

**College of Musical Arts -- Theory Core**  
**Summary of Assessment Accomplishments**  
**2006-2007 Academic Year**

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**General comments (Ongoing and experimental assessment activities):**

The 2006-2007 theory core assessment continued the pre-enrollment activities as reported in 2005 and 2006 (see 2005 report for details including primary learning outcome, “Boost music theory preparation for incoming students,” and procedures with results) . For the Fall of 2006, we noted that prospective student theory placement exam scores were even higher than in previous years. Therefore, there was a significant drop in the enrolment of our remedial class, MuCT113, as provided below. In years previous to 2004, thirty to forty students were placed in MuCT113 due to low placement test scores.

Number of students who scored low and were placed in MuCT113:

In Fall 2004	47
In Fall 2005	27
In Fall 2006	19

As in years past, incoming students are allowed to take the theory placement exam twice (as a part of their audition and, secondly, during orientation/registration). The initial test scores for 2006 (audition dates) were similar to incoming students in past years. However, the entering class of 2006 greatly improved their test scores when they took the exam for a second time (orientation and registration). Perhaps, more students used the materials that we provide (theory worksheets, web site information for textbooks and public domain electronic teaching materials). We noted that the incoming class of 2006 as a whole was more technically savvy and performed very well in both theory and aural skills. Perhaps they utilized the materials that are now readily available on our university web site. We are eager to see if this trend will continue in 2007-2008.

As mentioned in our 2006 report, we have started gathering data on other groups of students from Basic Musicianship and also Accelerated Fundamentals, MuCT115 (a mid-level remedial course). This will allow us to compare the two groups of Basic Musicianship students and study the different effects that our two introductory courses have on student learning. It will be interesting to see how this strong group of new students (entering in 2006) compares to previous years as they progress through the four-semester theory curriculum.

Capstone analysis projects were again evaluated during the fall semester of 2006. A detailed description of this assessment activity can be found in our 2004-2005 report including the five primary learning outcomes (independence, discrimination, analysis, communication, and creativity). The use of a new textbook (see 2005-2006 report) had a significant impact on the quality of these projects. This will be mentioned in more detail below.

The theory core at BGSU consists of four sequential courses MuCT151, MuCT152, MuCT251, and MuCT252 (Theory I-IV). In Fall 2005 (see “Actions Taken” in 2004-2005 assessment report) music students began using a new textbook that included an anthology and accompanying recordings. With the completion of Spring 2007, we now have a group of students who have used this new theory textbook throughout the four semester sequence. Below is a report of this assessment activity.

***Primary New Assessment Activity for 2007 that began in 2006:***

Evaluating the effects of a new textbook on student learning:

In our 2004-2005 assessment summary (see “Actions Taken”) and in our 2005-2006 assessment report, we recommended and provided a preliminary report on the use of a new theory textbook with accompanying anthology and recordings in our first two theory core courses. It was our hope that this text would foster score reading and a broader exposure to music literature (both noted as lacking in previous reports). As expected, we were able to use past capstone activities (composition projects from 2001-2005 and analysis projects from 2004-2005) as well as other previously employed assignments/exams to compare the learning achievements of students both past and present. This evaluation procedure was also implemented in MuCT251 and MuCT252 in 2006-2007.

Learning Outcomes (MuCT151, 152, 251, 252):

1. Competence. To possess a repertoire of skills and a body of knowledge appropriate to the discipline.
2. Independence. To demonstrate independence of thought and action in music performance and scholarship.
3. Discrimination. To be able to make informed aesthetic judgments about music compositions and performances.
4. Analysis. To understand the styles and structures of music and relate this knowledge to its performance.
5. Communication. To apply technical vocabulary to communicate with a community of other professionals.
6. Creativity. To apply musical knowledge to novel situations as well as develop

a

personal interpretation of the repertoire.

Level of Learning Outcomes as they pertain to MuCT251 (Theory III) and MuCT252 (Theory IV):

1. Competence
  - a. MuCT251 -- musical forms and chromatic harmonies focusing on music  
from the Romantic era especially Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Wagner.
  - b. MuCT252 -- musical forms as well as melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic techniques of the twentieth century. Literature studied include works by Bartok, Debussy, Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Hindemith, Stravinsky and Crumb.
- 2-6. Independence, Discrimination, Analysis, Communication, and Creativity
  - a. As the music grows more complex through the Romantic and Contemporary periods, so should the student’s depth of understand and sophistication of analysis and communication.
  - b. Students are expected to work more independently on analysis and composition projects in MuCT251 and MuCT252 when compared to MuCT151 and MuCT152. They are also expected to communicate more effectively with a freer understanding of more

complicated terminology especially when they present their analytical findings during analysis projects.

#### Methods and Procedures

In MuCT251 and MuCT252 (Theory III and IV) students were asked to complete items from past assignment/exams so that their learning could be compared with past students. Similar to MuCT151 and MuCT152, competence, analysis, and composition were evaluated. In addition, the students' abilities in discrimination and communication were carefully assessed in capstone projects.

#### Inferences from Assessments:

We found that writing skills (composition) continued to be stronger (technically and conceptually) in MuCT251 and MuCT252. Most students preferred composition projects and stated that they felt freer and more equipped to complete them. Because the new textbook includes an extensive (perhaps excessive) study of part writing, this is not surprising. In contrast, analytical skills were weaker both in the book's presentation and in student skill development (speed and accuracy). There was notable improvement in this skill in MuCT251 and MuCT252 especially when entire compositions were studied due in part to the book's examination of complete pieces in the later part of the book. Additionally, student skill in discrimination and communication were higher perhaps reflecting the book's strong presentation of form and twentieth-century techniques. Even with this improvement, student harmonic skill development lagged behind those of students in past years.

Students in aural skills courses continued to struggle with harmonic dictation as noted in our 2005-2006 report because of the delayed presentation of harmonic progression in the new textbook. Thankfully, instructors of keyboard harmony did not note any difficulty that students were having in their classes with harmonic progression.

#### Actions taken:

In light of the items mentioned above, the theory faculty have decided to return to our previous theory textbook for Fall 2007 and include a new anthology. Perhaps this new anthology will embrace some of the concerns raised initially in our 2004-2005 report. At this point, we plan to consider using the new theory textbook again in Fall 2008. We will continue to assessment the impact of these textbooks as students progress through the curriculum and use these skills in upper level courses.