

# Assessment Cycle Report Academic Year 2017 – 2018

## Program – Bachelor of Music Education (BME)

College: Arts and Sciences

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**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, Student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. *Northwestern State University prepares its Students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.*

**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 unequalled 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.** 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 Bachelor'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 BM 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 will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program faculty;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty teaching core Music Education courses if required (show cause);
- (5) The Program Coordinator, in consultation with the BM 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 excellence as solo and ensemble performers at a level to provide a basis for a professional career as a musician.**

Course Map:

Applied Study: MUS 1710, 3710; Ensembles: MUS 1310, 1320, 1330, 1340, 1380

### **Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge):**

**Details/Description:** Students will demonstrate excellence through: performance before a jury of 2-5 faculty each semester; auditions for ensembles at least once a year; and qualifying juries to assess whether they are ready for upper-class applied study. For Performance Majors, a Senior Recital is required, for which a Preview hearing performance in front of the student's Recital Committee must be passed.

**Acceptable Target:** A rubric for each of these juries is used to evaluate the student and is kept on file. Qualifying jury results are filed and noted in the CAPA offices. Acceptable target is 90% passing the Qualifying Jury and Senior Recital.

**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 100% passing Qualifying Jury and Senior Recital.

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

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Music Faculty

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**Supporting Materials:** Jury comment/grading form; Jury repertoire form; Qualifying Jury Assessment form; Recital checklist; Recital Grading Sheet; Recital Preview Hearing Form; Voice Jury Form; Voice Qualifying Jury Form; Voice Recital Preview Hearing Form

### ***Findings:***

#### ***AY 2016-2017***

***Fall 2016: 12 attempted, 9 passed (75%). Target not met.  
Spring 2017: 40 attempted; 36 passed (90%). Target met.***

#### ***AY 2017-2018:***

***Fall 2017: 10 attempted qualifying juries; 9 passed (90%). Target met.  
Spring 2018: 52 attempted; 36 passed (69%). Target not met.***

### ***Analysis:***

In AY 2016-2017 the target of was not met in the Fall (75%). In the Spring 2017 semester, the target was met (90%). However, it is more important that the Spring numbers for Qualifying Juries be considered, as this is most often the students' first or third attempt at the Qualifying Jury. The second attempt (usually taken in the Fall) is typically a student who needs more time to pass the Qualifying Jury. Students can take the Qualifying Jury up to three times (in consecutive semesters). Due to the high standards needed for this professional degree, it is not uncommon for students to have two or three attempts at the Qualifying Jury. This explains the discrepancy between percentages between Fall and Spring semesters. If there are more first-time qualifying juries attempted, it is expected that the percentage of students passing will likely be lower.

However, all students who attempted the Senior Recital in AY 2017-18 passed (16). This is an important measure, as the Senior Recital is a capstone event in their degree. The fact that the ideal target (100%) was met in this measure is important to note for our department, as it means the student is demonstrating this knowledge/ability at their capstone event. The lower number of students passing the Qualifying Jury is indicative of the fact that this is a “mid-degree” measure that helps us determine where a student’s weakness is, and how to address them. This area of the SLO has shown that our response to student’s mid-degree is working in a positive manner.

The analysis of 75%/90% passing rate for this SLO is evidence that the student learning is taking place, as most of these students are passing the Qualifying Jury by the third attempt. The plan of action was to ensure that the passing numbers from Spring 2017 rose in the Fall 2017 semester, as this would indicate students taking the Qualifying Jury for a second attempt. Each applied professor has individualized methods and lessons to focus on scales, technique, fundamental tone production, and repertoire—which allows for highly personalized responses and practice plans to

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address areas of weakness for each student. This measure was helpful, in that the Fall 2017 numbers were higher than the Fall 2016 numbers.

In comparison, this year's (AY 2017-2018) having implemented the plan of action from AY 2016-2017 to ensure higher passing rates as students are at their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt at the Qualifying Jury resulted in 90% of students attempting Qualifying Juries passed in Fall 2017. The growth from 75% to 90% meets the target. The analysis reflects the improvement and growth in student learning is a direct result of the department-wide push to ensure students attempting the Qualifying Jury for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> are meeting standards throughout the semester. In continuously striving to improve, the faculty has discussed more performance opportunities in front of small audiences be provided for students nearing their Qualifying Jury. These studio class, master class, and elective and/or shared recital experiences provide valuable experience in performing at a professional level in front of an audience. Another course of action under consideration is providing some instruction in master classes on dealing with Performance Anxiety and Musician's Health Issues.

### ***Decision:***

Implementing the decision/plan of action from AY 2016-2017 provides sufficient evidence of improvement based on the analysis of this year's result (particularly Fall 2017). The analysis further reflects higher passing rates as students are at their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt at the Qualifying Jury resulted in 90% of students attempting Qualifying Juries passed in Fall 2017. Students are demonstrating more advanced fundamental tone, technique, scales, and repertoire levels in their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> attempts and in their Senior Recitals by providing highly personalized responses and practice plans by their applied professor.

Based on the analysis and clear evidence of student learning reflected in this year's results, the faculty will build upon the students learning experience by incorporating further practice plan addressing weaknesses, by providing more performing opportunities in front of a small audience (studio class, master class, elective or shared recitals) to gain experience and deal with possible performance anxiety issues.

### ***Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results:***

The decisions made and implemented during AY 2017-18 were to incorporate highly personalized responses and practice plans for each student who did not pass the Qualifying Jury on the 1<sup>st</sup> attempt. Each applied faculty member provided this response and plan for their student(s), as they are specialists and experts in their particular instruments. Weakness that contribute to a student not passing the Qualifying Jury vary greatly and must be assessed and addressed individually. In addressing weakness in this is way, it allows each student to focus and be guided on the area which needs most addressing for them.

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### ***Plan of action moving forward:***

The faculty feels that providing highly personalized responses and practice plans for each student not passing the Qualifying Jury is working well, and they would like to continue applying this action. In continuously striving to improve, the faculty has discussed more performance opportunities in front of small audiences be provided for students nearing their Qualifying Jury. These studio class, master class, and elective and/or shared recital experiences provide valuable experience in performing at a professional level in front of an audience. Another course of action under consideration is providing some instruction in master classes on dealing with Performance Anxiety and Musician's Health Issues.

**SLO 2: Demonstrate specific knowledge in music theory and aural skills at a level to provide as basis for a professional career as a musician.**

**Course Map:** Music Theory 1-4: MUS 1150, 1160, 2150, 2160  
Aural Skills 1-4: MUS 1151, 1161, 2151, 2161

### **Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill / Ability):**

Students will demonstrate knowledge through ongoing assessment and cumulative final exams which require the student to demonstrate competence in these areas before continuing to the next level. Completion of all 4 levels satisfies the requirement.

**Acceptable Target:** These courses serve as pre-requisites for several upper-level required courses. Having this knowledge and these skills is essential to progressing towards the completion of the degree. Acceptable target: 90% of students passing final exam and final composition project (in MUS 2160), working toward completion of the cycle of these courses.

**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 93% passing final exam and final composition project (in MUS 2160).

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** each semester/ongoing

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Music Faculty

### ***Findings:***

***AY 2016-2017: 39 students enrolled in MUS 2160; 39 students (100%) passed the Final Composition Project. 38 (of 39) passed the final exam—97% Target exceeded.***

***AY 2017-2018: 43 students enrolled in MUS 2160; 39/40 students (98%) passed the Final Composition Project (2 students chose a Research/Analysis Paper option and passed, 1 student withdrew from the course and did not do either option). 40 (of 42) passed the final exam—93% Ideal target met.***

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### ***Analysis:***

In AY 2016-2017, the target of 93% was exceeded, as 97% of the students passed the final composition project and final exam. The MUS 2160 class is a capstone of the Music Theory cohort, demonstrating the culmination of skills learned and practiced in MUS 1150/1160/2150. Creating an original composition requires a complete knowledge and assimilation of music theory skills and demonstrates a fluency in the musical language. However, the composition assignment was the only option in the course in which a student could choose to demonstrate this ability. The analysis of the 97% achievement for this SLO is evidence that student learning is taking place but could be enhanced by providing more options for demonstration of cumulative knowledge. The plan of action was to continue with assessment in its current state. However, as the Fall 2017 semester began, the Music Theory Coordinator felt that providing an alternate option (research/analysis paper) would allow for a student to choose their method of demonstrating the culmination of music theory skills and knowledge. It would also provide an opportunity to write an analysis paper for those students who were planning on attending graduate programs in music. Therefore, this option was included for AY 2017-2018.

In comparison, this year's (AY 2017-2018) having implemented the plan of action from AY 2016-2017 to continue to measure music theory fluence with a composition assignment or a research/analysis paper resulted in a similar passing rate. However, student feedback on being given the option was extremely positive, even though most students still chose the composition assignment. While there was no growth, the slight drop to 98% is not a concern, as it still exceeds the ideal target. The analysis reflects the improved feedback from students on being given an option and illustrates that the option does not negatively impact the learning outcome.

### ***Decision:***

Implementing the decision/plan of action from AY 2016-2017 provides sufficient evidence of improvement based on the analysis of this year's result. The analysis further reflects that by offering a research/analysis option, student reactions and feedback were positive, and there was no negative impact of concern (only 2%, which was one student, and still exceeding ideal target) to the SLO measures. Students appreciate the option for a final project, and the addition of a research/analysis option provides an alternate way of demonstrating culminating skills/knowledge according to learning style or future graduate school plans.

Based on analysis and clear evidence of student learning and positive feedback reflected in this year's results, the music theory coordinator and faculty will build upon students learning experience by offering the research/analysis option as a final project.

### ***Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results:***

The decisions made and implemented during AY 2017-2018 were to offer an option for the final project in MUS 2160. Since this course represents the culminating experience in a four-course curriculum of music theory, it is important that the final project reflect the students' fluency in the area of music theory. However, there was previously only one option for the final project. The music theory coordinator, in discussion with music theory faculty, felt that providing a second option allowed for different learning styles

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and a research/analysis option for those students planning on graduate study in music. The addition of this second option was positively received by students in the course, and, while only two students chose this second option, they passed the final project.

### ***Plan of action moving forward:***

Since this was the first year that a research/analysis option was implemented, it is important that we continue to assess if this option is equally received by students. The music theory coordinator and faculty are beginning to assess implementation of on-line music theory skill practice being incorporated into class assignments to continually improve the course.

### **SLO 3: Demonstrate specific knowledge of music history and demonstrate the ability to write and speak effectively about the art of music.**

Course Map: Music History 1-4: MUS 2030, 2040, 3030, 3400

#### **Measure 3.1. (Direct – knowledge)**

In each of the Music History courses, students are required to write research papers and in some they are required to make in-class presentations. Cumulative final exams require the student to demonstrate competence in these areas before continuing on to the next level. Completion of all 4 levels satisfies the requirement.

**Acceptable Target:** Students choose subjects, submit proposed topics, submit rough drafts, and after receiving feedback submit final drafts. Some are chosen to make presentations at the University's Research Day. Acceptable target is 60% students receiving a passing grade on the research portion of their grade in the course.

**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 70% receiving a passing grade on the research paper portion of their grade.

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** each semester/ongoing

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Music Faculty

#### **Findings:**

***AY 2016-2017: Fall 2016: 114 enrolled, 73 passed the research paper. 64% passed  
Spring 2017: 87 enrolled, 81 passed the research paper. 93% passed***

***AY 2017-2018: Fall 2017: 117 enrolled, 93 passed the research paper/written work.  
79% passed  
Spring 2018: 102 enrolled, 95 passed the research paper/written  
work. 93% passed***

#### **Analysis:**

In AY 2016-2017, the acceptable target of 60% of students passing the research portion of these courses was met. In Spring 2017, the ideal target was exceeded at 93%. The 33% increase in students passing the research portion of the class is understandable, as the Spring courses (MUS 2040 and MUS 3040) meet in the Spring and these students have improved in the course of the academic year. However, in discussion with the Musicology professor, techniques to help with research skills were

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implemented. The plan of action for 2017-2018 was to continue with the help of a research assistant and tutor for these courses. At the beginning of AY 2017-2018, that option was no longer possible, so it was decided by the Musicology professor that several shorter research/written assignments would allow the professor more opportunities for feedback and the students more opportunity for reflection and improvement.

In comparison, this year's (AY 2017-2018) data shows that 79% passed in that Fall and 93% passed in the Spring. The target 79% passing rate exceeded the 60% acceptable target by 19%. The increase of 19% in the Fall semester is positive feedback that more short research/written assignments allowed students opportunities to reflect and implement improvement strategies. This, in turn, provided better results. This analysis reflects the growth in student learning in the research and written work component of the Music History courses by providing more opportunities for short written assignments, increasing the opportunity for feedback and reflection. In continuously striving to improve, this approach will be attempted again, with close attention paid to level of improvement and research skills.

### **Decision:**

Implementation of the decision/plan of action from AY 2016/2017, along with modifications made at the beginning of AY 2016/2017, provides sufficient evidence of improvement based on this year's result. The analysis further reflects that by providing more opportunities for feedback and reflection, the students performed the research/written tasks more successfully. However, it is to be noted that a different approach to the written assignments was attempted. In lieu of a large research paper, written assignments were modified to include several smaller assignments to assess the students' writing skills several times throughout the semester. A combination of essay assignments, essay test questions, and written concert reviews were assessed. The Musicology Professor felt that the smaller assignments allowed for better assessment of students' ability to write and speak effectively about the art of music. This approach will be monitored closely in the next year to ensure that the integrity of the research component remains intact. The Musicology faculty, along with the Department Chair, will continue to discuss further ways to continue to improve in this area.

### **Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results:**

The decisions made and implemented for this SLO were to modify research/written assignments from one large research paper to several smaller assignments that incorporated research and written work. Evidence of improvement over this assessment year is a 19% increase in students passing this component of work for the Fall 2017 semester. The opportunity for the faculty member to provide feedback on these smaller assignments, and for the students to reflect and then implement strategies learned on the next assignment, allowed for improvement—particularly in the Fall semester.

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### Plan of Action Moving Forward:

The approach of several smaller research/written assignments will continue for the next assessment cycle. However, the level and quality of research and research skills will be a focus so that the research and writing skill expectations for this professional degree are maintained.

### **SLO 4. Gain keyboard proficiency sufficient to assist in their professional career as a musician.**

**Course Map:** Class Piano 1-4: MUS 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830 Applied Study in Piano: MUS 1700A, 1710A, 3710A

### **Measure 4.1. (Direct – knowledge).**

Proficiency is demonstrated at the end of each semester of keyboard study (prescribed proficiencies for each level). A cumulative proficiency is administered and required at the completion of the 4<sup>th</sup> semester--MUS 1830. Skills achieved include playing accompaniments, score-reading, improvisation, transposition, scales major and minor, and melodic harmonization.

**Acceptable Target:** Students must complete the keyboard proficiency exams in all these areas before they are granted a passing grade in the final course in the sequence. If they do not pass the proficiency exams, they simply re-take the course. Acceptable target is 90% of students passing each proficiency level.

**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 95% of students passing each proficiency level.

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** each semester/ongoing. To be assessed at the end of each academic year.

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Head of Keyboard Area/Music Faculty/Department Chair

### **Findings:**

***AY 2016-2017: 45 enrolled in MUS 1830 (Piano 4) in which the cumulative proficiency exams are administered; 42 passed. 93% passed***

***AY 2017-2018: 42 enrolled in MUS 1830 (Piano 4) in which the cumulative proficiency exams are administered; 36 passed. 86% passed***

### **Analysis:**

In AY 2016-2017, the acceptable target of 93% of students passing the proficiency exams was met, as these students were able to demonstrate the required skills for piano proficiency for this professional degree. Careful attention and monitoring of these skills occurs by the Head of the Keyboard Area in consultation with all piano faculty teaching these courses. The analysis of 93% student achievement for this SLO is evidence that student learning is occurring. The plan of action was to continue with the current format for proficiency exams with careful attention paid to determine if the current model is meeting student needs.

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In comparison, this year's (AY 2017-2018) target was not met, with 86% of students passing the piano proficiency exams. In analyzing the 6% drop in this year's assessment cycle, it was determined that several more students withdrew from the class (6 students) than usual, which altered the results by 6%. While this helps to explain the drop in passing rate, it does not raise any red flags in long-term planning for the time being. Of those students who remained in class (36) all of them passed the proficiency exams. Therefore, that evidence shows a 100% passing rate for all students who attended class on a regular basis. The analysis shows that, of those students attending class, student learning is taking place. The overall pattern over several years shows that students are being prepared well. This is the first year the percentage passing has dropped below 90%. An unusual number of students withdrew or stopped attending (6 students), which contributed to the percentage drop. With this considered, 100% of students who attended class passed the proficiency. In continually striving to improve, the Piano faculty will meet again in August to review the proficiency exams and ascertain whether any changes should be made. While no major changes are planned for now, with the evidence of positive student learning outcomes, we will be sure we are meeting all student's needs with tutoring and additional feedback when needed.

### **Decision:**

Implementing the decision/plan of action from AY 2016-2017 provides sufficient evidence of improvement based on the analysis of this year's result (when number of students who dropped MUS 1840 is considered). The analysis further reflects that the method of giving the proficiency exams as several smaller exams, providing extra practice hours in the keyboard lab, and adhering to a prescribed curriculum for piano pedagogy are providing a positive student learning outcome. The drop from 93% to 86% is explained by considering the number of students who dropped the course (6)—showing that 100% of students who remained in class passed the proficiency exams. Students are being prepared for these exams adequately with the current curriculum. Based on analysis and clear evidence of student learning reflected in this year's results, the faculty will build upon the students learning experience by assessing any further tutoring or feedback needs.

### **Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results:**

The decision to continue give the proficiency exams as several smaller exams to allow for feedback and help with each section has proven helpful. Several smaller exams, rather than one large proficiency exam, allows for the student to thoroughly focus on each skill individually and to receive feedback and improvement opportunities on that skill before moving on. This model continues to work very well for this professional skill set that is required in the field.

### **Plan of Action Moving Forward:**

In continually striving to improve, the Piano faculty will meet again in August to review the proficiency exams and ascertain whether any changes should be made. While no major changes are planned for now, with the evidence of positive student learning outcomes, we will be sure we are meeting all student's needs with tutoring and

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additional feedback when needed.