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Report on Music Literacy Outcomes

Submitted by Grey Brothers

Summary

Our department’s student learning outcome in the area of music literacy and repertoire is assessed through students’ performance in the second of our two-course sequence in the history of western music, MU 121, taught each spring. Music literacy is assessed via classroom discussions, papers, presentations, and exams. Our students are expected to perform at the developing level.

1. The data for this year’s assessment was gathered from the nine students enrolled in MU 121 in the spring of 2015. To observe the trend in student achievement over time and to assess the possible benefit of an approach to enhance student achievement instituted in the 2013-2014 academic year (the “Listening Journal” described below) data was also gathered from the students enrolled in MU 121 every spring semester since spring 2011.
2. The benchmark for this outcome is: 80% of students will achieve an average score of at least 80% on papers, presentations, and exams.
3. The instruments used to gather data were the three exams given in the course, each of which includes a score identification portion, particularly geared to assesses music literacy, as well as student research papers and presentations.

Assessment of Final Grades:

The simplest way to determine whether students in MU 121 have met the benchmark is to look at the final grades in the course, which are determined by students' performance on quizzes, exams, papers, and presentations. To a small degree, students' attendance and preparation for class are also factors.

Five of the nine students, or 55% of those enrolled in Music 121 in Spring 2015 achieved a composite score of 80% or greater in the course. By this measure, we were 25% below our benchmark of 80%. A more positive result is seen, however, when the data is viewed differently. The average of the composite scores of all the students was 78%, slightly below the 80% benchmark score.

Assessment Specifically of Musical Literacy:

In order to assess music literacy more specifically, students' performance on the portions of the exams that directly measured their ability to identify the titles and composers of music scores was assessed independently. The students' success in this narrower area can be surmised from the section "Score Identification on Exams" in the attached "Music Literacy Data."

Of the nine students enrolled in MU 121 in Spring 2015, five, or 56%, achieved better than 80% on the first exam, four, or 44% achieved better than 80% on the second exam, and four, or 44% achieved better than 80% on the third exam. We clearly fell short of our benchmark.

A quick glance at the data from spring 2011 and spring 2014 reveals, not surprisingly, that the spring 2015 students performed more poorly by this measure than students of previous years.

Interpretation

As can be seen in the attached "Music Literacy Data," the students who took the class in Spring 2015 achieved the lowest average final grade of any group since Spring 2011. Since the course content and requirements have changed little during the intervening years, with the exception of adding an exercise in the 2013-2014 academic year in the hopes of boosting students' achievement, we can only surmise that the Spring 2015 cohort was simply not as strong academically as those of the previous several years.

In the Fall 2013, an exercise was introduced in MU 120, the first course of the two-year music history sequence, with the intention of

The data reveals that, all else being equal, the Listening Journal seems to have had little effect on students' performance. Indeed, if the natural variation in student ability is not taken into account, it could reasonably be assumed from the data for the spring of 2015 that the Listening Journal has had a negative impact. This seems hardly likely. There are more probably other factors involving students' aptitude and interest that have far greater impact on their performance in the area of music literacy. Regardless, since the Listening Journal has had no discernable positive effect, it will be discontinued in the future.

It may be time to lesson the overall workload of MU 121 in future years, so that students have more time to spend on the core music literacy component. A goodly portion of the course concerns the memorization of names of composers and titles of pieces; perhaps the information load in these areas can be reduced in order to give students greater opportunityJ ET Q s

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| 4 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 68.57 |
| 5 | 33.33 | 45.83 | 31.43 |
| 6 | 76.19 | 100.00 | 80.00 |
| 7 | 57.14 | 66.67 | 80.00 |
| 8 | 85.71 | 87.50 | 82.86 |
| 9 | 90.48 | 79.17 | 68.57 |
| Average | 77.25 | 79.63 | 66.35 |