

# **Pursuing NASM approval for an undergraduate music technology degree**

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The National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) maintains a broad set of guidelines for "majors in or based on electronic media and technology" (NASM Handbook, 64). The emphasis and goals of each institution's major are left up to that school's representatives, so long as they are clearly defined and publicly available. For faculty interested in establishing a new music technology degree at their university or college, this latitude can be both a blessing and a burden. Many questions have to be answered: What aspect of music technology should we emphasize? How are we going to teach this material to our students? What do we expect our graduates to do after graduation? Answering these and other questions is the first stage in articulating the essential qualities of your new program and identifying what needs must be addressed before a major can be established.

After the logistical picture for establishing the new degree program starts to come into focus, applying for NASM approval can seem like an equally daunting task. They require a thorough report detailing the compliance of the program with NASM standards, qualifications of the faculty involved, allocation of fiscal resources, availability of necessary facilities and relationship to existing programs. NASM maintains a set of publications meant to define the process for establishing new curricula, however the references found in these documents are difficult to navigate. The proposal formatting guidelines frequently direct the reader to separate publications, creating a circuitous route for the person preparing a proposal. Identifying the relevant passages early in the process and structuring paperwork accordingly can get the process started on the right foot and save time on needless revisions.

NASM maintains two deadlines each year for submitting proposals, so it is important to be mindful of these when setting up a timetable to complete the necessary

paperwork. Preparing for the deadline requires planning far in advance, primarily because of the need for consultation with colleagues at the institution. From aural skills to private study to music theory, the proposal must succinctly describe the instruction students will receive in all areas of the music curriculum. Soliciting input from fellow faculty and administration is a necessary step to completing these required portions of the proposal. By being aware of who must provide what information and anticipating the time they need to prepare any requested contributions, one can ensure that colleagues will remain responsive and supportive throughout the process.

This paper will discuss the necessary questions to consider when establishing an undergraduate degree program, distill the NASM proposal formatting requirements into an easy to follow format, and detail the process of preparing for plan approval. The author will illustrate specific points with descriptive accounts from of his recent experience preparing a successful application on behalf of Stetson University to establish a Bachelor of Music in Music Technology. After previous aborted efforts by the institution, the author spent one year preparing Stetson's paperwork for submission to NASM and learned many things he is eager to share with others who wish to tread down this path. Overall, the paper will act as a guide for those who would like to draft their own application, helping them to avoid potential pitfalls and pursue NASM approval more efficiently. Let me clearly state that I am not affiliated with NASM and in no way do I speak for them in an official capacity. This paper contains recommendations and advice based on my experience. If you find anything stated in this paper is in conflict with information found in a NASM publication or communication, it is best to follow the information provided by NASM or ask for clarification from them. In no way should this document be perceived as a substitute for NASM's own publications. I will reference relevant pages throughout, so it is best to have them available while reading this paper.

## **1. General Questions**

Before beginning with the paperwork for NASM, the faculty and administration should consider several questions about the big picture in order to clarify the purpose of adding a music technology degree. The first question to ask is, "Why does this institution need a degree in music technology?" If you cannot get a handle on this

question early, it will hinder your progress at some point. You are very likely to encounter someone at some stage of the process that will ask you this very question. If you have not put some thought into an answer, it will catch you off guard. Not having an answer for a person that believes the reason is not self-evident will only cause doubt and potentially derail the process. Do yourself a favor and think about the answer before someone asks you.

A large part of answering the why question will involve looking at the existing programs at your school. This will begin the process of making connections between the degree program you are looking to develop and the established programs at your school. There should already be a technology component within the school's curriculum, given that NASM lists technology as a competency required of all baccalaureate degrees (*Handbook*, 74). Identify how current students are specifically learning about music technology and how they might be better served. Perhaps students have inquired about courses in studio production or computer music or maybe those courses are already being taught through the composition program. Perhaps there is a media program that seems to be drawing students away from the music program. Wherever these courses are, you must create an inventory of how students are currently learning about technology and then ask how the addition of a technology degree would change things. This will help you start to see your program in the overall context of the school's current degree offerings. It will also help you start to consider the question of how the new program will be different than existing options, another question that you are likely to be asked along the way.

In addition to your own institution, you should also look at how other schools have implemented music technology degrees. There may be another program out there that you would like to use as a model for your own. You must have a vision for how your proposed program will be unique in the educational marketplace. Prospective students are very savvy customers that know how to weigh their options and find the best program. Without making comparisons to other schools, you will struggle to convince prospective students of what makes your program distinct when the time comes. It is another question that is very likely to come up during the approval process.

Someone will inevitably ask why students should not just go to some other program. Like the other questions, be ready with an answer.

Once you have started to develop a vision for the new technology degree, it is impossible to move forward without sufficient institutional support. This will encompass four areas: administration, fiscal, facilities, and other faculty. The first three of these should be an obvious prerequisite to moving the project forward. Without support from the supervising dean or department chair, it will be impossible to pursue approval for your degree program. This person is responsible for communicating with NASM and therefore a necessary person to have on board before any serious work starts. The amount of fiscal resources and facility maintenance are both large commitments on the part of the school. Make sure that if funding and equipment is not already in place, plans are at least in progress to secure long-term financial support from the institution. The last piece is support from your colleagues on the faculty. Do not assume that everyone will support the idea of adding a technology degree. It is important to begin informal discussions with colleagues early and begin to take inventory of their concerns. The sooner you can address these concerns, the smoother the process will be. It will also help you to identify your sources of support early, especially if they are in able to assist you when the need arises.

Once the possibility of adding a technology degree begins to materialize, it is important to define the areas of emphasis for this new degree program. As stated at the outset, NASM's guidelines for "majors in or based on electronic media and technology" (NASM Handbook, 64) are broad. Before you move forward with preparing a proposal, members of the institution should identify the particular areas of technology that will be the specialty of the new program. The possibilities include but aren't limited to studio production, electronic music composition, software engineering, multimedia development, instructional support and various combinations of these. Knowing that your school has strengths that compliment one of these areas may help you narrow the focus of your technology degree to something that compliments existing programs. Or if a nearby institution already offers a program with a strong emphasis in one of these areas, you may consider an emphasis that will distinguish your school from theirs.

After identifying your emphasis, it is important to practice explaining the differences to others. This will become an important skill as the application process moves forward as well as after the plan has been approved. During the process, it is important that there be no misunderstandings between you, the administration and your colleagues about what the new program will emphasize. Such misunderstandings can cause confusion and breed ill feelings among the faculty. For example, if the education faculty thinks the program will focus on instructional support, they may develop a particular assumption about how the new program will compliment their own. If your intent is to focus on electronic music composition, you will likely need to avoid overlapping with an existing composition major. In each example, defining the emphasis of your program early in the process and conveying this defined emphasis effectively to your colleagues can help you avoid such confusions and better establish how your new degree will compliment existing programs.

The defined emphasis will also help when the time comes to name your new degree program. There is a great deal of variety among the titles given to established degree programs around the country, as this author has written about before (Wolek and Swendson, 2003). Titles such as "Music Technology and New Media", "Electronic Music and Recording Media" and "Technology in Music and Related Arts" are examples of how schools have tried to provide titles that reflect their emphasis. Undoubtedly this is an effort to NASM's request that the "program title shall be consistent with its curriculum content" (NASM Handbook, 65). However, in my experience, differing titles only makes things more confusing for applicants. I have had many conversations with applicants about what emphases they can expect at my institution compared with others. These encounters lead me to the conclusion that titles alone cannot explain what a degree program emphasizes. My opinion is that simpler titles are better and that the word "technology" is an important word to include. Beyond this it is really up to the personal preferences of the institution and those directly responsible for the degree. (The name is an important part of the way the public perceives your program.)

The last question that needs to be asked is "What will the students learn from this degree?" For students in the program, this translates into the skills and competencies they will be learning, as well as the preparation they will need. It is more specific than

defining the emphasis of the program and requires thinking about the classes that will be required and the projects students will be working on. Thinking about what the students will do after graduation is also important. If you plan on them applying for specific jobs, how will the program prepare them? If you plan on students pursuing graduate study, which graduate programs would you like them to be ready for? This kind of goal-directed thinking is important early in the planning process and will help you answer inevitable questions later. The NASM Handbook raises issues along these lines and so it is best to start thinking about them early. The answers will also help you in recruit the first set of applicants after the proposal has been successfully accepted.

## **2. NASM publications**

After you have thought about these general questions and have the firm support of administration, it is time to start looking at the NASM publications related to the degree approval process. The best place to begin is *Policies and Procedures for Review of New Curricula*, which has a current edition good through 2009. This is NASM's guide to the process of getting new degree programs approved, outlining the deadlines, paperwork and procedures that are necessary to receive approval. There are three distinct types of submissions described by the document: consultative review, plan approval and final approval for listing. The consultative review is an optional step of getting feedback from NASM about a program prior to the degree being fully implemented. Plan approval is the review that will provide the degree with certification that it meets NASM's standards and permit an institution to being admitting students. It is therefore the one most relevant to the topic of this paper. The final approval is a report that must be submitted after a degree program has graduated three students that will be discussed only briefly in this paper.

This *New Curricula Procedures* document contains an outline of the information required when submitting an undergraduate degree for plan approval (11-12). These two pages are the primary source of formatting guidelines for the report you must draft for NASM. At first glance, they are deceptively simple and contain only ten items that you must address. But as you begin to study these items, you will find that each one is multi-faceted and requires a level of response much deeper than first impressions may

lead you to believe. With that said, it is best to adopt the numbers and letters used in this outline for your own report, as well as maintaining their order so that the item you are addressing at any given point in the report will be clear to the reviewer. The cover page of the *New Curricula Procedures* carries an advisory that "users of this document must have standards available in the latest edition of the *NASM Handbook* and all current addenda" (i). If you miss this warning on the cover, it will quickly become obvious that the outline is missing certain pieces of information. Specifically, there are two items that are impossible to address without additional reference materials. First, the outline requires a curricular table (item 1) detailing the distribution of courses required for the proposed degree. This must follow the approved NASM format that is detailed in a separate publication entitled *Instructions for Preparing Curricular Tables in the NASM Format*. Second, the outline asks for "an assessment of NASM standards for the new degrees" (item 2b). These are the same standards referenced on the title page and they can be found in the *NASM Handbook*. Having these three NASM publications at the beginning of the process and understanding how they work together can save a lot of time and confusion.

First let me address the relevant NASM standards, since those applicable to your proposed technology degree are actually found in three different locations. This may not be immediately obvious, but failure to realize this fact will result in an application that is incomplete. You do not want your paperwork to be returned because one of the sets of standards was overlooked. The first standards you must address are those for "Majors in or Based on Electronic Media" (64-65), which consists of seven goals you must state for the proposed degree program, including those for concentration within the discipline, how technology will be addressed, and pedagogical methods. These goals should be specific to the proposed technology major and should not address the general baccalaureate curriculum at your school. If you have not been thinking about the big picture, this set of standards may catch you off guard because they are very broad. Hopefully, the general questions set forth in the first section of this paper have prepared you to respond to the more specific questions here.

The second set of standards you must address are those specific to the type of degree you wish to grant. This will differ depending on whether the program of study

results in a professional baccalaureate degree or a liberal arts degree with a major in music. The general standards for a Bachelor of Music (70-71) requires an account of how students are trained as musicians and the connections that are made to general academic studies. For a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science, the standards (71-73) emphasize general education goals related to critical thinking and effective communication and how these inform their musical training. Responding to either of these requires familiarity with the overall curriculum at the college or university offering the technology degree. Therefore, you will likely struggle to respond to these standards clearly and effectively without such knowledge. If necessary, be sure to solicit help from someone who is more familiar with the overall curriculum design.

The last set of standards you must address are those common to all baccalaureate degrees in music (73-75). They cover music topics ranging from performance, aural skills, analysis, history and composition. Your school should have addressed these competencies during prior NASM reviews, so it is worthwhile to consult with the person who prepared paperwork for the last review and request a copy. The differences between existing degree programs and the new technology degree are likely to be minimal. By simply revamping and revising prior responses, it is much easier to address these standards.

The curricular table (item 1) must provide an itemized list of the courses required for the technology degree program. There are detailed instructions and several example tables found in the *Instructions for Preparing Curricular Tables in the NASM Format*. However, there is no example specific to a technology degree. The closest example is for BM degrees in combination with an outside field (CT-17) and I would recommend using it as a model. Use the outside field section found in the middle of the table's body to instead account for the specific technology courses required by your degree. Organizing your curriculum tables in this manner makes it very easy to see all the coursework required for your proposed degree program. It is a useful piece of reference material to prepare for yourself before drafting your responses to the three sets of standards (item 2b). I will address more specific strategies for tackling this paperwork later.



### **3. Curricular Design Issues**

When you reach the point of actually developing individual courses to offer and require for the new degree program, there are several factors that will shape your choices. I have highlighted them here because your paperwork for NASM will need to address all of these issues in some form. Reaching consensus on these broader issues early will avoid potential conflicts as the curriculum takes shape. The particular courses must be tailored to each school. This is as it should be, since a single standardized curriculum would run counter to the freedom NASM has provided for creative curriculum design. For this reason, I will avoid specific recommendations about courses and instead focus my discussion on factors that impact the decision-making process and general issues that should be considered. Where appropriate I will describe specific solution we developed at Stetson in response to these factors.

Based on my observations and experience, the university or school can directly impact curricular decisions for the technology degree program through three primary means: fiscal, facilities, and faculty. These three factors may not be explicitly recognized as impacting curricular decisions and that is my reason for calling attention to them in this section. The first of these should be obvious; technology programs require a comparatively large amount of financial investment in order to be properly maintained. Should your administration need convincing of this point, it may be useful to refer them to a NASM advisory on technology standards issued in December of 1999. This two-page document describes the necessary investment in technology as "significant" and "continuous" (NASM 1999/2003, 2). It is the second of these that is often overlooked in fiscal planning. Hardware and software must be continually renewed through regular updates or a technology program will quickly become irrelevant. It is imperative that your administrators understand this and are willing to make a long-term budgetary commitment to technology. The administration will need to determine how much will be budgeted to technology upgrades each year, who will have input into spending decisions and who will have ultimate authority over these decisions. The earlier these commitments are in place, the more confidently the degree program can move forward.

The facilities used by a technology degree program are in many ways an extension of the fiscal component. The physical spaces employed by the program will require budgeted funds for their upkeep and maintenance, in addition to personnel resources. Make sure that plans for adequate teaching and working spaces are part of the financial dialogue. Teaching technology effectively requires modern tools such as those found in so-called "smart classrooms". Devices for video projection and media playback enable lectures to be more dynamic. While it is certainly possible to teach in older classrooms with simple chalkboards, students will quickly recognize the disconnect between the topic being taught and the tools used to teach. Workspaces for students should include some sort of laboratory setup consisting of multiple computers with appropriate peripheral devices. The computers should be running the necessary software to complete assigned projects. Advanced work will likely require a special lab or studio with a larger variety of equipment but fewer workstations. How this studio is configured will depend largely on the emphasis of the degree program. For example, an emphasis in recording and production would likely necessitate a digital audio workstation and isolation booth, while an emphasis in software development may only require a few high-end workstations and specialized development software. It is possible to have these workspaces double as classrooms so that faculty can provide hands-on instruction. Such dual use can be an excellent cost saving measure, provided the schedule permits adequate free time for students to use the room outside of class meetings.

The faculty becomes a factor in curricular decisions in one of two ways: either the faculty employed by a school shapes the structure of degree program or the structure degree program shapes the faculty to be hired by the school. Which route a university or college takes is a decision for the administration. When the specialties of the faculty member associated with a program are not in harmony with the goals of the program, it is detrimental for both parties. This seems obvious, but it needs to be stated. Most often the problem occurs because of a failure to recognize how broad the field of music technology really is. This directly relates back to the general question about emphasis within music technology. If that decision has been made decisively at an early stage, make sure it is duly considered during any subsequent hiring process. NASM requires

schools to account for the qualifications of current faculty and faculty to be hired as part of a new degree program. They also require a designated program director and brief biographical sketch of that person. By requiring schools to account for a program director's major areas of "creative work and research" (*New Curricula Procedures*, 12), it appears that NASM ideally wants the specialties of faculty and programs to be well matched.

There are of course other factors, such as graduation standards held by the university or the distribution of general studies courses. Within the music school or department, it is also very important to reach an understanding with the other faculty about where your new program will fit it. Your students in the new technology program will need to take private lessons, study theory and learn analysis. It is important to have a dialogue with your music colleagues early on about how these students may be different and how they must meet common standards for all music majors. At Stetson, every BM must give a senior recital, so one of our biggest questions was what a senior recital for a music technology major should look like? Making this a part of my curriculum affects how the course sequence must be designed prior to the final year.

Developing any new music technology courses demands that you start thinking about specific skills that will be developed and topics that will be covered, while being mindful of the external factors that have already been outlined. Don't attempt to be too broad with the topics you cover and make sure the sequence of required courses for the degree meets your stated goals for the program. There must be a progression that makes sense, so that the skills students learn build on each other with each semester. Pre-requisites can be a helpful device in making sure this progression works, but be careful of the side effects of setting them too high. You may find yourself with too few qualified students to adequately fill the course. Ideally, the courses will culminate in a capstone project that allows students to synthesize the skills learned in previous semesters. Make sure that your course sequence supports this capstone experience and that check points are built in along the way to gauge student progress. I would also advise against structuring courses around the software that is taught. With the ownership and product changes that frequently occur in software development, you do

not want to have to resubmit paperwork to your curriculum committee each time you change your multi-track audio sequencer of choice.

As you design individual courses, it is useful to consider the methods of instruction used for each one. Will these be lecture courses, applied learning courses or some combination of the two? Application is a vitally important part of learning music technology. It is difficult to imagine a curriculum without some component where the students put their knowledge into practice by creating projects with the available technological tools. Think about where certain types of projects will best fit into your overall curriculum and how they help build the ideal set of skills you want graduates to have. Don't be afraid to use less traditional course formats if they suit your particular needs. At Stetson, we have a seminar course that every major must take every semester they are in residence. This one-credit class allows our majors to meet with their peers once a week and work on special projects or study topics as a team. The peer interaction has become a vital component of our program, giving the younger students a vision for where they are heading and older students a chance to take on mentoring roles. We sacrificed lecture and project courses within our curriculum in order to allocate hours to this seminar, but the benefits far outweigh any losses.

You must also consider how the music technology courses will relate to other music degree programs. The existing programs at a school will affect decisions about the new music technology program by virtue of the fact that they serve a common student body and draw from the same pool of financial resources. It is important that the new program not be seen as encroaching on territory that another program perceives as its own. You should consider how the technology courses might serve the other music students, not just technology majors. Will students from other music majors be permitted to take technology courses? Should they be required to take a technology course? Does it make sense to reserve certain courses for technology majors only?

In the context of the larger university, the questions only grow in number. Should we let non-music majors into the music technology courses? Should there be some minimal music competency in order to enroll? There are many programs in the larger university community that share interests with music technology such as digital arts, media arts, computer science, acoustics and engineering. The overriding question is

what level of interaction with these students makes the most sense for your program. If a healthy relationship with these other programs on campus can be formed early in the process, there is great potential for sharing resources such as teaching labs and studio space. You may want to consider requiring courses from these other departments or programs, rather than offering duplicate courses within your program. Talk to these departments to make sure they can accommodate additional students and will offer courses on a regular basis. There is also the potential that your music technology courses could serve as recommended electives for these related disciplines, providing you with a reserve of interested students to help fill your classes.

#### **4. Planning Your Timeline**

Now let me transition to the practical steps you must take in order to submit a proposal for a new music technology degree to NASM. New degree programs that are submitted for plan approval must be reviewed at one of the two NASM Commission meetings held in June and November each year. The paperwork must be submitted to the national office in advanced so that there is time to distribute copies to the relevant committee members prior to the meeting. The deadlines for submission are May 1st and October 1st (*New Curricula Procedures*, 4). This means that if you miss a deadline for some reason, you have another six months to wait before another opportunity for review is possible. This makes it very important to plan your timeline in advance and make sure you are not rushing to finish at the last minute. NASM guidelines state that you may not advertise your degree or admit students prior to plan approval by the commission (*New Curricula Procedures*, 6), making a six-month delay potentially detrimental to recruitment cycles.

Preparing the paperwork will require frequent communication with your colleagues and administration. The most important person you will likely need to communicate with is your dean or department chair. He or she is likely to be the best resource for answering questions about the music curriculum as a whole and is also the school's representative to NASM. Even though you may be the one preparing the paperwork, it is this person's name that will go on the front of the report. Therefore he or she has a personal stake in the process. Make sure that you have open lines of

communication with this person. Monthly meetings to sort through issues as they arise might be a good strategy for keeping the process on track. Good lines of communication with the other music faculty are also important for answering specific questions about the curriculum. The report requires descriptions of how music competencies ranging from "Aural Skills and Analysis" to "Repertory and History" are being addressed by the curriculum. Consult with faculty that teach courses in these areas and make sure any language referring to their courses is accurate. You will also need to communicate with library faculty and staff for a short report on their available resources. In order to ensure quick responses, you need to learn their individual habits. Knowing their preferred method of communication (Who uses email? Who prefers phone calls or a note in their box?) can help speed things up tremendously. It is also good to know who needs a lot of time to respond. This information may help you anticipate any delays generated by that person and keep things on schedule.

A big factor in planning your timeline will be the university or college's own curriculum review process. The school must approve the new degree proposal before it can be considered by NASM (*New Curricula Procedures*, 6). This means you need to first learn the procedure on your campus for approving curriculum changes. There may be a curriculum process at the school or department level, a separate process at the university level and potential one at the state level for public institutions. Talk to the administration and any faculty members who sit on the curriculum committee. Once you have opened the lines of communication, request the deadlines for the committees to review your proposal and the dates of any meetings. In order to factor this into your preparation, you should work backward from the NASM deadline you are trying to meet. If the curriculum committee meetings are too late for the NASM deadlines, you will need to submit at an earlier campus deadline or a later NASM deadline. You also may want to give yourself an extra meeting to resubmit to the committee should they request changes after the first time you submit. Planning around the university's procedures is more likely than anything else to move up your timeline.

## **5. Preparing Your Report**

The report you will submit to NASM is not a single continuous piece of prose like a paper prepared for publication. The format should be more like an extended outline with short segments of prose responding to each point in the hierarchy. Start sketching your outline by duplicating the items found in the *New Curricula Procedures* (11-12). They are numbered 1 through 2h, numbers that should be duplicated in your outline. Without deviating from the order they are listed by NASM. The phrases in bold from the *New Curricula Procedures* can be used as headings for your outline, although you may wish to shorten a few of them. Duplicating this format makes it absolutely clear which point you are responding to in your report, leaving the reviewers with no doubt about the context of each comment. As described in section 2 of this paper, item 2b requires a multifaceted response. Three distinct sets of applicable standards from the *NASM Handbook* must be addressed within your response to this item, the standards for: 1) majors in or based on electronic media (64-65), 2) professional baccalaureate (70-71) or liberal arts majors (71-73), and 3) competencies common to all baccalaureate degrees (73-75). The clearest method for accomplishing this task is to create three sub-outlines that duplicate the framework used in the *NASM Handbook*. The standards in each set are numbered and lettered, making it necessary to once again transfer NASM's numbers to your report. Make sure you respond to each point in their outline with a corresponding point in your report and keep the order consistent. Unlike the outline found in the *New Curricula Procedures*, not all of the standards contain headings or phrases in bold for you to incorporate into your outlines. In the cases where these are absent, don't hesitate to use a key phrase from the passage to adopt as a section heading. In order to clarify the outline formatting described here, I have included the basic framework used by Stetson for our plan approval application as an appendix at the end of this paper.

Once you have your outline in place, insert brief passages of text to respond to each item. The tone of your writing needs to be direct and informative. Remember that the reviewers will be reading several reports and need them to be formatted in a manner that provides the information quickly and concisely. By using an outline based on NASM's published standards and providing short headings in bold, you can launch

directly into your answer and avoid unnecessary prose just to explain which point you are responding to. Keep jargon to a minimum and try to discuss technical matters in broad terms, because your target audience is comprised of administrators who may not be familiar with specialized terminology. Whenever appropriate in your text, reference specific courses that address the item you are responding to. Course titles need to be consistent and it is a good idea to follow a title with the corresponding course number and number of credits in parentheses (e.g., *Music History* [MC398-399, 6 credit hours]). Each passage does not have to be very long though. There are a many responses that can easily be limited to only two or three sentences. The one item that does require a more in depth answer is the rationale (item 2g) for adding your technology degree program. This is your chance to make the case for NASM approval of the degree and therefore deserves an expanded explanation to ensure that your point gets across.

Within the report, there are three items that will likely require extra attention: the curricular table, library holdings and a financial report from the dean or department chair. Because each requires tables and charts, it may be desirable to attach them as numbered appendices to the outline that organizes the majority of the report. As I mentioned in section 2, the curricular table (item 1) must follow the guidelines found in *Instructions for Preparing Curricular Tables in the NASM Format*. Even if you prepared it in advance of writing the report, you should revisit the table to ensure it follows NASM's formatting standards. The body of the curricular table should be organized into three groups: general music courses, courses specific to the technology major and general studies courses. Each course or course sequence must be listed on a single line with the course number and number of credits awarded in a column to the right. For each section, use the column to tally the total credits and provide a sum. Make sure your course numbers, number of credits and sum totals are all accurate. An overall total for the degree and the total number of upper-division credits are also required. The header for the curricular table should summarize how the overall credit total is distributed among the three groups, expressing each group as a percentage of the overall course total. The required balance between these groups will depend on the type of baccalaureate degree being awarded (*NASM Handbook*, 68-69). It is worth noting that NASM considers 100% to be 120 semester hours and therefore wants



schools to consistently use 120 as a divisor when computing percentages.

Consequently, if your degree requires a higher total than 120, your distribution percentages will total more than 100%.

The report on library holdings and acquisitions (item 2f) will require assistance from the music librarian at your school. Be sure to give him or her adequate lead time to prepare the necessary data for the report. The data must reflect expenditures for years past and budgeting for the upcoming academic year. Librarians will be in the habit of filling such reports on an annual basis, but may not be ready with this year's data at the time you need it for your deadline. The format your librarian provides may also be different than the one described by NASM (*New Curricula Procedures*, 12), so be prepared to reformat the data if necessary. Note that this breakdown is described as ideal. Try to come as close to NASM's guidelines as possible, but don't get completely hung up if the format differs only slightly.

A financial report prepared by the dean or department chair will likely be the last piece added to the request for degree approval. It will form part of your description of the fiscal resources available (item 2d). Because it contains potentially sensitive financial data (e.g., salaries & scholarships), the dean may wish to add it to the report as a final step before sending it to NASM. This means you may never see it and need to format the overall report in manner that accommodates this. At Stetson, our solution was to include these data as the final numbered appendix. By doing this it can end the report and not interrupt the flow of the rest of the document. The report is one that must be kept current for NASM, which means it should be ready to pull from a file, copy and attach without delaying your report. However, you should still check with your dean or department chair in advance to make sure this planned addition is ready for inclusion.

## **6. Conclusion**

If you are the person leading the effort to establish a music technology degree at your institution, the process of pursuing NASM approval breaks down into five stages. First, you and the administration must ask general questions in order to clarify your shared vision for the new degree. Second, you need access to the relevant NASM documents so that they can be referenced throughout the process. Third, you must

face a variety of curricular design issues before launching any new courses for the program. Fourth, you should plan out your timeline with an eye toward meeting one of the two annual NASM deadlines. Finally, you can begin drafting your report by following the outline set forth in NASM's publications. By understanding and managing each stage carefully, you will see steady progress toward your goal of establishing a music technology degree program.

After your degree plan is approved by NASM, your school may begin admitting students. However, there is one last step to the process: the final approval for listing. After three graduates have completed the program, the school must submit their transcripts to NASM along with notice of any changes to the degree made since plan approval (*New Curricula Procedures*, 18). This ensures that the school accounts for things that had to be changed while implementing the degree plan and afterwards grants a more permanent listing status in the NASM directory. The advice I received on this was that cleaner transcripts were better. In other words, if your first graduate had a lot of course substitutions, it might be best to wait and not include that one. We have not reached this point yet at Stetson, but look forward to requesting our final approval for listing in 2009.

Pursuing approval for a new degree program from NASM is a slow process. More than anything, I hope that this paper makes it very clear that the report cannot be rushed. At Stetson University, the author was fortunate to have a head start. We were essentially codifying and re-titling an existing course of study under the BM with Outside Emphasis program at our school. Even though we had all of our courses, faculty and facilities in place, preparing the report of behalf of Stetson still required an entire academic year, albeit while maintaining a full teaching load. During this time, I learned to navigate the different NASM standards and gained a deeper appreciation for the way they held the school accountable. But it was also very frustrating at times trying to mentally assemble the relevant passages within NASM's publications and making continuous progress toward the deadline. My objective with this paper was to help others more easily sort through the paperwork and keep from stressing out too much.

In conclusion, I need to thank Dr. James Woodward, a man with over 20 years of NASM experience who was dean of the music school during the preparation of my

report. His guidance and mentoring was invaluable. I am also grateful that he put the responsibility for preparing this report on me because it gave me a much deeper appreciation for the music curriculum as a whole. Thanks as well to Dr. Jean West, who was our associate dean (now interim dean) for her careful reading of the report and the clarifications that resulted. I also want to thank my colleagues on the faculty at Stetson for their gracious responses as I emailed them throughout the process for seemingly random bits of information about their classes. I hope that everyone who reads this paper and embarks on a similar process has a support system as generous and congenial as the one I enjoyed at Stetson while preparing our report for NASM.

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### ***Appendix: Plan Approval Outline***

Proposal for a New Undergraduate Degree  
Bachelor of Music in Music Technology

1. Curricular table

2. a. Degree Title

Bachelor of Music in Music Technology

Goals

Objectives

2. b. Compliance with NASM standards

(1) Operational Standards (II)

N. Majors in or Based on Electronic Media

1. Disciplinary goals:
2. Technology goals:
3. Problem solving goals:
4. Delivery system goals:
5. Specialization goals:
6. General basic goals for education in music:
7. General liberal education goals:

(2) General Standards for Graduation from Curricula Leading to Baccalaureate Degrees in Music (V)

- A. Musicianship:
- B. General Studies:
- C. Relationships between Musicianship and General Studies:
- D. Professional Health:
- E. Residence:

(3) Competencies Common to All Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Music (VII)

- A. Performance
  1. Major performance area:
  2. Repertory overview:

3. Fluency:

4. Leadership and collaboration:

5. Keyboard competency:

6. Ensemble experiences:

B. Aural Skills and Analysis

1. Recognition:

2. Application:

3. Contextualization:

C. Composition and Improvisation

1. Rudimentary capacity:

2. Ability in multiple music languages:

D. Repertory and History

1. Historical knowledge:

2. Exposure to live music:

E. Technology

1. Basic overview:

2. Working knowledge:

F. Synthesis

1. Independent problem solving:

2. Value judgments:

3. Comprehensive repertory:

4. Musical enterprise:

2. c. Faculty

2. d. Fiscal resources

2. e. Facilities

2. f. Library holdings and learning resources

2. g. Rationale

(1) Reasons for adding this degree:

(2) Unique aspects of this degree as distinguished from other degrees or options presently offered:

(3) Number of students expected to be served:

(4) Expectations for placement of graduates:

2. h. Relationship to Ongoing Programs