

**Department of Music General Education Assessment Report**  
**MUS 142: Appreciation of Music**  
**Spring 2008-Spring 2009**

**I. Relationship to University's Mission**

*MUS 142: Appreciation of Music* seeks to expose students to a wide variety of musical experiences including art music, folk music, jazz, world music and popular music through live concerts and in-class activities during which critical listening skills are developed and sharpened. Thus the course supports the mission of Marshall University in three important areas by giving students the opportunity: 1) "to appreciate and to cultivate diversity, and to value differences"; 2) "to participate in activities such as artistic and cultural programs"; and 3) to develop critical thinking skills through the process of analytical listening.

**II. General Education Component Area's Student Learning Outcomes**

The learning outcomes for *MUS 142: Appreciation of Music* were designed to meet the *College of Fine Arts General Education Mission and Learner Outcomes*, stated as follows:

The College of Fine Arts, through general education courses in the appreciation of the arts, is dedicated to the transmission, application and advancement of knowledge in the arts. We seek, through arts appreciation courses, to stimulate understanding and individual response to the arts. Learning outcomes for arts appreciation classes are: 1) converse about various art forms using the language of the fine arts to convey ideas; 2) demonstrate that students know basic arts elements and that they are able to recognize them in works of art regardless of the cultural context they come from; and 3) articulately and critically respond to works of art to reflect observation and critical thinking. A fourth expectation (4) is that students be provided direct experiences with works of fine art in exhibition and performance venues so that they can interpret and evaluate the value and significance of the works.

Specifically, the learner outcomes for *MUS 142: Appreciation of Music* are as follows:

Students completing *MUS 142: Appreciation of Music* will be able to

1. Identify and describe general stylistic characteristics in recorded and live music using common musical terminology;
2. Place a musical work within its historical, cultural, and/or stylistic context;
3. Distinguish between similarities and differences in musical characteristics among art, folk, jazz, popular and world music tradition; and
4. Categorize how music functions in different cultures both past and present.

### III. Assessment Activities

#### A. Assessment Measures (Tools)

Beginning in Spring 2008, we began using a 50-item, multiple-choice objective exam that is administered by all sections to all students either at their scheduled final exam or in the final week of the semester. Faculty have their choice of whether to count the results as part of the students' final grades; most have chosen to do so. The exam consists of ten listening examples, both "known" and "unknown." For each example, students respond to a set of questions that corresponds to one or more of the learning objectives. For some question sets, students are asked to compare two or more examples before they respond (for example, students hear an example of a Hindu raga and a work by a jazz combo, then are asked to articulate the similarities and differences between the two).

In order to make sure that the results for each objective are balanced, the exam has been designed such that the questions that correspond to each objective are roughly equal in number: Objective 1, 13 items; Objective 2, 13 items; Objective 3, 13 items; and Objective 4, 11 items. Additionally, the exam includes questions that are designed for critical thinking, in which students synthesize knowledge and apply it to new situations (17 items). Please refer to Appendix A: "Item Analysis (Mean) for each semester" for a breakdown of which question corresponds to each objective.

#### B. Benchmarks

For each objective, we have set a pass percentage of 80% of the students at a rate of 60% or better. Ultimately, we would like to set a goal of a pass percentage of 60% of the students at a pass rate of 70% or better. The results below show the difficulties that we will face in achieving that goal.

Our benchmark for each objective is a mean of 60% or better.

#### C. Results/Analysis

The following tables report the results for each semester, from Spring 2008 to Spring 2009. The first is a compilation for all sections, indicating pass rates; the second shows a compilation of the means for each objective.

Table I: Percentage of Students Passing at 60%, at 70% and Average Score

Semester	# of Scores	# Passed at 60+	# Passed at 70+	Average Score	Range
Spring 2008	308	240/80%	174/58%	70	90/36
Fall 2008	361	285/79%	160/44%	67	92/34
Spring 2009	269	215/80%	133/49%	68	92/38

Table II: Mean for Objectives and Critical Thinking Questions

Semester	Obj. 1	Obj. 2	Obj. 3	Obj. 4	CT
Spring 2008	61.17%	73.17%	70.39%	69.64%	67.33%
Fall 2008	61.62%	69.42%	69.58%	68.08%	66.85%
Spring 2009	63%	70%	69.64%	69.09%	67.73%

#### D. Analysis/Planned Action

##### Analysis

For the course as a whole, we have met our pass percentage and rate in two of the three semesters (Spring 2008 and Spring 2009), and came quite close (79%) in Fall 2008. Our goal of 60% of the students passing at 70% or better is quite elusive, although we came closest in the first semester of the new assessment exam (Spring 2008). Our scores have remained remarkably consistent. We are meeting our benchmark of a 60% average for each objective.

In Spring 2008, six of nine sections met the pass percentage of 80% of the students passing with 60% or better. Two sections, taught by first time graduate assistants were close at 77% and 74%; one section was quite a bit below our goal with a rate of 63%.

The comparison of the data from Spring 2008 and Fall 2008 is revealing (see Table I). Overall, scores were much lower in Fall 2008, than in Spring 2008. There are several factors that may have contributed to this: 1) we had a large number of first time instructors for the course (including four graduate assistants); 2) we had a large number of instructors giving the test for the first time (nine out of thirteen), although at least one of the instructors giving the test for the second time had scores that were significantly lower than in Spring 2008 and that were significantly lower than many of the instructors giving the test for the first time; 3) we had three off-campus sections (although one of these performed exceptionally well) over which we have little oversight. Also, in Fall 2008, ten of thirteen sections met the pass rate. The three that did not were significantly below the pass percentage (at 64.5%, 42% and 26%). Of these three, one was an off-campus section and one was giving the test for the first time.

Between Spring 2008 and Fall 2008 our percentages of students answering Objective 1 questions correctly improved only marginally (see Table II); all other percentages dropped slightly. Particularly noticeable is the 3.5% drop in Objective 2.

Between Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 the average score did not change significantly, but we met our pass rate goal overall, despite that Spring 2009 saw more than its fair share of challenges during the semester as regards to personnel. One graduate assistant resigned in

the middle of the semester, with the result that her section was taken over by our most experienced graduate assistant. One of our experienced part-time instructors was put on bed rest by her physician, with the result that one of our full-time faculty members took over the instruction portion of the course as an uncompensated overload.

Individual results for Spring 2009 were quite varied: six of the 11 sections met the goal. Five did not. Of those five sections, three were taught by graduate assistants, including one who struggled considerably with the course, one was taught off campus, and one section was taught by two different instructors during the semester, one of whom had not taught the course during a normal, non-summer semester and had not given the assessment test previously. The off-campus section continues to cause concern, as scores are continually lower than on-campus sections.

On the whole in Spring 2009 our percentages of students answering Objective 1 questions correctly improved somewhat; all other percentages improved only slightly, with most of the scores below those of Spring 2008. The Critical Thinking score improved slightly.

Individual Item Analysis: The item analysis comparison (see Appendix A) is also interesting, revealing some mixed results. There were some improvements for some questions, but some decreases over time for some others (see questions 22 and 23 for a particularly alarming trend). Overall, the average for each question dropped, some significantly more than others. What the data does not tell us completely is how well each question discriminated among those scoring highest on the exam and those scoring lowest.

#### Planned Action

We continue to have room for improvement in meeting all of our learning objectives as we are at our minimum level of success. One of the challenges that we face is the reluctance of faculty to relinquish their practice of lecture-based learning in favor of activity-based or experience-based learning. Therefore, more is needed in the area of faculty development, particularly as regards a consideration of experiential/active learning activities in the classroom to support an improvement of student performance. It is hoped that completion of the activities of a Hedrick Program Grant – specifically training offered by a music appreciation expert who will come to campus in Spring 2010 – will go a long way toward improvement of classroom instruction and student performance. Currently, graduate assistants are undergoing a more rigorous training procedure designed specifically for the course, in addition to that offered by the university.

Additionally, given that we now have a usable amount of data, the assessment test itself will be assessed for its effectiveness, particularly with regards to question discrimination. Consistently low averages for some questions as well as consistently high averages for some questions suggest that they might need to be reevaluated, unless we can determine that these questions discriminate well.

#### **IV. Overview of changes implemented since last report**

As this is the first time that the report has been generated at the department level, we can speak to this only generally. The primary change occurred in the assessment tool: we developed a 50-item, multiple-choice objective exam that is administered by all sections to all students either at their scheduled final exam or in the final week of the semester to replace a student writing assessment. Previously, papers were collected from six students chosen at random which were then scored by two outside jurists without benefit of a score norming process.

#### **V. Assistance Needed with Assessment**

We could use some assistance with item discrimination analysis.

*11/24/2009*

Appendix A: Item Analysis (Mean) for Each Semester

Item/Objective	Spring 2008	Fall 2008	Spring 2009
#1 1	72.6	67	66.5
#2 1	69.9	66.9	76.5
#3 2	67.4	51.4	70.2
#4 4	96.3	90.5	99.2
#5 2	65.9	62.1	60
#6 2	74.3	66.6	72.5
#7 3 CT	62.1	56.1	60.7
#8 4	44.4	39.1	39.8
#9 4	79.3	69.7	73.4
#10 3	85.0	80.7	83.6
#11 3 CT	85.7	80.2	86.5
#12 1	66.9	69.5	74.7
#13 1	53.8	60.8	61.5
#14 2	60.4	50	54.5
#15 4	88.2	77.2	84.5
#16 4 CT	48.1	45	50.6
#17 1	47.4	46.4	54.5
#18 4	69.8	62.4	73.2
#19 2	53.6	51.3	60.7
#20 3 CT	52.4	47.9	50.5
#21 3 CT	52.5	47.4	50.6
#22 1	79.6	53.6	58.7
#23 1	48.4	35.1	32.4
#24 1	59.7	49.4	52.4
#25 2	56.3	49.8	52.7
#26 4 CT	98.1	90.1	98.4
#27 4 CT	84.2	70.6	81.3
#28 2	98.3	91.2	97.2
#29 1	71.7	52.6	61.4
#30 1	48.6	42.5	52.8
#31 2	82.2	73.5	84
#32 3 CT	39.1	29.4	33.8
#33 3 CT	78.5	75.2	76.5
#34 3 CT	82.0	75.8	84.9

Appendix A: Item Analysis (Mean) for Each Semester

#35 3 CT	78.7	70.9	74.7
#36 3 CT	78.7	70.2	81.7
#37 3 CT	84.4	82.3	88.8
#38 2	64.1	50.5	53
#39 4	35.6	42	44
#40 4 CT	28.0	22.2	20
#41 1	77.1	72	76
#42 2	77.8	67.9	77.8
#43 4	95.5	85.5	94.6
#44 2	84.3	72.3	77.5
#45 3 CT	65.1	62.1	65.4
#46 2	83.8	69.8	79.7
#47 2	88.4	71.6	92.5
#48 3	71.2	52.9	68.6
#49 1 CT	55.9	42.5	59.5
#50 1 CT	95.8	80.3	88.5