

Marshall University Department of Music Yearly Report: M.A. - Music Program Assessment

Submitted to the Dean of the College of Fine Arts, September 19

Dr. Jeffrey Pappas, Chair

I. ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

A. PROGRAM GOALS

The Marshall University Department of Music offers the Master of Arts degree with emphasis in music education, performance, history/literature or composition. Depending on the emphasis, either 32 or 36 credit hours is needed to complete the degree.

The department via the MA program provides the opportunity for each student to:

1. Create an effective applied music performance:
 - a. by integrating comprehensive capabilities in major performing medium including technical facility, musicianship, musical styles, and musical interpretation;
 - b. by demonstrating knowledge of literature for performing medium.
2. Identify use of theoretical materials in music:
 - a. through synthesizing and articulating theoretical and stylistic concepts and perspectives;
 - b. by utilizing aural skills for performance, historical and theoretical analysis.
3. Explain knowledge of musical repertoire and the relationship between repertoire and musical developments:
 - a.. through synthesizing and articulating historical and stylistic concepts and perspectives;
 - b. by integrating knowledge of historical, cultural, and stylistic contexts in compositional, performance, scholarly, pedagogical and historical contexts, according to specialization emphasis.
4. Justify his/her communication of musical ideas and musical information in a written and oral media:
 - a. through the application of research techniques as summarized in the completion of portfolio, thesis or creative projects;
 - b. by integrating theoretical, historical, and interpretive knowledge via oral and musical performance.

B. LEARNING OUTCOMES/DATA COLLECTION AND C. RESULTS

(Please see the attached *Assessment of Student Outcomes Chart* for additional information.)

A three-part assessment process (entrance, midway, graduation) provides regular and coherent data for evaluation of student progress. The entrance assessment requires a performance audition for all incoming students, regardless of the intended area of emphasis. This audition evaluates their performing skills and determines the incoming applied music level. In the Performance area of emphasis, Level 8 is the standard entry level; anything below results in probationary entry. In addition, applicants to the Music History/Literature and Theory/Composition areas must submit one or more samples of research, writing, or original compositions. Applicants in Music Education may submit a videotape of teaching or conducting. All applicants complete an interview process to assess their potential for success in the program and their ability and potential to provide service as a graduate assistant.

The midpoint assessment most generally is in the form of the Plan of Study, which provides a review of progress and organization. Procedures used to assess each outcome differ according to the activity. For instance, a faculty jury evaluates students in applied music every semester. The outcome of the jury is one of several criteria considered by faculty before students are permitted to register for applied lessons in the next semester, and, in the case of applied majors, to continue in the graduate program. At each juried performance, students are graded on performance elements, such as intonation, technique, interpretation, and literature. Simultaneously, the student's applied music level is reviewed. A level of 10 is required for graduation.

A final assessment tool prior to graduation is either the graduate recital or thesis, in addition to the comprehensive examination and oral examination, each of which is juried by a faculty panel. In addition to the written questions supplied by the committee, students are asked to submit a current résumé, sample cover letter, and biographical statement. With either assessment approach, the student's ability in our learning outcomes is measured.

Specific assessments as listed in the attached table are conducted in the following manner:

- Course assessment instruments are given and graded by faculty teaching the specific courses. These include a wide range of writing assignments, tests, and research activities.
- A faculty panel conducts jury exams of all students enrolled in applied music. Students receive a grade from the jury panel, which counts for one-third of the semester grade in applied music.
- Forms for the applied level and Recital Hearing are completed by the appropriate faculty committee, filed in the department, and shared with the student. The faculty panel must approve the entire recital before the program will be presented. Approval is based upon demonstration of a high level of proficiency in technique, presentation, interpretation, and intonation.
- Faculty in the area of emphasis meet to discuss the progress of graduate students and at the completion of 18 hours of earned graduate credit recommend further study.
- Final projects (recital, thesis, etc.), comprehensive examinations, and oral examinations are reviewed and evaluated by committees of three or more faculty with graduate status.

Using a variety of measures, a faculty jury of at least three members evaluates semester juries, recital hearings, and recitals. The evaluative measures include course descriptions and literature/technique/musicianship requirements given in the levels description. Each combine faculty experiences at a variety of institutions, which reflect national norms for, graduate performance in our degree options.

Ensemble conductors are responsible for evaluating student progress in performance groups. This evaluation is based upon their performance skill and overall musical and professional contributions to the ensemble. In addition, external judges are used for various competitions sponsored by the Department of Music. These include the Jackson, Turley, Orchestra Concerto and Wind Symphony Soloist competitions.

Music theory remains the major stumbling block for most students not majoring in theory or composition. Students from smaller undergraduate programs lack background in specialized areas, such as analysis, or twentieth-century music. We have designed and are currently offering MUS 540, a developmental course in music theory that addresses background deficiencies in the theory area. This will permit MUS 640A, the required graduate theory course, to be conducted as a truly graduate theory course rather than part review and part graduate level.

Graduates are enjoying success in many music fields after graduation. Indirect data shows that the overwhelming majority of our master's graduates hold positions in music. This is due in large part to our strong curriculum and the high standards we set within our program via the assessment measures we use. Each ensures a strong and on-going feedback loop throughout a student's enrollment at Marshall. The program revision in January 2006 has only strengthened our degree and, as it matures, we look forward to further success.

II. Plans for the Current Year

The music department will continue its current successful assessment measures, but review these efforts to ensure that each outcome is being measured in as complete a manner as possible. To that end, the department acknowledges that the development of rubrics to gather more quantifiable data to support our assessment efforts would be beneficial. These will be utilized during the graduate recital hearing and the written comprehensive and oral examination – the “milestones” of graduate study. Numerical standards and benchmarks (using internal and/or national norms – if the latter are available) will be established prior to utilizing these new rubrics. From this information, more data and yearly and long-term judgments can be made as to the effectiveness of the outcomes in our program.

Time will also be spent to engage the entire faculty in the assessment effort. Indications are that previous assessment reports were totally compiled and written by the department chair. Having faculty involved in the process by creating and implementing rubrics, yearly review of student learning goals, and other assessment information will only heighten their awareness of their role in this process.

We will continue to develop and refine graduate course rotations in music history, music theory and music education to endure that we are offering and our students can take the “natural progression” of courses within our curriculum; a critical element in our assessment effort. Class scheduling is often hampered by the availability of faculty to teach in the graduate program, as many take on these classes as an overload to their undergraduate schedule. Although we are fortunate to have some strong part-time faculty serving as graduate instructors, the inclusion of full-time faculty teaching in this degree is important to its success.

The department will begin the process of identifying indirect assessment measures to support our current efforts.

III. Assistance Needed

As the department begins to review our assessment tools, we might be asking for assistance from the Office of Assessment in the creation of rubrics and sources for national data that might support our learning outcomes. Additionally, any aid in the creation and implementation of indirect assessment tools would also be welcomed.

Any assistance the Office of Assessment can give the department in the specific criteria necessary for a successful assessment of our program and the writing of this report would be appreciated.

IV. What one most important thing has the department/program learned through this process?

The Master of Arts in Music degree is a successful program, graduating students who are active practitioners in the field of music. This success is due largely in part to the strong curriculum, faculty and assessment indicators we have in place to guide a student through our program. One area where we need to increase our assessment effort is through the gathering and compilation of more quantifiable data to further support our claim that we are meeting our student outcomes.