate Advising was implemented. This person updated the departmental Graduate Faculty help sheet, focusing on timelines and planning of the final semester and distributed to all faculty in August 2023. As individual graduate faculty members prepared to begin advising the students for whom they are the major professor, the Department Chair and Coordinator of Graduate Advising provided assistance where needed to ensure a

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smooth transition to this advising model. In addition, the professor for MUED 5900 Intro to Research (required course for all Music graduate students) addressed planning and timelines as a part of the research/writing assignments in this class. The addition of Applied Faculty/Major Professor also acting as Advisor allowed for more frequent discussion between the graduate student and their major professor/advisor. The frequent conversations of class schedule planning, final proposal/final document planning, and course rotations proved quite helpful for each individual graduate student. Also, each music faculty member was required to update and/or renew their Graduate Faculty status. This helped to ensure that there were Graduate Music Faculty in each area who could serve as major professors and on graduate committees.

- In Measure 2.1, each student's major professor also became their advisor, which allowed for more involvement by the major professor in the student's overall degree timeline. This also provided earlier and more frequent discussions regarding effective time management in preparing a full professional-level recital in the final semester. In addition, graduate students were encouraged to perform an elective recital in their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> semester to learn how to prepare effectively before the final degree recital. More frequent live performances, earlier assessment of performances, and discussion/resources pertaining to musician's health issues were well-received by the graduate students. Discussions on overall wellness, mental health, physical health, and performance anxiety while preparing for major performances have been a positive addition to the music graduate student experience.
- In Measure 3.1, two Music Education faculty positions were filled this year through a national search. The Department Chair worked closely with the two new faculty members to assess the current graduate music education course rotation and curriculum. All ideas and suggestions for ways in which to update and ensure the degree plan is effective and relevant for the music education field were explored. In addition, graduate faculty were encouraged to remain active or to re-energize their professional activity, where needed, by seeking out opportunities for regional and national performances, presentations, and/or publication submission opportunities.

### Plan of action moving forward.

To drive continuous improvement, the following will be implemented in AC 2024-2025:

- The Coordinator of Graduate Advising will update the help sheet, focusing on streamlining instructions for registration, course rotations, and preparation for the final scholarly project/document. This updated help sheet will be distributed to faculty in August 2024 and will also be available on the Music Department Moodle Shell. Additionally, a shared folder will be updated and made available to all graduate music faculty where they can access degree plan worksheets, curriculum



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guides, and other information to help with advising.

- The professor for MUED 5900 (required of all Music graduate students) will address planning, timelines, and preparation of the final project/document. The Department Chair will explore ways to ensure that each student's graduate committee can be determined and solidified at the end of the first semester of study.
- The major professor/advisor will continue to have more involvement in their overall degree timeline which will allow for earlier and more frequent discussions regarding planning and overall wellness in preparing a full professional-level recital in the final semester.
- Graduate students will be encouraged to perform often in small settings (MUS 1500, elective recital, chamber music) in their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semesters to allow for frequent performance opportunities.
- The Department Chair and two Music Education faculty who have just completed their first year will communicate and work with the College of Education more frequently to ensure that the graduate music education students are receiving all necessary information and are up to date in both departments.
- The Music Department will submit Final Plan Approval from NASM for the MM: Mued concentration to designate NSU as a Distance Learning Campus.
- Graduate faculty will be encouraged to remain active or to re-energize their professional activity, where needed, by seeking out opportunities for regional and national performances, presentations, and/or publication submission opportunities.