

Macalester College
Reconsidered Department Assessment Plan
Music Department

Submitted on 4th February 2014

I. Department Student Learning Statement

Music has long been called the “universal language.” But while it certainly binds us, in groups large and small, music also can be a disruptive force, one whose primary effect is to articulate difference. Recognizing this dual nature of musical experience, the Music Department at Macalester College aims both to celebrate music as a source of beauty and an agent for positive change, and to interrogate music from critical perspectives that reveal its powerful and direct social influences. We believe that the study of music, as a means of exposing people to multiple ways of seeing the world, is an ethical pursuit: a deeper understanding of the world’s many modes of creative expression leads ultimately to a keener awareness of the responsibilities of global citizens.

In lessons and ensembles covering a wide range of musical traditions (Western art music, African music, Asian/Chinese music, Jazz, Scottish Highland, and various traditional, and popular musics of the world), we train students in the practical arts of music-making, with regular opportunities for recital participation, ensemble tours, master classes, and interaction with guest artists from around the world. In our curricular offerings—which aim to transcend such outmoded binarisms as Western/non-Western, traditional/popular, and art/entertainment—we place music within the broader context of the liberal arts, leading students to a deeper appreciation of music’s social and political status across time and space.

Graduates of Macalester’s Music Department find themselves well poised to pursue graduate study at the nation’s top music schools, whether it be as performers or in an academic fields such as musicology, ethnomusicology, composition, and music theory. Other participants of the program, from the most committed to the most casual, leave Macalester’s Music Department enriched by their experiences making music and thinking more imaginatively about the many roles that music plays in their lives and in the world around them.

II. Department Learning Goals and Outcomes

Goals

1. Music students will apply critical and analytical skills in communicating about music in a diversity of musical traditions.
2. Music students will demonstrate proficiency in applied musical skills.
3. Music students will be prepared to participate actively in the musical life of their communities after college.

Outcomes

Outcome 1.1

Students will demonstrate ability in musical analysis.

Outcome 1.2

Students will demonstrate ability in researching music in its historical, social, cultural contexts.

Outcome 2.1

Students will demonstrate their progress in their major instrument.

Outcome 2.2

Music majors will participate in ensembles every semester; music minors will participate in ensembles for four semesters. Students will demonstrate ability performing in ensemble settings.

Outcome 2.3

Students will demonstrate their effectiveness in piano for proficiency.

Outcome 3.1

Students will be prepared for lifelong music appreciation and participation.

Outcome 3.2

Music majors will be prepared for graduate study in music

III. Department Assessment Strategies

Outcome 1.1

Composition exercises, musicianship tests, aural exams, analysis of harmony and form.

Outcome 1.2

Oral examinations in music history survey courses, written and listening tests, and papers assigned in classes address critical-historical and aural skills in a variety of musical traditions.

Outcome 2.1

Lessons commented and graded by studio instructor and performance review at end of semester commented and graded by faculty as well; Thursday recitals; junior/senior recitals (capstone) with exit interviews.

Outcome 2.2

Graded for ensembles; participation in regular public performances.

Outcome 2.3

Music majors and minors will take piano for proficiency lessons for four semesters; each semester culminates in an exam. A passing grade for all four semesters is required in order to graduate with a music major or minor.

Outcome 3.1

Web-based survey/questionnaire two years after graduation.

Outcome 3.2

Web-based survey/questionnaire: (a) final semester at Mac, (b) two years out for alumni; exit/post-recital interviews for Majors and Minors

IV. Four-Year Timeline to Implement Assessment Strategies

Most of what is laid out in this plan is already in place in our department. We are committed to being more diligent about the exit interviews for majors and minors. The current implementation of the assessment strategies will be reviewed according to the following timeline. The department chair will be take the responsibility for the assessment.

2014: Outcomes 1.1

2015: Outcomes 1.2

2016: Outcomes 2.1, 2.2 & 2.3

2017: Outcomes 3.1 & 3.2