

# **Student Outcomes Assessment Plan**

***Department of Music  
Montana State University***

## **Music and Music Education**

This assessment plan is a summary of expected student competencies and proposed faculty activities for assessing these two undergraduate degree programs. For further information, please contact the department.

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## **Degree Objectives**

The role of the Department of Music is to develop and deliver innovative curricula at the forefront of music and music teacher training, designed to prepare students for careers in music.

Degrees: Bachelor of Music Education (BME), Bachelor of Arts in Music (BA)

The Bachelor of Arts in Music degree emphasizes the study of music within a broad program of general study. A non-teaching minor is offered by the Department of Music to non-music minors.

The Bachelor of Music Education (K-12 Broadfield) degree leads to certification to teach music at all levels of the public schools in Montana. This degree allows a music major to select instrumental or choral music as a major field. The curriculum provides training in the alternate field so graduates are prepared to teach in both disciplines. Emphasis is equally divided among music pedagogy, performance, and historical and theoretical study.

## **Expected Competencies**

### **Discipline-Specific Knowledge**

Music concentration competencies include the mastery of performance skills in one major performance area; the understanding and acquisition of skills in music theory and aural skills sufficient for aural, visual and verbal analyses; the development of composition and improvisation skills; and the accumulation of experiences with music of diverse cultures, historical periods, and media.

BME students develop additional competencies in the areas of elementary general music, choral, and instrumental pedagogy. This coursework requires proficiency in teaching voice, strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion.

### **Communication Skills**

Although music is primarily a form of non-verbal communication, students must be able to present the results of their work not only musically, but also orally and in written form.

### **Problem-Solving Skills**

By combining their skills in and knowledge of performance, analysis, and music history, students are expected to have the ability to work independently to solve a variety of musical problems which result in accurate and musically expressive performances.

BME majors also use their knowledge of teaching strategies and pedagogical methodologies to solve problems while teaching in university laboratory settings and field placements in public schools.

## **Student Learning Assessment**

### **Discipline-Specific Knowledge**

Every music major must perform before a jury of 3-4 faculty members, as the culminating evaluative event for Applied Music (MUS 160-460) each semester. This is an important assessment tool for Applied Music, which is a required course for music majors for every semester in residence. Both written and verbal critiques are given to the student by the jury.

All students must successfully complete a piano proficiency exam following requisite keyboard coursework. BME majors are also required to complete Guitar in Class I (MUS 153) or a proficiency test.

A comprehensive sophomore review ensures that students can synthesize and apply sufficient discipline-specific knowledge to enter upper division courses. The faculty feels that this is an important step in ensuring success in graduation and beyond.

BME majors undergo a file review and advising session with music education faculty prior to submitting their Teacher Education Preparation Program application to the School of Education. All course grades are reviewed and plans are made for continuing coursework or retaking coursework to maintain minimum grade requirements. The Department's policy of not accepting grades lower than C in music concentration courses, or allowing such grades to be accepted as prerequisite for student teaching, insures that competencies are maintained.

For BME majors, whose degree program culminates in student teaching, it is necessary to regularly demonstrate the acquisition of musical and pedagogical skills by developing musical concepts and acceptable performance skills in their students. Success in this area is evaluated by both the cooperating teachers in the public schools and the university supervisor.

## **Communication Skills**

BA students study the core music courses in theory, aural skills, keyboard, history, ensemble performance, and applied music. In addition to the core music courses, BME students study conducting, instrumentation, vocal and instrumental techniques, elementary, choral and instrumental pedagogy. These courses have numerous laboratory experiences during which the student demonstrates the ability to communicate musical concepts, both orally and musically.

Written communication skills are integral to music history courses; choral, instrumental, and elementary methods courses; and Senior Project (MUS 405R).

Furthermore, students enrolled in elementary and secondary methods courses and student teaching participate in field experiences requiring written and verbal analyses, which are evaluated by course instructors.

## **Problem-Solving Skills**

Problem-solving skills are apparent in several upper-level courses in which students must synthesize knowledge and skills acquired in requisite coursework.

In the capstone experience, MUS 405R – Senior Project, students are expected to demonstrate the synthesis of all musical competencies, with the exception of performance. A comprehensive analysis by the student of a major work brings together listening, theoretical, historical and stylistic analytical skills acquired in many prior courses.

Student teachers placed in the public schools must apply a multitude of problem-solving skills as they assume the teaching duties of their cooperating teachers. This experience is evaluated by using videotapes of the student in classroom situations, on-site observations, and written evaluations prepared by both the cooperating teachers and university supervisors.

Additional opportunities for program synthesis (i.e., recitals, lecture-recitals, research papers, etc.) are provided in MUS 489, Undergraduate Research.

## **Program Assessment**

### **Feedback from Current Students**

Music students are represented by the Student Advisory Board, which meets with the Department Head monthly to discuss issues of importance to both parties. Due to the nature of Applied Music, many students feel very comfortable confiding in their instrumental or voice instructor about departmental issues. Moreover, each music student will meet with the Department Head as part of the sophomore review process, during which time the student may discuss program strengths and weaknesses.

Beginning in Fall of 2005 student teachers meet with the music education faculty during EDSD 413 Professional Issues to discuss the student teaching experience. Of particular importance is the discussion concerning the Department's curriculum and the student teacher's impression of how that curriculum met their classroom needs. These students also complete an anonymous exit survey to gather specific data about the preparation for student teaching. This data is shared with the faculty for consideration of program adjustment.

## **Feedback from Outside Constituencies**

The Department of Music is a fully-accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), the agency responsible for the accreditation of music curricula in higher education. As such, the Department undergoes rigorous accreditation review every ten years, most recently in Spring 2003. Yearly reports are also submitted to maintain accreditation.

Based on NASM recommendations, the Department has developed Introduction to Recording and Computer Applications (MUS 220) to be required of the BME majors beginning in Fall 2006. Additional courses in recording (MUS 221 and 222) have been developed and are options for all music students.

Additionally, the Department curriculum has passed review by both the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and the National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE).

The Department developed discipline-specific survey administered to all graduates. The survey was collected in Fall 2003 and used to inform the strategic planning process for the Department in Spring 2004.

Additionally, the Department receives feedback regarding the curriculum from cooperating teachers and administrators who accept our student teachers. A new survey for cooperating teachers is being implemented for Spring 2006. This along with the student teacher survey data will be shared with faculty at the end of each semester for consideration with regard to the music curriculum. Moreover, the needs and expectations of professional organizations, such as the Montana Music Educators' Association, influence our curriculum as well.

## **Evaluation of Teaching**

All faculty members are required to distribute student evaluation forms in all classes at the end of the semester. The summary data is returned to the faculty member and reported as part of the annual review process. This information is discussed with faculty during the annual review meeting. Guidelines for an In-Depth Assessment of Teaching for promotion and tenure review have been approved by the Department of Music.

## **Curriculum Review**

Curricular review is an ongoing process in the Department. The Curriculum Committee meets regularly to discuss the Department's curriculum, and brings suggestions for curricular revision to the faculty for consideration and adoption.

Data was collected in Fall 2005 regarding the alignment of current courses to the newly adopted Montana Professional Educator Preparation Program Standards. The results of the data collection will be shared with the music faculty in Spring 2006. Discussion at that time will include remedies to meet any standards that are not adequately addressed in the current curriculum.

## **Application**

All assessment activities are used by the Department to improve the curriculum and to ensure that the curriculum provides graduates with the skills necessary for success in public school music teaching.