

MSU Departmental Assessment Plan 2007-2009

Department: Music

Department Head: Johan Jonsson (Alan Leech, Acting Department Head, Spring 2008 only)

Assessment Coordinator: Johan Jonsson

Degrees/Majors/Options Offered by Department

Bachelor of Music Education (BME)

Bachelor of Arts in Music (BA)

Bachelor of Arts in Music Technology (BA MTEC)

Student Outcomes Assessment Report, Fall 2007

Department of Music
Montana State University

Music, Music Education, and Music Technology

This report on use of our assessment plan is a summary of expected student competencies and proposed faculty activities for assessing these three undergraduate degree programs. Please refer to the last posted plan, 2006. For information beyond this report, please contact the department.

Assessment Contact

Name: Johan Jonsson, Department Head (Alan Leech, Acting Department Head,
Spr.2008)

Phone: 406-994-4641

E-mail: jjonsson@montana.edu

Web: www.montana.edu/music

Assessment activities

Discipline-Specific Knowledge

Music concentration competencies include the mastery of performance skills in one major performance area, which is assessed by the applied faculty in applied lessons, weekly performance seminars and student recitals, formal recitals and concerts. Each student musician must provide evidence of achieving a level of mastery by performing for a jury of faculty each semester. Ensembles in which student musicians participate offer public performances that are open to constructive criticism from students, faculty, and the public. Students exhibit growth in aural perception skills, sight-singing and the understanding of temporal relationships through the course sequence in aural skills. Understanding of notation and perception of structure is developed throughout their study in the department beginning with the music theory sequence, and concluding with Form and Analysis. All of these forms of assessment are taken into account by the faculty, and discussed with students at various points in their student career. Particularly the sophomore review is a full review of each student's progress, needs, and successes.

The development of composition and improvisation skills are a part of several courses, and specific study in each is available to the students. The necessary study of historical and stylistic musical concepts found in the western musical canon is studied in Music History, while the approaches and use of music in non-western cultures is studied in World Music. Advising sessions with students attempt to discuss with students their progress, needs and successes in each of these areas.

Education courses are the focus of the BME students, and we try to keep abreast of their progress there. Specific courses in the Music Department are designed to additionally augment their knowledge in musical areas, such as playing and teaching techniques for all standard instruments encountered in the public schools, and rehearsal methods and techniques for bands, orchestras and choruses in school situations. Faculty assess each student's knowledge and abilities before they are allowed to student teach.

The specialized courses in the area of Music Technology are very new in our program, and are practically being developed as they are being presented. Faculty in this area follow their plan for presentation while keeping close track of each student's progress, needs and successes, particularly in respect to the gate at the end of the Freshman year, which allows only a certain number of students to pass on in the program.

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. Examinations, research projects and portfolios are required in many classes, with content and style being evaluated by faculty. All students in the three music curriculum options must satisfy basic University core requirements in writing and speaking, as well.

BME students must also not only communicate with their students in the classroom, but must have the oral skill to impart knowledge during rehearsals and classes. They are evaluated in terms of their interpersonal and communicative skills because of the importance of these skills in teaching. Not only the sounds of music are non-verbal, but the gestures in conducting must communicate information to groups of musicians. Conducting gestures are evaluated by the instructors in conducting classes and laboratories. In methods classes, emphasis is placed on communicating information in both one-on-one and ensemble teaching situations, with students being critiqued on their use of language and their ability to give clear, succinct instructions. In addition Music Education field experience classes and student teaching experiences put the students in situations that both help the students become more comfortable in teaching as well as providing opportunities for cooperating and supervising faculty to offer evaluations in interpersonal skills and communication effectiveness.

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, allowing for more accurate and musically expressive performances.

Students in all options must be able to demonstrate problem-solving skills in musical performance, and the communication with an audience that a soloist must present. Students are encouraged to perform regularly in performance seminars, student recitals and occasionally in full recital (or lecture-recital) presentations. Constant evaluation is made by applied music faculty to ensure a high degree of musicianship and performance quality.

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. They must demonstrate the synthesis of all competencies. Evaluations are offered on an ongoing basis by the cooperating teaching and periodically by the supervisor of student teaching. Evaluations include knowledge of subject matter, interpersonal and communication skills, problem solving, decision making, conducting, rehearsal techniques, classroom organization, lesson planning and teaching personality.

BA MTEC majors use their knowledge and skills to design sounds and compose high-quality music for electronic and acoustic media, with a particular focus on visual media and interdisciplinary collaboration. Students must be able to learn to teach themselves new technologies as they appear, following the rapidly changing roles of the commercial recording studio, broadcast media, the internet, and digital media. Faculty in Music Technology are constantly evaluating and giving feedback to students in this program.

Assessment Results

Discipline-Specific Knowledge

Students who complete the theory sequence demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of musical notation and language, aural perception, and an understanding of the material of music including melody, harmony, rhythm, form, etc.

Students in conducting develop a comprehensive knowledge of score reading, conducting gestures, and rehearsal techniques, to enable them to guide choral and instrumental ensembles.

Students in applied music develop the ability to perform as soloists and as members of small and large ensembles at a high artistic level. They can make decisions while performing to avoid disaster even if a minor aberration in their presentation should appear.

Students in methods courses in elementary music and secondary choral and instrumental music develop knowledge to select and adapt music from a variety of sources to meet the needs and proficiencies of school performing ensembles in classroom situations.

All graduating students successfully complete a piano proficiency exam following requisite keyboard coursework. BME majors also complete Guitar in Class or a proficiency test in guitar.

Students in music history and world music courses develop a knowledge and appreciation of past and present world musical cultures, as well as knowledge of the historical relationship of music to other performing and visual arts, and incorporate this knowledge in their teaching.

We are coming to the end of the first year for the first group of Music Technology students, which will use the criteria established to test who will be able to continue in the program. These students begin as pre-majors and must apply to be accepted into the major through a gate process, after successfully completing the first sequence of music theory, aural and keyboard skills, performance, and music technology coursework. Successful completion is defined as a grade of C or better in all music courses. Following acceptance through the gate, BA MTEC students undergo the sophomore review process along with BA and BME students. This is a new assessment point in our program and will help to determine if the gate's requirements need to be reviewed.

The comprehensive sophomore review has assessed that all music 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. This review is conducted by the Department Head, in a meeting with the student and the student's advisor.

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.

Communication Skills

Although students are required to satisfy basic University core requirements in writing and speaking, as a general rule, faculty would like to see ongoing improvement in students' written work. Verbal communications skills and written communications skills are average for students in our department.

Problem-Solving Skills

For students in the Bachelor of Music Education curriculum, ongoing problem-solving skills take place in front of a classroom. A high student placement rate in teaching positions round the state and region, demonstrates successful acquisition of the skills of music. Graduates of this department are among the most respected teachers in Montana, which is testimony to the success of the program.

Through the Music Technology curriculum, Bachelor of Arts students should achieve the same competency and problem-solving skills as our other students, bringing them to an appropriate level in music performance, music theory, and aural and keyboard skills. In music technology, students gain problem-solving experience in music software management, recording, and live sound. They also gain experience in compositional problem-solving: composing music to given specifications and communicating with other artists in the interdisciplinary collaboration process, all essential skills for the modern composer working in collaborative media. We are in the process of finding the best processes for assessing this aspect of the program.

Program Improvements

From feedback we have assembled from current students, graduates, our accreditation organization (NASM), and outside constituencies such as our Department External Advisory Committee, and peer consultants, we are undertaking to respond to perceived needs in addressing portions of our curricula.

University-Level Suggestions

The percussion faculty line is to be restored to full-time, tenure-track status which will ensure that both percussion majors in the department as well as future teachers in the BME program will benefit from a specialist in the area. This position also is seen as a necessary aid to the Director of Bands as an assistant instructor of the marching band, and athletic bands. The person hired for this position will also be responsible for some of the basic support courses for the entire department in music theory, ear training, and/or keyboard harmony.

A new position will be hired, not yet tenure-track, in the field of Music Technology to enable the teaching of all the courses we must offer to flesh out a viable program. The Director of Music Technology has basically been working a double job attempting to cover all necessary classes, advising, and management of the program's facilities.

Department-Level Suggestions

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 all BME majors. As space permits, music majors are encouraged to take Introduction to Digital Music (MUS 115); thus far BA and BME majors have excelled in this course.

The Student Advisory Committee has been revitalized, since it had fallen into a lapsed state a couple of years ago due to student disinterest. This will again allow the best input route for students within the programs to the Department Head and the Faculty. Music students are represented by the Student Advisory Committee, which meets with the Department Head every other week to discuss issues of importance to both parties. The students in this committee are elected by their peers, one representative from each of the three degree options in the department.

Beginning in Fall of 2007 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 and is being considered during the undertaking of a Curriculum Review committee during the Spring of 2008.

The BA MTEC curriculum has been developed over the past four years, and courses began in the fall of 2006 for the first prospective majors. Students have been directly involved in the curriculum planning process: helping to choose equipment, providing course evaluations, and meeting individually with the Director of Music Technology for advising and to discuss their individual progress, goals, and needs. As the first two cohorts of BA MTEC majors continue through the curriculum, the Director of Music Technology maintains ongoing communication with each of them to ensure that the program meets their needs. The Department Head also meets individually with all students as part of the Sophomore Review process.

The young BA MTEC program has passed the review by NASM in November of 2007, and has joined our other two degree options as a fully accredited program. NASM recommendations were implemented in the BA MTEC curriculum. Specifically, the standards for admission past the gate were clarified with respect to music performance, and the balance of music, music technology, and general electives were adjusted to ensure that the BA MTEC degree meets NASM standards for a major in music technology within a liberal arts degree. In future years, the BA MTEC curriculum will phase in a senior internship program, which will be designed cooperatively with the local music and audio industries. We intend to give students the best possible contacts and professional experience, and to maintain ongoing communication with local industry to ensure that the MTEC curriculum provides the highest-quality preparation for this experience.

One-Year Department Commitments

A Curriculum Review committee during the Spring of 2008 is looking at all three of our degree options in detail, but with particular emphasis on the Music Education curriculum. Among other particulars, we wish to review the teaching of our instrumental techniques courses that are designed for future teachers. Input has identified varying teaching presentations, styles, and results. Also we will look at possible reorganization of some of the coursework, investigating whether some courses might be combined, or perhaps taught every other year for more efficiency.

We pledge to improve communication both internally between students and faculty with a renewed commitment to effective teaching and advising; and externally with music educators in Montana schools by offering to act as resources to service needs of those educators.

We intend to take into consideration the external feedback from our alumni survey as we embark on our extensive curriculum review. We also wish to make more use of the input

from our External Advisory Committee which includes respected educators at the local state and national level. We have included the Supervisor of Music of the Bozeman Public Schools as a member of our curriculum review committee.

We wish to continue to provide the very best in quality performance ensembles and also to work toward recruiting outstanding music students to all of our music curricula.

Five-Year Department Commitments

We want to increase the visibility of our Music Department around the State with student ensemble tours. Recruitment of new students for the University as well as the department will result. Utilization of faculty soloists, etc. with these ensembles also puts the faculty into the spotlight for the state and many music students are particularly enticed to a school because of an appealing teacher in their specific field.

We would like to continue and perhaps expand summer youth programs which create new opportunities for prospective students to meet and work with Music Department faculty.

We need to find more and better ways to identify, recruit and retain the finest student musicians Montana and the region has to offer.

We must investigate new lines for faculty within the department. Two needs are presently apparent: a full-time guitar position will soon be necessary because of the large number of guitar students coming to MSU; and a jazz program director position is necessary, since our jazz program is presently headed by the same faculty who heads the orchestra program (this person would be irreplaceable should he decide to leave this unprecedented-combination position).

Although we have less control over our physical plant, we are busting at the seams and we must investigate additional teaching and rehearsal space, preferably very near by Howard Hall.