

## Assessment Cycle 2024 – 2025

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

**College: Arts and Sciences**

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**Date: 10 June 2025**

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

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**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 the 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.

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

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

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

**Findings:** The target was met.

**Analysis:** 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 can serve as major professors and on graduate committees.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-24 data, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2024-25 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Coordinator of Graduate Advising updated the help sheet, focusing on streamlining instructions for registration, course rotations, and preparation for the final scholarly project/document. This updated help sheet was distributed to the faculty at the August 2024 Music Faculty meeting and was made available in the Music Department Moodle Shell for easy access. Faculty were also sent a link to access a shared folder in which degree plan worksheets, curriculum guides, and other information to help with advising is kept. Additionally, the professor of MUED 5900 (Intro to Music Research, required for all Music graduate students in their first semester), addressed planning, timelines, and preparation of the final project/document. In addition to this information, the professor of MUED 5900 required that all students have their graduate committee set by the end of the first semester.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-25, the target was met. All students scheduled to complete their final scholarly document did so (7 out of 7 students). With Applied Faculty/Major Professors also acting as Advisor, there was more frequent communication and accountability between the graduate student and the professor they see most often. This communication, in addition to faculty access to advising materials and information via the Coordinator of Graduate Advising/Help Sheet Moodle Shell and link, allowed for regular discussion regarding class schedule planning, final proposal/final document planning, and course rotations. Regular access and communication proved quite helpful for each graduate student. Additionally, each faculty member in the Music Department has renewed or applied for Graduate Faculty status. The ability to divide the committee work more equally among music faculty has also been very helpful.

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.

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**Decision or Recommendation:** In AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2024-25 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Coordinator of Graduate Advising will create in-house fillable templates for Title Page, Signature Page, and Abstract so that students preparing Proposals and/or Final Documents will be able to create uniform spacing and formatting on all of these documents. These templates will be included on the Help Sheet. This will help to streamline the preparation of the Final Projects/Documents for students in their last two semesters of the MM.

In an effort to help faculty become more independent and comfortable with the advising process, the Coordinator of Graduate Advising will add a "Frequently Asked Questions" section to the end of the Help Sheet. This may allow for faculty to find answers to common questions more easily. She will also experiment with creating a "Graduate Student Survival Sheet" to help Graduate Students find answers to their common questions, especially in their second year.

The Professor of MUED 5900 will experiment with including an exam that covers important information in the Guidelines for Theses, etc. Manual (available on the Graduate School website) as part of the grade for the class so that students can commit this information to memory in their first semester. We are finding that many graduate students are forgetting the vital information learned in this class by the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semesters. 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

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### **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.

**Analysis:** 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.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-24 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2024-25 to drive the cycle of improvement. The major professor/advisor had more involvement with the students' overall degree timeline which allowed for early and more frequent discussions regarding planning and overall wellness in preparing a full professional-level recital in the final semester. Graduate students were 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.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-25 the target was met. 100% of students scheduled to complete their final degree recital successfully passed. With more attention directed to being accountable to an overall degree timeline, the final project and recital became a more visible goal which succeeded in encouraging students to perform more often in small settings. Many students are beginning to give elective recitals and more actively participate in chamber music opportunities. These performance opportunities allow the faculty to identify any deficiencies in performing and address concerns early and quickly.

**Decision or Recommendation:** In AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2024-25 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2025-26 to drive the cycle of improvement. Opportunities for graduate students to lead chamber music groups (their own or assisting in coaching undergraduate groups) will be encouraged. Opportunities for graduate

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students to perform with faculty chamber groups will be explored, as well. An attempt will be made to offer additional master classes (virtual and in-person) to all students, with some having a focus of preparing graduate students for performing at a professional level. Each student's major professor/advisor will receive updated information (Graduate Faculty Help Sheet and links) and guidance from the Department Chair and Coordinator of Graduate Advising as they gain more confidence in the Advisor role. The major professor/advisor will continue to have more involvement in the student's 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.

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.

### **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 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

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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.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-24 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2024-25 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Department Chair and one Music Education faculty member (who has just completed her 2<sup>nd</sup> year) communicated and worked with the College of Education more frequently to ensure that the graduate music education students received all necessary information and were up to date in both departments. One music faculty member left his NSU position to pursue another opportunity in July 2024, which left one music education faculty member to do the work of two. She did an excellent job while the national search for a 2<sup>nd</sup> music education faculty member took place this year. The 2<sup>nd</sup> music education faculty member will join us in July 2025. In addition, graduate faculty were incredibly active in their professional activity. Many faculty performed/presented, or are performing/presenting in summer 2025, in international and national venues and conferences.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-25 the target was met. 100% of students who submitted final projects/research papers successfully passed this capstone project. The music education professor was proactive in frequently communicating with the College of Education and, in turn, the graduate music education students. 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 or Recommendation:** In AC 2024-2025, the target met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2024-25 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2025-26 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Music Department will submit the response to deferrals on the Final Plan Approval from NASM for the MM:Mued degree. 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 will also provide the opportunity for virtual classes to be offered to our resident students where appropriate and helpful. Music 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 submissions. These activities are vital, as they serve several purposes: they are a valuable tool in recruiting potential graduate students to NSU because they increase the exposure of our wonderful music faculty, they feed the creativity and artistry of the music faculty, making them even more effective in teaching graduate students, and they increase exposure of NSU to the larger music/music education communities.

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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 2023-2024, the following were implemented in AC 2024-2025:

- In Measure 1.1, The Coordinator of Graduate Advising updated the help sheet, focusing on streamlining instructions for registration, course rotations, and preparation for the final scholarly project/document. This updated help sheet was distributed to the faculty at the August 2024 Music Faculty meeting and was made available on the Music Department Moodle Shell for easy access. Faculty were also sent a link to access a shared folder in which degree plan worksheets, curriculum guides, and other information to help with advising is kept. Additionally, the professor of MUED 5900 (Intro to Music Research, required for all Music graduate students in their first semester), addressed planning, timelines, and preparation of the final project/document. In addition to this information, the professor of MUED 5900 required that all students have their graduate committee set by the end of the first semester.
- In Measure 2.1, The major professor/advisor had more involvement with the students' overall degree timeline which allowed for early and more frequent discussions regarding planning an overall wellness in preparing a full professional-level recital in the final semester. Graduate students were 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.
- In Measure 3.1, The Department Chair and one Music Education faculty member (who has just completed her 2nd year) communicated and worked with the College of Education more frequently to ensure that the graduate music education students received all necessary information and were up to date in both departments. One music faculty member left his NSU position to pursue another opportunity in July 2024, which left one music education faculty member to do the work of two. She did an excellent job while the national search for a 2nd music education faculty member took place this year. The 2nd music education faculty member will join us in July 2025. In addition, graduate faculty were incredibly active in their professional activity. Many faculty performed/presented, or are performing/presenting in summer 2025, in international and national venues and conferences.

### **Plan of action moving forward.**



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In order to drive continuous improvement, the following will be implemented in AC 2025-2026:

- The Coordinator of Graduate Advising will create in-house fillable templates for Title Page, Signature Page, and Abstract so that students preparing Proposals and/or Final Documents will be able to create uniform spacing on all of these documents. These templates will be included on the Help Sheet
- The Coordinator of Graduate Advising will add a "Frequently Asked Questions" section to the end of the Help Sheet in hopes that it allow for faculty to find answers to common questions more easily.
- The Coordinator of Graduate Advising will also experiment with creating a "Graduate Student Survival Sheet" to help Graduate Students find answers to their common questions, especially in their second year.
- The Professor of MUED 5900 will experiment with including an exam that covers important information in the Guidelines for Theses, etc. Manual (available on the Graduate School website) as part of the grade for the class so that students can commit this information to memory in their first semester.
- 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.
- Opportunities for graduate students to lead chamber music groups (their own groups, or assisting in coaching undergraduate groups) will be encouraged.
- Opportunities for graduate students to perform with faculty chamber groups will be explored.
- Additional master classes (virtual and in-person) will be offered to all students, with some having a focus of preparing graduate students for performing at a professional level).
- Each student's major professor/advisor will receive updated information (Graduate Faculty Help Sheet and links) and guidance from the Department Chair and Coordinator of Graduate Advising as they gain more confidence in the Advisor role.
- The Music Department will submit the response to several deferrals on the Final Plan Approval from NASM for the MM:Mued degree. Final Approval is expected, which will designate NSU as a Distance Learning Campus.

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- Music 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 submissions.