

**Assessment of Capstone Experience for Music Majors:
The Senior Recital**

**Submitted for the Music Department by
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The senior recital is a capstone event for all music majors. It is a public concert wherein the student demonstrates his/her musical proficiency by performing 25 to 55 minutes of music from the solo repertoire of his/her major instrument (25 minutes for education/ 55 for performance programs). It is unique to the students' experience for several reasons. First, it is a culminating experience representing the product of eight (in some cases seven) consecutive semesters of Applied Studio. Secondly, it is the single most exposed and demanding performance that a student will undertake, requiring the preparation and presentation of several pieces from different and contrasting historical and stylistic sources. Most significantly, the senior recital is an assessment-rich experience for each student, Applied Studio and the Music Department as a whole.

As unique as the experience of the senior recital may be, the assessments of this event are also unique. Formally, the senior recital is a non-credit, pass/fail course. Yet, because of the importance of the senior recital (for reasons enumerated above), there are in fact numerous assessments both directly and indirectly related to the qualification for, and certification of successful completion of the event. The curricular structure of Applied Studio, a continuing course, is designed with the long-term goal of preparation for the senior recital. Thus, part of each semester's evaluation considers each student's progress as it relates to this long-term goal. Indeed, 1/3 of each semester's grade is derived from a performance evaluation made by a group of area-faculty at the end of every semester (the areas are: brass, woodwinds, strings, voice, piano, percussion). Next, at the end of the student's junior year, the student undergoes the "Junior Qualifying Exam." This pass/fail assessment is incorporated into the semester's jury and is the formal certification by the area-faculty relating to the student's satisfactory progress and preparedness for the forthcoming recital. Lastly, no less than four weeks prior to the recital date, the student must perform a "Preliminary Presentation" of recital material. This is a 15 minute pass/fail exam administered by a small faculty committee wherein the student is asked to perform portions and/or excerpts from pieces programmed on the senior recital. Finally, the recital is itself an examination whose outcome is assessed by the Applied Studio instructor. Of significance is the high degree to which these numerous assessments are coordinated; with so much coordination, the outcome is usually predictable. In the past year, all students passed the senior recital, a typical outcome.

In evaluating the assessments for the senior recital, we look beyond the simple pass/fail outcome of each recital to more specific qualities of each performance that may be more precise indicators of skill, knowledge and accomplishment. These evaluations have been made in a survey of area coordinators, ensuring a high degree of expertise for each evaluation. The coordinators have been asked to evaluate each recital in respect to six key indicators of skill, knowledge and accomplishment.

1. Instrument specific technical proficiency
(to what degree has the performer mastered his/her instrument?)
2. Tone Quality and Production
3. Intonation
4. Rhythm
5. Stylistic interpretation
(how well did the performance accurately reflect appropriate stylistic conventions?)
6. Artistic Achievement
(to what extent did the performance demonstrate artistic merit from a professional perspective?)

In rating each of these indicators, the evaluators were given the choice of: poor, minimally acceptable, acceptable, and excellent. These rather narrow criteria have been chosen in order to focus on the question of whether or not standards have been met with only minimal consideration of how well they have been met.

SURVEY

Survey date: May 18, 2006

Total number of Senior Recitals 2005-2006: 29

	Poor	Minimally acceptable	Acceptable	Excellent	TOTAL SURVEYED
Instrument specific technical proficiency	1	2	13	12	28
tone quality and production		4	11	13	28
Intonation	1	2	14	7	24 (4 NA)
Rhythm	1	2	17	8	28
stylistic interpretation		3	18	7	28
artistic achievement	2	4	15	7	28

Results of this specific capstone experience clearly indicate that in the context of the senior recital, the overall majority of students demonstrate acceptable attainment of skills and knowledge. One possible conclusion that might be considered, is that with so many students scoring above the acceptable level, a re-assessment of recital practice might be in order.