



**POINT LOMA**  
NAZARENE UNIVERSITY

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**MUSIC PROGRAM**

**SPRING 2014 ASSESSMENT REPORT**

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## **Overview and Description**

Each year at the end of the Spring Semester, the PLNU Department of Music conducts an assessment of a portion of its programs. Music Academics, Applied Instruction and Performing Ensembles are assessed on a rotating basis, the assessment data is tabulated and the results are used to either make changes to our programs or to confirm that we are hitting our goals. In Spring 2014 we assessed the following LO's:

- Demonstrate essential competencies and musicianship skills in written music theory, Aural Skills, and keyboard
- Become conversant with the outline of music history and literature, and an awareness of significant non-Western music style

As outlined in the Department of Musics Assessment Plan, these LO's were assessed using the following instruments:

- the *Piano Proficiency Exam* (given each semester) to measure "essential competencies in keyboard" at the initial and developing levels,
- the *Music Theory Placement Exam* and the Final Exams in MUT100 and MUT120, which provide entrance/exit scores to measure "essential competencies in written music theory" at the initial level
- the *final projects* in MUT221, 302 and 432 to measure "essential competencies in written music theory" at the proficient level, and
- the *final paper* in MUH332 to measure "conversant with the outline of music history and literature" at the developed level

## **Criteria for Success**

The Department of Music has set the following standards as the goals for measuring the above LO's:

- *Piano Proficiency Exam*—80% of students will pass all portions of the PPE by the end of the fourth semester of attendance at PLNU.

- *Music Theory Placement Exam*—80% of students will pass the Placement Exam on the first attempt (usually at the end of MUT100) and 95% by the second attempt (at the end of MUT120)
- *Final Projects* in MUT221, 302 and 432—80% of students will score no less than “Proficient” in all areas of the project at “Exemplary” in at least one area
- *Final Papers* in MUH332—80% of students will score “Developing” in all areas and “Proficient” in at least 2 areas

### **Procedure**

Assessment data is collected every semester. The Departmental Assistant stores and tabulates data for the Piano Proficiency each semester and tracks student progress. The Music Theory Placement Exam is given during the first week of the semester to all entering students, both entering freshmen and transfer students. The results of the test are tabulated and scored against the student’s equivalent score in MUT100 or MUT120 in order to gain entrance/exit data. The tests are scanned and stored as pdf’s on the server for five years. The individual professors score the final projects for their courses against the rubrics that have been established. These projects and their associated rubrics are submitted to the Music Office and stored on a cloud-based server until they are needed for an assessment review. The Department of Music stores five years’ worth of assessment artifacts and their associated rubrics. Tabular data is maintained for ten years.

The Music Faculty met on 13 May 2014 for a full day of assessment and discussion. The eight faculty members were broken into four groups with two members per group and asked to examine a handful of artifacts at random. Each group was provided with a USB drive that contained anonymous papers and projects. They were also provided with copies of blank rubrics as well as the rubric that the professor used to score the artifact. They first examined the project/paper, score the work against the rubric then checked the original rubric against their own. In this way they were able to both think about the quality of the work itself, how it scored against the departmental standards, as well as how the professors scoring standards measure against those of the

department. The meeting ended with a lunch provided by the department a discussion about each group's findings and a set of suggestions for changes and improvements.

### Conclusions Drawn from the Data

#### Music Theory Placement Exam

**Table 1**—Results of the Music Theory Placement Exam from 2009 to 2013

Year	No. of entering freshmen	Average entrance score	Average exit score	Percentage of students scoring 80 or higher
2009	22	8	83	65%
2010	23	6	86	100%
2011	29	10	92	100%
2012	27	12	87	83%
2013	27	10	86	84%

The results of our first two music theory courses represent among the most dramatic changes that we see in our entering freshman music majors. Many students, during the first few days of the semester when the test is administered, are unable to complete even a single portion of the entrance exam whereas most comfortably pass all of the sections of the same exam when administered at the end of the semester. However, the quality and the mix of the entering freshman class vary wildly from semester to semester. Some years we have quite a few students test at higher levels of music theory and who were fortunate enough to have access to either AP Music Theory classes or the Certificate of Merit program. During other years, however, we admit an entering freshman class that benefitted from few if any of these opportunities. We feel that the pace and the content of MUT100 are appropriate and are still pleased with the overall progress of our students. However, we realize that more and more students are coming out of California schools with little or no background in music theory in spite of the fact that such training is part of the core standards for California music programs. We are not planning on changing our approach at this point but will continue to monitor our entering classes. If we continue to see that our students need multiple attempts to pass the test then we may have to institute training for our students in the Summer before they arrive on campus.

## Piano Proficiency Exam

The Piano Proficiency Exam is administered at the end of each semester by the Piano Faculty who also score the exam. The results are submitted to the Music Office where they are entered into a spreadsheet maintained by the Departmental Assistant. Both student scores and progress over time are tracked in the Music Office.

**Table 2**—Results of the Piano Proficiency Exam from 2009 to 2014 organized by entering class, showing the percentage of the class that completed all sections during the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> semester of matriculation.

year	# of semesters					
	4	5	6	7	8	9*
2006	20%	26%	37%	45%	65%	76%
2007	34%	54%	54%	54%	85%	85%
2008	44%	52%	61%	61%	74%	74%
2009	43%	46%	62%	67%	89%	89%
2010	19%	28%	35%	54%	61%	61%
2011	15%	18%	25%	30%	71%	84%

\* —note that the final column may not be 100% as a result of students who transfer, drop the music major or do not complete the piano proficiency requirement.

The Piano Proficiency continues to be a source of concern for the faculty, specifically because students find ways to delay passing all portions of the exam until late in their music studies when they actually need the skills earlier in their work. At this point we are not even close to hitting the mark that we have set. The Piano Faculty have searched for ways to revamp the exam but have not reached a consensus yet. It is likely that the entire process will need to be re-examined and that a new approach will need to be developed that more closely matches the expectations of the music faculty and that ensures that the students acquire badly needed keyboard skills at the beginning of their music studies where they are needed most.

## Final Projects in MUT221, 302 and 432

We believe that students are doing good work in all three of these courses and that the projects fairly represent the level of research, writing and work that our students are

doing. In general, the scoring by the professors of these courses seems to match those of the group that examined the artifacts. However, we feel that there is room for improvement in the quality of the writing that students present. The projects seem to indicate that students are working at the last moment and that their work is not checked and reworked as carefully as it could be. Although we are impressed with the overall quality of their projects, these projects are not presented as carefully and as polished as they could be. We are encouraging all classes to implement peer evaluations and earlier timeframes so that students are encouraged to refine their final work.

### Final Papers in MUH332

2014 was the first time that data on the MUH332 papers has been collected. Table 3 presents the tabular data for the assessment.

**Table 3**—Results of the MUH332, final paper assessment presenting the percentage of students that hit the target of “Developing” or higher.

Item	Average
Topic, Thesis	92%
Works, Conclusion	87%
Original Ideas	82%
Organization	83%
Length	91%
Flow, ease of understanding	81%
Grammar, punctuation, structure	91%
Bibliography	78%
Bibliographic Form	82%

Our students are able to write well, organize their thoughts and communicate their ideas effectively. The committee was not always impressed with the choice of topics or with the quality of the sources that the students chose. Students seemed too willing to use (for instance) a source from the 1970’s which happened to be easily available on a shelf, instead of trying to become more aware of the current state of research for their given topic. Students need more practice in using the major bibliographical tools in music research.

## Changes to be Made Based on Data

### Music Theory Placement Exam

No changes to be made at this time. The quality and preparation level of each entering class need to be monitored from year to year. If preparation levels continue to drop then the class scope and timing may need to be adjusted.

### Piano Proficiency Exam

The Piano Faculty are encouraged to find some creative solutions for the PPE. We are consistently not hitting our targets and need to find a way to redesign the process in order to ensure that necessary keyboard skills are in place earlier in the student's music studies.

### Final Projects in MUT221, 302 and 432

- Encourage peer reviews and peer edits
- Encourage earlier timeframes for submission and more opportunities for rewriting

### Final Papers in MUH332

The Music Department needs to continue to convince Library Services to acquire RILM for our students. This has been an ongoing battle for 10+ years. Until then, we will have to continue to send students to SDSU in order to accomplish better-quality research. Students need more practice in becoming aware of the current state of research in various areas that affect their music studies, including identifying the major works of research, major authors and important scholars in their area of study.