Central Washington University  
Assessment of Student Learning  
Department and Program Report

Please enter the appropriate information concerning your student learning assessment activities for this year.

Academic Year of Report: 2010-2011  
College: College of Arts and Humanities  
Department: Music  
Program: Bachelor's degrees in Music: B.A. in Music, B.A. in Music with Specialization in Jazz; B.M. in Performance, B. M. in Music Education; B.M. in Composition/Theory

1. **What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?**

In answering this question, please identify the specific student learning outcomes you assessed this year, reasons for assessing these outcomes, with the outcomes written in clear, measurable terms, and note how the outcomes are linked to department, college and university mission and goals.

Introduction

The Department of Music recently completed a revision of the music core, which affects all students, as well as specific adjustments to particular degree programs. These changes include:

- Splitting the MUS 144-246 sequence of courses into separate aural and written sections
- Assessment and revision of class piano and piano proficiency requirements
- Revision of policy and implementation of Convocation and concert attendance requirements
- Changes to the number of credits earned in applied study (from 2 and 4 credits to 1 and 2 credits)
- Credit changes for courses in the music history sequence
- Replacement of MUS 104 with UNIV 101 and elimination of MUS 304 for transfer students
- Implementation of 1st and 2nd year review for student advising
- Creation of a capstone recital performance course

The Department of Music assessed two student learning outcomes this year: 1. **Students become literate musicians**, and 5. **Students will be equipped with a set of theoretical and conceptual abstractions that are applicable to and useful for the understanding of a substantial body of musical literature, applicable to music degree programs in the fields of music education, performance, composition, jazz studies, and music as general field of study.** In response to feedback on prior departmental assessment reports, the department chair and faculty coordinators are in the process of revising the department's goals and objectives, including student learning outcomes for the music core and specific degree programs. The purpose of this revision is to a) ensure close alignment between specific degrees, the music core, College, and University goals and b) more clearly articulate specific and measurable outcomes in the areas of student knowledge, skills and attitudes. This report is framed on the outcomes as they currently exist, with provisional reference to more specific outcomes as appropriate.
This choice continues the departmental concern (begun with the assessments of 2007-2008) with basic aural and written fundamental musicianship skills. These skills are most directly addressed in music theory and aural skills classes, but are manifest in other areas such as class piano, applied music instruction, ensembles, and pedagogy/methods classes. As we reported in 2009-2010, "[this outcome] has been the subject of intensive continuing assessments and subsequent policy changes that have had remarkably successful consequences."

These outcomes are related to the Department of Music curricular goal: "Students will receive a foundation of knowledge and skills leading to specialization in one of the major programs in music education, performance, or composition" and the program goal "Increase the percentages of students retained in upper division from lower division courses." This in turn addresses the College of Arts and Humanities student learning goals "Ensure that students develop disciplinary specific competencies for success in their field" and "Develop students' intellectual and practical skills for lifelong learning." The selected outcomes are consistent with CWU's Core Theme 1: Teaching and Learning: Outcome 1.1.1: "Students will achieve programmatic learning outcomes," and Outcome 1.1.2: "Students will persist to graduation with increased efficiency and rate." They support CWU's Goal I: "Maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus," and Goal V: "Achieve regional and national prominence for the University."

2. How were they assessed?
In answering these questions, please concisely describe the specific methods used in assessing student learning. Please also specify the population assessed, when the assessment took place, and the standard of mastery (criterion) against which you will compare your assessment results. If appropriate, please list survey or questionnaire response rate from total population.

A) What methods were used?

Direct Measures:

We examined the grade distribution of the final aural and written exams for MUS 146 and 246, which represent the culmination of the first- and second-year theory courses. The population assessed was all students in the first year sequence (primarily freshmen) and students at the end of the second year sequence (primarily sophomores), and was administered in the Spring quarter. The faculty would like to see 90% or more of the students earn a C or above on these exams.

A second direct measure of student skill is the departmental Piano Proficiency exam required of all majors. This exam is administered individually by a piano faculty member (or TA) on a quarterly basis. As a graduation requirement, it naturally boasts a 100% pass rate. However, the department faculty has been dissatisfied with how many students must retake the exam, or wait until late in their program to attempt it. This is a difficulty for music education majors, as they are required to demonstrate proficiency prior to applying for placement in the student teaching internship. The department goal is a 90% or better first-time pass rate.

Indirect Measures

The primary indirect measure of student literacy in aural and written music theory was the pass (retention) rate for the six-quarter sequence composed of MUS 144-145 and MUS 244-246. We
chose to continue monitoring this rate to allow us to compare current data with the same information collected since 2007-2008. The population assessed was all students in the music theory sequence (basically all freshmen and sophomore students with some transfer students). The department goal is to maintain 90% pass rate throughout the sequence, with at least 75% of students completing the first year and 75% completing the second year.

An additional indirect measure is the rating and commentary provided on the Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEOI) forms. We reviewed these data for MUS 146 and MUS 246 for Spring 2011. The department goal is to equal or exceed College and University means on selected items, and to have no items with means below the midpoint. The department chair also reviewed the open-ended (constructed response, qualitative) student comments to note trends of student attitude toward these courses.

Related to the selected learning outcomes, the department has a policy that requires student attendance at all Convocations (4 per quarter) and at least 7 concerts or recitals. In addition to providing a breadth of music listening experience, we also believe that this is an indicator of student disposition to engage in the community of musicians as an active listener. The department goal is to have 90% of students completing this requirement each quarter. We examined the percentage of students completing the requirement in each quarter of 2010-2011.

B) Who was assessed?
See above.

C) When was it assessed?
See above.

3. What was learned?
In answering this question, please report results in specific qualitative or quantitative terms, with the results linked to the outcomes you assessed, and compared to the standard of mastery (criterion) you noted above. Please also include a concise interpretation or analysis of the results.

We examined score distribution from the final aural and written exams for all sections of MUS 146 and 246, and noted the following: MUS 146 Aural: 69% earned C or above, Written: 80% C or above; MUS 246 Aural: 70% C or above, Written: 84% C or above. These assessments relate to both learning outcomes described above, in that they illustrate a student's level of music literacy (in the sense of notational and theoretical constructs) and mastery of theoretical and conceptual abstractions necessary to understand a large body of music literature. These data indicate that a) we are nearing our goal of 90% pass rate for these particular assessments and b) students are generally stronger in written than in aural theory. Beginning in Fall 2011 and as a direct result of our assessment process, the written and aural skills components of the freshman music theory courses have been split into two classes. We will continue to monitor student achievement on these exams in light of this substantial curriculum change.

Retention data for 2010-2011 in the core music theory sequence demonstrate a continued upward trend since our departmental assessment began in 2007-2008. Pass rates are MUS 144: 87%, MUS 145: 90%, MUS 146: 92%, MUS 244: 91%, MUS 245: 96%, MUS 246: 92%. We are near achieving the department goal of at least 90% of students passing each course of the sequence.
The baseline rates estimated for 2007-2008 were 50% for the 100-level and 40% for the 200-level sequences. The first year sequence showed 75% of students enrolled completing the courses, and the second year 81%. We are near the goal of 75% completion for both years.

Student SEOI data from all Spring sections of MUS 146 and 246 indicate a notably positive response to the courses. Mean ratings across all seven sections yielded "Course as a Whole" = 4.72 and "Instructor's Teaching Effectiveness = 4.82 on a five-point scale (5 = Excellent). These compare quite favorably with Department (4.43, 4.45), College (4.19, 4.29) and University (4.27, 4.35) means, and indicate we have met our departmental goals.

We examined the first-time pass rate for the Piano Proficiency exam during 2010-2011, and estimated it to be 83%. The instructor of the class piano sequence felt that at least 25% of the students would be able to pass proficiency at the end of the third quarter of piano study. These baseline figures will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the redesign of these courses and revision of policy in the next year, with the goal of a 90% first-time pass rate.

Data indicated that in Fall 2010, 61% of students completed the Convocation/recital attendance requirement, the respective numbers for Winter and Spring were 64% and 65%, well short of the department goal of 90%. The faculty viewed this as unacceptable, and voted to implement a revised policy for 2011-12.

4. What will the department or program do as a result of that information?

In answering this question, please note specific changes to your program as they affect student learning, and as they are related to results from the assessment process. If no changes are planned, please describe why no changes are needed. In addition, how will the department report the results and changes to internal and external constituents (e.g., advisory groups, newsletters, forums, etc.).

We will continue to monitor student pass rates in the core freshman theory sequence to identify to the impact of splitting into two classes (aural and written). This new scheme may affect students who excelled in one area and were deficient in another, yet passing the old course overall. We may notice reduced pass rates until we are able to offer remediation and other support for students with deficiencies.

An ad-hoc committee of faculty is working with the department chair to redesign the Piano Proficiency exam and the content of the piano sequence such that completion of MUS 154A will demonstrate the required proficiency. Students unable to demonstrate mastery after will be required to repeat MUS 154A until they do so. When this change is made, we will be particularly interested the retention rate for these courses and in the percentage of students able to demonstrate proficiency at the end of the standard 3-quarter sequence. We will continue to monitor progress toward the department goal of 95% of students passing the exam before their senior year. Additionally, we are exploring ways to provide (and/or require) additional piano experience for choral and broad-area music education majors to suit the demands of their future teaching positions.

Beginning in Fall 2011, the department has rescheduled Convocation and revised the attendance policy to separate it from the applied studio registration. This will now be a graduation requirement and will not be tracked on a quarterly basis; rather students must accumulate the
required attendances over their entire CWU career. We will continue to monitor this measure of student disposition and adjust policy as necessary to achieve the department goal.

Results of these revisions will be discussed in full faculty meetings and summarized in briefings to CAH Dean, AVP for Undergraduate Studies, and for NASM and other accreditation purposes. Additional summaries may be made available on the department website.

5. What did the department or program do in response to last year’s assessment information?
In answering this question, please describe any changes that have been made to improve student learning based on previous assessment results. Please also discuss any changes you have made to your assessment plan or assessment methods.

As part of an overall revision and refinement of the music degree programs, the department faculty approved a substantive change in the freshman music theory sequence (MUS 144, 145, 146). The existing 3-credit classes consisted of written and aural skills, and as noted in prior assessment reports, did not allow the final grade to be a meaningful indicator of specific skill acquisition. Beginning in Fall 2011, this sequence now requires concurrent enrollment in MUS 144 (Theory 1, 3 cr.) and MUS 144A (Aural Skills 1, 1 cr.), as well as a 3-quarter sequence of MUS 152-154A (Class Piano, 1 cr.).

The Music Department chair has designated a faculty member to assist in department assessment and accreditation, and provided workload for this purpose. This faculty member serves as assessment liaison with the CAH Dean, the CTL, and the AVP for Undergraduate Studies. The department assessment process is currently focused on the periodic requirements of reporting and accreditation for all programs (NASM, CTL and OSPI, NWCCU, CWU) as well as the revision and realignment of program goals and student learning outcomes.

As mentioned in the introduction, the department has made several program changes not directly resulting from the assessment process. In order to ease student credit loads and to provide consistency between performance areas, the faculty voted to implement a policy in which a 1/2-hour private lesson bears 1 credit, and an hour lesson bears 2-3. The different programs would require different numbers of credits (for example, music education students need 11 plus 1 recital to graduate, total 12; performance majors need 27 plus 2 recital, total 29). This will result in a reduction of contact time for some students; we intend to analyze end-of-quarter performance jury ratings to see if this policy change results in decreased student achievement.

6. Questions or suggestions concerning Assessment of Student Learning at Central Washington University: