

# **Achievement and Quality: Higher Education in the Arts**

— COMPOSITE TEXT VERSION —

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## **COUNCIL OF ARTS ACCREDITING ASSOCIATIONS**

National Association of Schools of Art and Design

National Association of Schools of Dance

National Association of Schools of Music

National Association of Schools of Theatre

This is a composite version of material developed for and presented online at <https://www.arts-accredit.org/council-of-arts-accrediting-associations/achievement-quality/>.

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## **Achievement and Quality: Higher Education in the Arts**

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# **Achievement and Quality: Higher Education in the Arts**

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The following set of information is intended to assist individuals and institutions. It has been developed by the arts accrediting associations and reflects a basic consensus by the representatives of over 1000 accredited institutions and programs across the disciplines of art and design, dance, music, and theatre who seek broader public understanding of the nature of what they do and how they evaluate it as experienced professionals.

## **Critically Important Notes**

### **1. Accreditation Disclaimer**

Except where specifically noted, the information provided here does not constitute accreditation requirements. These documents have been developed to serve the professional development and policy analysis functions of the arts accrediting associations.

### **2. Relationships to Education, Scholarship, Research**

The material presented in this set of information addresses achievement and quality weighted toward the perspectives of creating and performing works of art. These perspectives have many applications to and often significantly inform study and projects in education, scholarship, and research in or about the arts. However, the fields of education, scholarship, and research have their own specific goals and criteria for success. These can be and regularly are combined with those of the arts, in part because there are significant commonalities as well as differences among all of them.

### **3. Relationship to Degrees and Credentials**

The primary purpose of this material is to describe attributes and evaluation approaches of the arts and professionally oriented studies in them without regard to formats for learning provided by degrees. For one section, the expectations of professional and liberal arts undergraduate degrees are used to illustrate the composite fundamental competencies of specializations in each art form. But other combinations of degrees or studies may produce the competencies indicated. The principles outlined apply to all types of degrees, liberal arts or professional, that have significant creative and/or performance objectives.

### **4. Composite Text Version**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Achievement and Quality: Higher Education in the Arts**

The arts disciplines are the arts disciplines because each of them deals with content and the human condition in a unique way. Therefore, each of the arts disciplines needs to be considered on its own terms, especially when the purpose is the education of creators and performers.

#### **The Arts and Evaluation**

The arts disciplines are virtually synonymous with achievement and quality. Part of the reason is continuous, rigorous evaluation. Individuals create and perform under pressures generated by unremitting, moment-to-moment self-criticism. Peers, teachers, mentors and critics continuously add their perspectives. The pervasiveness of assessment begins early, often in childhood. In higher education, it informs beginnings, middles, and ends of programs. Advanced levels of knowledge, skills, and potential must be demonstrated for admission to professionally-oriented studies in creation and performance, even at the undergraduate level. Following admission, younger or less-experienced artists improve the quality of their individual work by gaining additional knowledge and skills. Public demonstrations of competence are required for graduation. As study continues, expectations rise. *Evaluation Mechanisms in the Arts*

The set of knowledge and skills gained through study and evaluation is not the work or the quality itself, but rather their enabler. Works of art are only partially composed of the knowledge and skills evident in them. This truth reflects another: institutions can nurture and evaluate the development of competencies in individuals, but they cannot produce, and thus are not responsible for, the quality manifested in works of art created by individual uses of the competencies developed. *The Individual as Primary Source; Concepts Associated with Quality in Works of Art*

To work effectively in institutions with these and other facts and complexities, achievement and quality in the arts in higher education must be pursued and assessed in specific terms. Using the term “quality” in the abstract is not useful. Different sets of terms associated with different perspectives on achievement and quality produce different results. It is important not to conflate different sets of terms and perspectives. *Quality as Word and Meaning; Achievement and Quality are in Terms of Something*

#### **Evaluation Perspectives**

This set of documents considers the issue of quality and achievement in terms of three perspectives: (a) individual, (b) institutional, and (c) public. Introductory Information: *National Accreditation Standards; Evaluation, Quantitative Methodologies, and Verbalization; Evaluation Perspectives: Individual; Institutional; External Perceptions*

- a. Evaluating individual student learning involves two basic things:
  1. Levels of achievement in acquiring basic professional-level knowledge and skills in one or more of the art forms. These competencies are spelled out in the content standards of the arts accrediting associations. *Basic Competency Index by Discipline and Specialization—Undergraduate*
  2. The individual application of knowledge, skills, and capabilities to works in the art forms that fulfill general artistic goals in unique ways. Often, one such goal is the integration of

multiple elements into an optimum relationship in a single work. However, there are an infinite number of ways to reach this goal. For example, Bach and Mahler each achieve this optimum relationship but the musical results are vastly different. Indeed, there are significant differences in the way integration is achieved from work to work by the same artist. This principle applies to multiple goals across the art forms. *Annotated list of attributes for individual artistic achievement*

- b. Evaluating results and conditions of quality and achievement in institutions involves two basic things:
1. The extent to which individual knowledge and skills (a.1. and 2. above), and work in the arts disciplines are nurtured and advanced by what the institution is and does.
  2. The attributes, priorities, and practices of the institution compared with characteristics normally found where there are significant, continuing aggregations of individual achievement.

Basic necessities and characteristics are found in accreditation standards. *Operational Standards Index by Discipline*

Additional attributes based on decades of experience in reviewing hundreds of institutions are also available. *Evaluating Elements and Conditions for Quality and Achievement in an Institution, School, Department, or Program*

- c. Evaluating public or external perceptions about achievement and quality involves two basic things:
1. The extent to which the institution is successful in areas that produce renown or images of renown.
  2. The extent to which achievements or images of renown are connected to student learning (a.1. and 2. above) and instructional achievement (b.1. and 2. above) at specific points in time.

The sources and uses of public perceptions are fascinating and somewhat seductive. In many instances, renown is developed over time from combinations of individual and institutional achievements. And, to some extent, notoriety can be purchased. But positive public perceptions cannot be the whole story for those with responsibility for student learning.

Institutional renown can neither predict nor generate individual results. No matter how high they are, admission and graduation requirements can define only thresholds, not ultimate individual achievements in any art form.

Further, the images producing public perceptions are often symbolic or surrogate indicators that are not truly connected to substantive individual or institutional achievement, or the future prospects of either. Perceptions of those with little knowledge of the field or the institution rarely provide the basis for effective evaluation of what is being accomplished by individual students at any given time.

The benefits of renown are unquestionable, but renown is a trailing indicator. The arts themselves work from and with this premise.

*Evaluating External Perceptions of Institutions*

## **Art as a Mode of Thought**

Whatever perspectives or combinations are chosen, and whatever tools are used, effective, useful evaluation of achievement and quality must be based on a particular mode of thought and work used in the arts. Though deeply intellectual, art-making works differently than research or scholarship in the sciences, humanities, or social sciences. One example: in art, discerning, analyzing, or defining technical means is never the whole, but only a few of many critical elements in the creation or performance of a work. Another example: art finds things out by expressing powerfully what cannot be fully known. *Creative Work, Inquiry, Research, and Scholarship*

Art is focused on creation from nothing, or from the basis of such things as choreography, design, musical scores, scripts and so forth. Just as art works with a distinctive mode of thought, individual art forms use these modes of thought in unique ways. *Art as a Mode of Thought*

Over the centuries, a number of concepts associated with quality in the arts have become observable. For example, general rules shape and form each arts discipline, and create frameworks for highly individualistic action and reaction. However, attempts to impose detailed rules usually stifle art. *The role of time in assessing achievement; Concepts Associated with Quality in Works of Art*

Art-making is based on principles of composition or design. The goal is a specific, successful compilation or aggregation from a virtually infinite number of possibilities. In some fields, the goal is to produce results that can be replicated exactly, or at least verified by following the same research path or using the same facts. At the highest level of achievement in the arts, the result is unique expression.

## **Conclusion**

For individuals concerned about the achievements and quality of arts programs in higher education and how they might improve, there are multiple ways to engage in substantive analysis. But each successful way is centered on the distinct natures and purposes of work in the art forms. Time spent on other approaches is wasted. *Crafting Unique Evaluations; Cautions; Numbers and Evaluation in the Arts*

The most effective education and evaluation systems in the arts in higher education are developed from an artistic rather than a technical perspective. This means that criteria, approaches, techniques, and expectations are crafted uniquely for specific situations while reflecting artistic capability expectations for professional-level work. The institutions that take this approach and pursue it through every aspect of their arts curricula and programming achieve the most over time. Focusing on the substance of arts learning, individual by individual, is the key to success.

# Achievement and Quality: Higher Education in the Arts

## INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

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*This set of texts reflects a belief based on centuries of experience: The natures of the arts disciplines and the ways work is done in them dictate the basic principles and approaches necessary for achievement and quality in educational settings and in evaluation.*

Works of the highest quality in the art forms are among the greatest human achievements. They exert significant influence on culture, often perpetually. They are the basis for research and scholarship in the arts and in many other fields.

Higher education has traditionally played a critical role in fostering achievement and building quality in the arts disciplines. Content and methods of instruction evolve over time, following and extending the natures of the various art forms and reflecting the general nature of art as a mode of thought and action. But a fundamental goal remains: to enable younger or less experienced artists to improve the quality of their work in order to achieve excellence.

Reaching this goal in higher education requires connecting achievement and quality with the arts in sophisticated ways based on the natures of fields and of the work being done.

This set of texts provides an introduction to the challenges inherent in considerations of achievement and quality, recognizing the presence of many complexities and points of view.

The information provided is in four parts:

- a set of basic conceptual information;
- general observations about the nature of the art forms and quality and achievement in them;
- issues of evaluation from three perspectives: individual, institutional, and public;
- a set of resource documents.

## BASIC CONCEPTUAL INFORMATION

### Quality as Word and Meaning

Quality is a problematic word. It is used so casually in so many different contexts that it has little precision. A number of examples demonstrate the result:

1. Quality is associated with cost. The more something costs, the higher its perceived quality.
2. Quality is associated with winning. In order to demonstrate quality, it seems necessary to triumph in some way over others, particularly in a public way.
3. Images of quality are often engineered and constructed. It is relatively easy to identify what criteria a specific group of people use to determine quality and then produce images to fit those criteria.
4. The idea of quality remains under attack in certain intellectual circles where the term “quality” is associated with condescension, cultural oppression, elitism, philosophical and methodological rigidity, and other negatives.
5. There are not always correlations between perceptions of quality and real achievement.

Working seriously toward achievement and quality in the arts in higher education requires clarity about specific circumstances, perspectives, and goals. Otherwise, discussions and decision-making suffer.

#### ***More Information:***

[Achievement and Quality Are in Terms of Something](#)  
[Concepts Associated with Quality in Works of Art](#)

### Achievement and Quality are in Terms of Something

It is not particularly useful to use the terms “quality” or “achievement” in the abstract. To conduct meaningful analyses and make practical decisions, it is necessary to talk about achievement and quality in terms of something.

The terms chosen matter. They channel effort into specific kinds of achievement based on specific aspirations or perceptions regarding quality. When choosing, a number of considerations are critical:

1. Different fields, disciplines, and specializations within disciplines have different purposes and thus different approaches to and indicators of achievement and quality.
2. The choices an institution makes about the aspects of the arts it will teach and study call forth specific issues regarding achievement and quality.
3. There are differences in quality work *in*, *about*, and *for* something. In the arts, it is important not to conflate the criteria for evaluation and achievement with those for scholarly or scientific analysis, or advocacy.



4. In terms of creating and presenting works of art, quality is a complex issue involving intent, content, process or technique, and product or results. There can be varying levels of quality among these in a particular artistic effort.
5. In creation and performance, the highest levels of achievement and quality are determined by the profession, which includes the academy; in scholarship, research, and education, they are determined primarily by professions housed in the academy.
6. Institutional and individual achievement and quality are not the same thing. One does not necessarily produce the other, although the relationships can be strong.
7. Institutional quality can, and often is, considered by the public in external terms not necessarily associated with work in a specific arts discipline. For example, wealth and availability of resources, exclusivity, financial success, physical appearances, fame, reputation, history, winning in contests, polls, and ratings, identification with popular ideas or doctrines, associations with other symbols of success, pursuing connections into the profession, what graduates are accomplishing that achieves national and international recognition, and so forth.
8. Each institution decides by design or default the extent to which it will pursue quality in terms of (a) external perceptions and/or (b) fulfillment of internal purposes and agendas associated with field and disciplinary advancement, and with fostering individual achievement.

***More Information:***

Achievement and Quality in Terms of:  
individual work, institutional capabilities and results, and public perceptions

## **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON QUALITY, ACHIEVEMENT, AND THE NATURES OF THE ART FORMS**

### **Art as a Mode of Thought**

It is not by accident that we divide all academic disciplines into fields: the arts, the humanities, the sciences, and the social sciences. If all or any were the same, there would be no need for the separate designations.

1. As a field, art uses a mode of thought oriented primarily toward making choices and arrangements among a few or many sets of materials to create something new or to produce a unique version of a work. It is focused on creation from nothing or from the basis of such things as choreography, designs, musical scores, scripts, and so forth.
2. The artistic mode of thought is one way of working in the world, and it can be contrasted with other ways of working. It is not the same as research or scholarship in the sciences, humanities, or social sciences; nor is it the same as the application of technical means to various problems. Discerning, analyzing, defining, or applying technical means are only a few of the many critical elements of composition, design, or performance.
3. At the highest levels, the artistic mode of thought requires advanced intellectually-based capabilities in compilation and integration to achieve specific purposes, often for a specific

time and place. The artistic mode of thought and the capabilities it requires are applicable to many other fields and professions, but they are at the core of the arts disciplines.

4. The artistic mode of thought is applied to work in the various arts disciplines. However, each of the disciplines is different. The disciplines remain different even when they are combined. Just as the artistic mode of thought has its own nature, each arts discipline also has its own nature.
5. There are differences among the artistic mode of thought and other modes of thought, and differences among the arts disciplines. However, these differences do not preclude virtually infinite numbers of connections and combinations among modes of thought, the arts disciplines, and other disciplines. In principle, connections do not obviate differences; differences do not obviate connections; differences and connections reveal and enrich each other in applications of the artistic mode of thought.
6. In some fields, a major purpose is to reveal internal complexities. Presentations of work reveal their intricacies and difficulties of achievement. In the arts, a typical goal is to hide the internal complexities. On the surface, works seem natural, effortless, inevitable. For this reason, a Mozart symphony can be appreciated on significantly different levels by a seven-year-old violin student and by a seventy-year-old conductor.
7. It does not always take advanced knowledge in the arts disciplines to appreciate or even revere advanced application of the artistic mode of thought in the art forms. What is the mathematical counterpart of Shakespeare's Macbeth, for example? Appreciation, therefore, does not equal in-depth understanding.
8. In some fields, the goal is to produce results that can be replicated, or at least verified, by following the same research path or using the same facts. At the highest levels of achievement in the arts, the result is unique expression.
9. In many fields or disciplines, work at the highest levels focuses aspiration primarily in terms of the field itself—mathematicians seek to achieve in terms that can be understood by professional mathematicians. In the arts, there are all kinds and levels of aspiration for specific works, in part because the arts are connected to so many things. The arts function both on their own terms and in terms of many other realms of thought, fact and action. A work is usually about many things at once—a play is dramatic history, process, history, psychology, philosophy, and so forth. Works of art can be small, multidimensional universes.
10. In many fields, success is described in terms of developing explanations or verifications in terms of words or numbers. In the arts, even in forms that use words, success is calibrated in large part on the ability of the work of art or its presentation to reach places in human response that transcend verbal or numerical explanation.

***More Information:***

Numbers and Evaluation in the Arts  
Creative Work, Inquiry, Research, and Scholarship

## **Achievement and Quality Over Time**

The arts disciplines and achievements in them are recognized worldwide as major components of civilization. The arts are not just one among other major fields of endeavor, but rather a deeply respected area of human action and achievement in their own right.

1. In the arts, the new does not replace the old, but rather comes alongside it. The old does not just become history, it stays alive in new performances and new interpretations. The art itself continues to speak to individuals down through time. Achievement and quality, therefore, are not centered on replacing previous works of art.
2. In the arts, time sifts achievement and produces the ultimate evaluation. It can take a long time for the quality of a body of work to be fully understood, even among experts. It is important to remember that there are distinctions between fame and achievement, and that these distinctions are often hard to make at any specific time.
3. The high levels of achievement and quality manifested in the arts depend on values and infrastructures dedicated to the artistic mode of thought and a willingness to invest in them over time. They include, but are not limited to, education, resources, and high aspiration.

### ***More Information:***

Art as a Mode of Thought

Evaluating Elements and Conditions for Quality and Achievement in Institutions

## **The Individual as Primary Source**

Achievement and quality come from the work of individuals. Individuals vary in the range, scope, and depth of their abilities, education, talent, and vision. These two realities underlie the intense competition among a significant number of institutions for students and faculty showing the greatest promise in terms of competence, capacity, aspiration, and dedication.

1. In terms of achievement, most students entering a professionally-oriented undergraduate program in the arts in higher education must already demonstrate advanced levels of competence and/or potential as a condition of acceptance. In some arts disciplines, a high level of competence in the field of specialization is required. This is in contrast with some other fields where professional competency development is appropriately deferred until graduate school.
2. The work of the arts as a whole needs many people fulfilling different functions at high levels of excellence. In addition to creation and performance, individual achievement and quality is essential in teaching, scholarship, research, the arts therapies, the management and support sectors of the arts, and so forth. Each of these areas requires a deep understanding of what the arts are, in essence, and how they work as a mode of thought and action.
3. Because so much of the source of quality is individual, it is extremely problematic to assume that what works in one case will work automatically in another. In pedagogical approaches, there are no universal certainties.

### ***More Information:***

Important Characteristics of Individual Achievement  
Creative Work, Inquiry, Research, and Scholarship

## **Concepts Associated with Quality in Works of Art**

The natures of the arts dictate certain terms for considering achievement and quality in terms of the art forms themselves. The selection of attributes below is provided for institutions that want to consider the arts on their own terms, in the same sense as they consider other disciplines on their own terms. Considering a discipline on its own terms means working with it and assessing it in terms of its general intent, content, process, and products.

1. Achievement and quality in creation or performance occur when the work is successful in terms of the art form. A work may also be successful in other terms: it may make money, it may become famous, it may support a cause, it may enhance a celebration, it may be the basis for research and scholarship in other fields. However, success in any of these areas is not a substitute for success in terms of the art form.
2. The arts disciplines have essential technical components. It is not enough simply to conceive; one must also be able to execute. Normally, technical ability is pursued by artists throughout their careers. Helping the artist achieve eventual virtuosity is a major purpose of arts programs in higher education.
3. Technique, though essential, is not the sole ingredient of art or the sole measure of achievement.
4. At advanced and complex levels, the arts involve work with deep structure, layers of connection, integration, and synthesis that function on many perceptual and intellectual levels. For example, developing deep structure within specific amounts of time or space and creating balances between stasis and change and between form and content are major aspects of composition or design in all the art forms. Ability to make effective choices, arrangements, and juxtapositions of elements of the art form is an element of quality determination.
5. The artist may deal with a universal truth, belief, or perceptual system, but does so within the parameters established by the unique goal of a particular work.
6. There are general rules that shape and inform each arts discipline, and create frameworks for highly individualistic action and reaction. However, attempts to impose detailed rules usually stifle art.
7. Evaluation is continuous in the formation or presentation of a work of art. Assessment criteria used by arts professionals reflect the nature of the artistic mode of thought and the natures of each of the arts disciplines themselves. Methodologies used to evaluate works or procedures in other fields may be useful in the arts, but often are not.
8. High achievement associated with quality requires an understanding of distinctions between quality of process and quality of result. Goals, or desired results, are the drivers of technical process; process is only a means to achieve specific goals.
9. In the development of works of art, it does not matter how little or how much time is spent if the result is outstanding. Efficiency has no particular virtue.

### ***More Information:***

#### **Important Attributes and Characteristics of Individual Achievement**

## **Creative Work, Inquiry, Research, and Scholarship**

1. Professional work in the arts disciplines is produced through creative endeavor, inquiry, and investigation.

Each type of work and each individual work exhibits specific intent, content, methodology, and product.

Individual or group decisions about these four elements shape the ways that creativity, inquiry, and investigation are used to produce work in various artistic, scholarly, pedagogical, or other specializations.

Competency to practice in one or more fields of specialization includes the ability to conduct the types of creative work, inquiry, and investigation normally associated with the specialization(s) chosen.

2. These types include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Creative work in that results in contributions to the body of knowledge and practice in the discipline.
  - b. The development and application or incorporation of various types of inquiry and investigation, including formal research or scholarship the artist wishes to use in the creation or performance of a work of art.
  - c. Research and scholarship as defined and practiced by professional humanists, scientists, and social scientists.
  - d. The development, compilation, and application or incorporation of inquiry results, including those produced by formal research and scholarship, in decisions about pedagogy and teaching, policy-making, and other applications in various contexts.

# EVALUATING ACHIEVEMENT AND QUALITY

*The evaluation lists that follow address issues from three perspectives that are specific to individual persons and institutions. They are areas of quality and achievement that benefit most from attention on a case specific basis. They are not readily amenable to standardization.*

The three perspectives—individual, institutional, external perceptions—provide ways for institutions to review the complexities of achievement and quality. They show that achieving quality is far more than placement in a rubric or hitting a set of targets, especially if they are expressed only in mathematical terms. They indicate the necessity of being clear about priorities. It is extremely important to note that high levels of student achievement in terms of ability to produce work of high quality are not necessarily dependent on external perceptions held about the institution.

The lists and assessments based on them are not technical projects, but artistic projects; technical aspects may be important, but they are not everything. This means, for example, that one can start with any element in any list and ask questions about the relationships of that element to other elements in the same list or in other lists.

Individual  
Institutional  
External Perceptions

## Explanatory Notes

### **1. National Accreditation Standards**

National accreditation requirements for art and design, dance, music and theatre outline threshold standards for institutional and individual achievement. These thresholds indicate essentials; they are rigorous. Attaining them represents a significant accomplishment. Therefore, these standards are both a foundation and a framework for specific achievements and evaluations of their quality. Although standards compliance may be embedded and reflected in specific achievements, quality and its manifestations are developed uniquely from the standards basis in the works of individuals and institutions.

#### ***More Information:***

Art and Design—NASAD Handbook  
Dance—NASD Handbook  
Music—NASM Handbook  
Theatre—NAST Handbook

### **2. Evaluation, Quantitative Methodologies, and Verbalization**

The approach presented in this set of materials is not based in quantitative methodology. Mathematical techniques of various kinds may be useful, but they are not necessary, especially for experts in the fields of the arts. Expert evaluators can discern levels of individual achievement in terms of the work presented. They do not need to translate this discernment into verbal or mathematical terms in order to make it valid and usable. Numerical values can be assigned to anything. The question is the extent to which there is

utility of doing so in specific circumstances, and whether the number is a sufficient indicator given the complexity of the issue or achievement.

Verbal or written explanation prepared for assessment is not the same as achievement in the art form itself. While abilities to speak, write, and communicate are important, it is far more important for the vision of an artist or a scholar or teacher to be evident in his or her work than to have a statement of purpose in words, especially if such a statement is generic and, thus, superficial.

***More Information:***

[Evaluation Mechanisms in the Arts](#)

[Numbers and Evaluation in the Arts](#)

## **Individual**

### **1. Evaluating Individual Achievement in an Arts Discipline or Specialization**

A list of characteristics of achievement and quality associated with high-level individual work in the artistic domain is provided below.

Fundamental knowledge and skills, and conceptual frameworks associated with disciplines and specializations are spelled out in the Standards of the Arts Accrediting Associations.

The list for individual achievement begins with those fundamentals and uses them as a basis for describing several attributes of the capabilities, capacities, and work that are present when knowledge and skills are being applied in an advanced and sophisticated way.

The characteristics of individual achievement, thus, reflect and explain the nature of achievement and quality beyond basic thresholds for entry level; even though they are present at entry level, at least to a fundamental degree. Developing these capabilities is the work of a lifetime, and there is virtually no limit to the levels of achievement and quality that can be reached.

The specifics associated with each characteristic vary among disciplines and specializations. Therefore, the list can be addressed in terms associated with specific degree programs, and areas of specialization. The characteristics can be used to address the specific work of individual students—what they have achieved and their potential, evaluated in terms of specific accomplishments at a particular time. It is far more difficult to generalize among groups of students, but it can be done and may be useful.

### **2. Important Attributes and Characteristics of Individual Achievement Are:**

- a. Basic knowledge and skills in the discipline and any area of specialization as defined in Arts Accreditation Standards demonstrated by level of accomplishment or work. These include fundamentals of the field in terms of practice, history, analysis and their applications in various areas of specialization.

See: Basic Competency Index by Discipline and Specialization – Undergraduate

Curricular Standards for degree and non-degree-granting programs:

Art and Design

Dance

Music

Theatre

- b. Development of a personal vision and/or purpose—sometimes called “artistic voice”—that is evident in terms of work produced in the discipline or specialization. Verbal articulation of the vision or purpose is virtually immaterial if the vision is not manifested in the work produced. Vision or purposes are realized in terms of content or process in one or more of the following fields: artistic, humanistic, scientific, pedagogical, therapeutic, and so forth. Visions or purposes can change from work to work.
- c. Conceptual acuity and ability to:
  - (1) create, sustain, realize, and evolve personal vision and purposes;
  - (2) identify and achieve specific and associated ideas and/or goals at various levels of scope and complexity;
  - (3) work creatively with relationships among ideas, structure, and expression;
  - (4) understand multiple perspectives;
  - (5) create using the process of discovery inherent in making a work.
- d. Ability to:
  - (1) use imagination as a means of creation and discovery with regard to specific content or subject matter and as a means for communicating through the art form what is created or discovered;
  - (2) channel imagination to reach specific artistic goals;
  - (3) apply imagination to all aspects and levels of a work in ways that enhance its communicative power.
- e. Technical ability to:
  - (1) create, sustain, realize, and evolve a personal vision and/or purposes;
  - (2) realize specific works or projects or elements of concepts at an advanced or professional level;
  - (3) analyze one’s own work with sophistication using various methods and perspectives.
- f. Ability to combine knowledge and skills, personal vision and/or purpose. Conceptual acuity and clarity, imagination, and technical ability to function independently in the creation and production of high level work in the area of specialization, including but not limited to the capability and capacity to:
  - (1) define, analyze, and solve problems;



- (2) make effective choices;
- (3) evaluate critically and effectively work in process;
- (4) critique and learn from work of others;
- (5) understand and work with layers of structure and meaning;
- (6) combine, integrate, and synthesize elements into works with internal conceptual and structural integrity.

***More Information:***

[Creative Work, Inquiry, Research, and Scholarship](#)

[Evaluation Mechanisms in the Arts](#)

[Creating Unique Evaluations](#)

[Concepts Associated with Quality in Works of Art](#)

## **Institutional**

### **1. Evaluating Elements and Conditions for Quality and Achievement in an Institution, School, or Department, or Program**

The list below presents some, but not all areas addressed in accreditation standards; it extends analytical perspective by describing attributes that are achieved and achievable in unique ways. It also provides a way to compare (1) institutional or programmatic purposes and results in terms of individual achievement outlined in the previous section with (2) the elements and conditions present in the institution as outlined here. In other words, results in any area outlined in the Individual Achievement list can be reviewed for its relationship to any or all of the elements in the following list for institutions.

***Background Information:***

Accreditation Standards:

[Art and Design—NASAD Handbook](#)

[Dance—NASD Handbook](#)

[Music—NASM Handbook](#)

[Theatre—NAST Handbook](#)

[Basic Competency Index by Discipline and Specialization – Undergraduate](#)

[Important Attributes and Characteristics of Individual Achievement](#)

[Concepts Associated with Quality in Works of Art](#)

[Evaluation Mechanisms in the Arts](#)

### **2. Important Elements and Conditions Are:**

#### **a. Purposes Carefully Crafted and Regularly Fulfilled**

- (1) Institutions create and publish statements of purpose at various levels. Since achievement and quality are pursued in terms of something, statements of purpose are critical.
- (2) Purposes are specific about areas of the arts to be addressed and the various levels of achievement expected in fulfillment of various specific purposes.

- (3) Purposes for the arts are arts-centered. This means that one or more arts disciplines is either a subject of the content or the primary source or home field of the content.
- (4) Purposes at more detailed levels reflect the nature of the field, specific disciplines, and specializations within disciplines. Habits of mind or evaluation systems of other fields are not imposed on the central teaching and learning purposes.
- (5) Purposes reflect a clarity about the differences, similarities, and relationships among teaching and learning, artistry, scholarship, research, and other aspects of the field and disciplines chosen.
- (6) Operationally, there is a strong, unmistakable congruence between written purposes and common understandings about purposes.
- (7) Purposes are both expressions of intent in conceptual terms and statements of goals and objectives that produce automatic expectations and responsibilities regarding content, process, and product and level of achievement.

***More Information:***

Purposes of the Institution and Unit (Section IIA., *Handbook*)

Art and Design—NASAD *Handbook*

Dance—NASD *Handbook*

Music—NASM *Handbook*

Theatre—NAST *Handbook*

**b. Clear Focus and Sustained Effort**

Focus indicates intensity with which levels of achievement are pursued. This intensity is expressed in many ways.

1. Sustained levels of achievement and quality are usually the fruit of long-term aspiration, commitment, and planning.
2. Long-term commitment rests, in large part, on transcendent faith in the value of the purposes.
3. The degree of focus expected is consistent with the range of investments in the teaching and learning program. Financial investments are critical, but other kinds of investments associated with content and process in the disciplines and specializations chosen are equally critical. These include respect for professional expertise and the nature of artistic work and accomplishment, and the provision of significant independence.
4. There is a comprehensive understanding of what is required to achieve and sustain focus. Achievement and understandings in artistic/intellectual forms and work are reinvested in the teaching and learning program on a regular basis. What is accomplished is used as the foundation for improvement. Such an approach intensifies focus and usually leads to improvement year-by-year, like compounding interest.

5. Focus serves as a balancing force to keep purposes from expanding to the point where expected levels of achievement and quality cannot be sustained with available resources.

**c. Realistic Analyses and Thoughtful Decision-Making Connected to the Presence of Excellence in the Art Form**

Sustaining efforts to raise levels of achievement and quality usually require a finely honed sensibility about relationships among realism, prudence, and excellence.

1. There is a continuing search for prudence in creating relationships and designing priorities in light of purposes, the requirements for success they engender, and the importance of focus.
2. There are clear, realistic definitions of excellence that are consistent with individual arts program purposes.
3. There is a clear understanding about the levels of excellence achieved and achievable at the present time. This enables the institution to develop realistic schedules, and qualitative bases for long range planning that inform the quantitative or financial elements of such plans.
4. There is a clear understanding regarding the limits of systems and techniques. In some cases, methodology is the content, but in many other cases it is subordinate to content. Improper substitution of systems and methodologies for content is neither realistic nor prudent. It impedes the quest for results of the highest quality.
5. When institutional comparisons are useful or necessary, there is a search for true and, therefore, real comparability. Comparison is not allowed to become the primary inspiration for achievement and quality. Comparisons can lead to imitation and thus to following others rather than creating for the institution's unique situation and potential.
6. A real comparison requires virtually as much knowledge about the subject of comparison as the institution has of itself. Realism and prudence dictate the importance of asking the extent to which this is possible, affordable, or the wisest use of time and resources.
7. Renown is not sought for its own sake, but as a way of intensifying conditions that enable the most intensive pursuits of purposes. It is not sought at the expense of long-term investment in substance of teaching and learning.
8. Patience is evident: there is a fundamental belief that if achievement and quality can be sustained and enhanced over time, renown will come.
9. Goals for achievement and quality are expressed in terms of artistic, scholarly, pedagogical, and other kinds of content, and not just winning over others. Winning is considered a result of the pursuit of excellence, not excellence itself.
10. There is realistic and prudent use of available time. Time is channeled toward content and the continuous pursuit of increased competence and capacity in individuals. Bureaucratic time taxes are kept to a minimum.

11. There is a passion for building individual capabilities and capacities for the kind of moment-by-moment critical evaluation essential to work in the art forms. Evaluation is seen as a servant of learning and of artistic, scholarly, and pedagogical action. Time allocations to formal evaluation and assessment reflect this understanding. There is a wariness of false, surrogate, or superficial indicators. Prudence keeps achievement in terms of all inadequate indicators from becoming engines of false pride about excellence, and thus, generators of complacency.
12. There is a passion for realism about resources. Resources are never infinite, and it is a goal of most institutions to increase them. The pursuit of the highest achievement and quality usually involves the ability to focus resources intensely on purposes expressed in terms of content. When resources are barely adequate to address purposes, those concerned about intensifying achievement and quality will ask whether the number of purposes is too great as well as asking whether resources can be increased.

**d. High Levels Continuously Pursued and Raised Over Time**

Achievement and quality can be considered productively in terms of levels. Clearly, it is not essential for everyone in an arts discipline to achieve the same level in every major aspect of that discipline in order for an institution or a field to sustain the highest level of achievement and quality. However, the highest levels of achievement and quality do depend on some people reaching and extending the highest level in each aspect of each field. Normally, these levels are achieved in maturity, long after graduation.

Each arts discipline specialization also has threshold levels of competence necessary to enter the profession. Threshold levels are not low. In fact, in most arts specializations, they are very high. Thresholds establish a fundamental level of achievement associated with a fundamental level of quality. In most individuals, aspirations for quality extend far beyond these thresholds. Indeed, teaching and learning institutions demonstrating consistently high achievement and quality are graduating, and even accepting, students who are well beyond the basic professional threshold, at least in certain aspects of their discipline or specialization. In this section, three related areas for the consideration of levels are presented: personnel, teaching and learning, and areas of work defined by purposes.

*1. Personnel—Students and Faculty*

Individual capabilities, capacity, and dedication are the fundamental ingredients of achievement and quality. Aggregate individual achievement is one measure of an institution's quality.

- a. There is a deep correlation between purposes expressed in terms of content, including the means to achieve in that content, and the personnel who are teaching and learning at the institution.
- b. Achievement and quality in individuals is assessed not only in terms of immediate, present, demonstrable accomplishment, but also in terms of potential. Nurturing potential is a high priority.

- c. It is understood that potential is an extremely difficult assessment to make, especially when an individual already possesses advanced technical capabilities and/or knowledge in a particular specialization or area.
- d. There are serious efforts to assess potential for growth beyond present accomplishments as a condition of acceptance.
- e. There is a special intensity that manifests itself in dedication to hard work as the primary mechanism of achievement. In admission and employment, the institution is selective in determining the presence of this characteristic and in connecting it with assessments of potential.
- f. There is a consistent understanding of the relationship between images of quality and content-based assessments of institutional potential on the parts of prospective students and faculty, particularly among high achievers.
- g. There is understanding in students and more so in faculty of the differences among levels and kinds of achievement expected at matriculation, graduation, and later in the profession.
- h. Personnel are nurtured in the direction of their talents and evolving capabilities as they grow in the program or in service as faculty.

## 2. *Teaching and Learning*

In situations where achievement and quality are the highest, teaching and learning begin at advanced levels and move rapidly into ever more advanced levels of creative, conceptual, or theoretical work, and of technique and methodology.

- a. For each student, teaching and learning are able to proceed on the basis of high levels of fluency or virtuosity in at least one disciplinary area or specialization.
- b. In areas of the field where students are starting at the beginning, there is rapid progression to a sufficient capability for creative and conceptual work.
- c. The teaching and learning culture focuses on building capacities for self-criticism in the details of art making and overall self-evaluation of work accomplished.
- d. Teaching and learning are oriented to the development of professional practitioners.
- e. Teaching and learning are engaged in producing a breadth of knowledge, skill, and perspective that encompasses and supports the area of specialization.
- f. Teaching and learning draw forth the personal “voice” of each individual while, at the same time, connecting the student to the broader profession and specialization.

### 3. *Areas of Work Defined by Purposes*

The efforts of students and faculty and the effects of teaching and learning are manifested in specific works of creation and performance, scholarship, teaching, etc.

- a. There is a direct, but not complete, correlation between (a) the levels of achievement and quality represented in works of art, scholarship, or teaching produced at the institution and (b) the capabilities and capacities of students as influenced by teaching and learning.
- b. The correlation is sufficiently strong to be a primary indicator of program achievement and quality, especially to those with expert knowledge.
- c. There is a clear distinction between (a) quality achieved by narrow focus at the expense of comprehensive competency development, and (b) the comprehensive professional competency and capacity to produce works of quality consistently and independently.
- d. There are regular efforts to determine, at least to some extent, the degree to which teaching and learning have made a difference. Such determinations are easy in areas where the student brought little or no knowledge and skills. The more advanced the proficiency of an entering student, the more difficult the assessment of added value expressed in terms of capability and capacity.
- f. At high levels of achievement and quality, there is an understanding that evaluations of artistic achievement and quality are extremely complex. Many are subjective and thus subject to professional disagreement. With regard to students, questions of potential often remain unresolved.
- g. The work produced by individual students and groups in professional programs reaches or extends beyond fundamental levels of competency expected to enter the profession.
- h. The work of individual students gains them entry into advanced study or into the profession at advanced levels.
- i. The work produced has the respect of expert professionals in the area of work presented.

#### **e. Supportive, Challenging Environment**

Environments and the expectations they create have a tremendous impact on achievement and quality. Through their daily engagement with and influences on the fulfillment of purposes, environments can focus concentration, keep priorities clear, produce and regenerate focus and prudent realism, and be both supportive and challenging.

1. Arts environments are intense and focused.
2. There is common understanding among students and faculty regarding the nature and level of the highest achievements in specific areas of work. In fields of creation and presentation, this means individual comparison against the work of

internationally renowned practitioners whose work is readily available to the same public that will see and evaluate their own work.

3. There is an artistic and intellectual environment that inspires, encourages, and requires individual achievement, in part by keeping expectations high and providing constant examples of superior work.
4. Superior work is evident from the efforts of students as well as from faculty and guest artists.
5. There is deep respect for, and faith in, the art form, and strong belief in the necessity of continuous, disciplined effort. The fundamental value of the field does not need to be justified.
6. The environment provides and shapes time in favor of the accomplishment of work in areas of content defined by purposes. Time is not wasted, and is seen as precious by all on behalf of all.
7. Learning and performance expectations are stated clearly in unambiguous terms at all levels.
8. There is a pursuit of rigor with deep intensity, or even passion, but not rudeness.
9. There is a fundamental understanding and exemplification of reciprocity—support, collaboration, generosity of spirit.
10. The environment is conducive to helping individuals make continuous connections between specific efforts or projects and work of the discipline and specialization as a whole. Although manifested in various ways, there is an understanding that the field, discipline, and specialization are bigger than any one individual, school, or effort.
11. Evaluation is pursued primarily for the purpose of improvement. The evaluation systems are consistent with the natures of the disciplines and specializations being taught.
12. There is an atmosphere of healthy pride in high accomplishment irrespective of the extent to which it is recognized publicly or professionally.

***More Information:***

Crafting Unique Evaluations

**Evaluating External Perceptions of Institutions or Programs**

This list indicates a number of factors that influence external perceptions about institutional and programmatic achievements and quality. These factors provide the basis for correlation and comparison with information from the lists regarding individuals and institutions.

Please note: Institutions and programs concerned with arts disciplines are advised to pursue quality and achievement primarily in terms outlined in previous lists regarding individuals and institutions. Focusing solely on external perceptions reduces attention to the substantive bases of real accomplishment.

### **Important Considerations Are:**

1. *Reputation, history.* The institution, and/or its teaching personnel, and/or its graduates have regional, national, or international reputations. These conditions have been in effect for a significant period of time. Association with the institution is seen as a credential in and of itself.
2. *Exclusivity.* There is significant competition for places within the institution or program. Significant numbers of high achievers are not admitted. Being admitted, and completing a program confers an image of distinct and unusual achievement.
3. *Appearances.* Facilities are impressive, promotional and other published materials and web appearances are sophisticated and effective with their intended audiences. There are strong associations and connections with other institutions, professionals, and organizations working at similar levels, and efforts to lead, provide assistance to others in education and the arts, and participate in efforts for the common good are publicly perceived and acknowledged.
4. *Self-regenerating renown.* The institution, school, or department regularly does well in polls, contests, ratings, and rankings.
5. *Connections with the profession(s).* The institution cultivates links with individuals, organizations, and institutions to support the career advancement of graduates and to receive consultation about its programs, their progress, and their improvement.
6. *Placement of graduates.* Program graduates are accepted into excellent graduate programs, jobs, or working situations. Or, graduates are equipped to place themselves by creating their own careers. Over time large numbers of graduates are recognized as high level practitioners.
7. *Promotional presence.* In direct and indirect ways, the institution constantly promotes its work among those with influence on its reputation. Significant resources are expended on promotional efforts. Methods are sophisticated and materials are targeted to specific audiences.
8. *Financial condition.* Wealth in itself is a significant producer of positive image. The distribution of available money for specific arts programs enables constant reputation building. Resource deployment enhances public image.

### ***More Information:***

Evaluation Cautions

Crafting Unique Evaluations



## RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

### Evaluation Mechanisms in the Arts

The arts disciplines use a wide variety of historically-proven evaluation mechanisms. Many of them involve critiques from more than one person. Evaluation is both formative and summative. Mechanisms include, but are not limited to:

- Auditions
- Portfolio and document reviews
- Examination and course grades
- Juries
- Master classes
- Competitions
- Performance, or studio, or technique lessons and classes
- Rehearsals
- Public exhibitions
- Public performances

The more advanced the student, the more evaluation of technical proficiency recedes in favor of the artistic attributes found under Evaluating Individual Achievement.

### Evaluation Cautions

A number of pitfalls need to be avoided if evaluations regarding achievement and quality are to be productive.

First, it takes years of study and experience in an art form to make substantial judgments about individual achievement. The higher the levels of achievement and quality, the more this is true. It is counterproductive to allow content-based, knowledge-driven evaluation to be eclipsed by generic or reductionist assessment methodologies.

Second, the more advanced the levels of achievement and quality in the arts, the less numbers are effective in describing results. While numbers can be assigned to everything, it is hard for them to express the complexity, sophistication, or total impact of achievements in the arts disciplines. Additionally, numbers describing past performances of specific institutions or individuals do not predict future performance, nor does data about what many individuals have achieved indicate what any one individual will achieve. See: *Numbers and Evaluation in the Arts*.

Third, rankings are usually based on collections of perceptions or on one or more specific numerically expressed indicators that do not begin to tell the whole story of achievement or quality, or evaluations of them. Problems with rankings are well known. But here is the caution we wish to provide: while rankings can reflect certain realities, and have an impact in tangible and intangible ways, they are not predictors of individual success, nor can they encapsulate a sophisticated assessment of what is actually happening to students who are developing as artists in any institution at any point in time.

Fourth, comparison and benchmarking may be useful if there is sufficient similarity of purposes, content, and systems to make the results valid. It is often said that it is almost impossible to lead, innovate, or be truly successful if all one is trying to do is meet a benchmark. In the arts, the results of comparisons are often questionable because the parameters, including purposes, are so different. The arts seek uniqueness through setting and creating unique sets of achievable goals.

Cautions about the nature of expertise, numbers, comparisons, and benchmarking combine in a general caution. Institutions that are the most successful focus evaluations of student and institutional achievement on the specific competencies and attributes derived from the nature of the arts and the way each of them is taught. These are described under the individual and institutional sections of these materials.

## **Numbers and Evaluation in the Arts: Critical Questions**

### **INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION**

Numbers, quantification, and counting can play various roles in evaluating various aspects of the arts, including professional preparation, but it is a grave error to consider them as the sole indicators of success or failure. Choices are critical. They determine the extent to which numbers illuminate or obscure realities in specific evaluations or with regard to the composite nature of arts evaluation.

Elsewhere, we have presented facts and ideas about art as a mode of thought, and indicated that the arts are centered in and seek uniqueness. Thus, uniqueness is an important indicator of success, especially at the highest levels.

Numbers, quantification, and counting have many interesting connections with conditions of uniqueness. Indeed, uniqueness regularly thwarts their conclusive utility, especially when they are used to make comparisons. For example, there is a number that will specify to all the exact amount of water in a glass. Measurements of this kind and the systems that enable them are structured to find a universal answer, not a unique one. But what about varying opinions about which was more important, the end of WW I or WW II? There is no number that convinces conclusively, that produces unanimity. The reason: different people have different, even unique perspectives that lead them to their conclusion. For example, the relative numbers of people who lost their lives in each conflict may not convince an individual who lost a beloved ancestor in one of them. Fundamentally, there is no single, numbers-based answer to questions of valuing. Individual interpretation, professional debate, and at times, temporary consensus is about all that can be expected. Questions of valuing uniqueness are central to making and evaluating in the arts.

Numbers, quantification, and counting clearly work well explaining and evaluating things that are replicable. This capability and its powers in the scientific and technical world produce the illusion that numbers will tell the whole or at least the necessary truth and thus predict accurately every other realm of activity, if only the right formulas are found and applied. This illusion often leads to misuses of numbers and counting, and can lead to serious misjudgments about what is happening and what should be done, particularly in the dynamic and relatively unpredictable world of human action. Indeed, this illusion can damage the pursuit of quality and achievement in the arts disciplines and in many other fields.

The art forms have properties and use materials and processes that can be expressed mathematically. The physics and thus the mathematics of color, light, sound, movement, and so forth operate in works of art. Further, in becoming an arts professional, there are certain aspects of mastery in each field that have yes or no answers, or that are based in technical proficiency or the necessity of replication. Many elements of these aspects can be evaluated effectively and honestly using numbers. And in the arts, as in other fields, numbers can be used as reductionist surrogates for complex evaluations; for example, the single number judges use in professional competitions. In all these cases, however, the numbers, as vital or as useful as they are, cannot produce or reproduce the art work or the artistry, or even begin to encompass it, not even to the extent that digital technologies can store and reproduce specific sets of aesthetic effects. Even in the digital example, the numbers are the medium for the art, not the art itself.

### **QUESTIONS**

Given the issues presented above, how can individuals and groups evaluating the arts, and particularly the preparation of professional artists use numbers, quantification, and counting effectively *and* respect the integrity of how the art form and education in it produce results? The questions below are offered as one possible way to determine the role of numbers in any particular evaluation project.

1. What do you want to know?
2. What is the scope of what you want to know? How comprehensive, how much breadth, how much depth, what level of sophistication?
3. Why do you want to know it? For example, because you want to, need to, or must?
4. Given the answers to the first three questions,
  - a. what roles can numbers, quantification, and counting play?
  - b. what will any proposed use of numbers reveal?
  - c. what will they not reveal?
  - d. what may they obscure?
  - e. how may they be misinterpreted or misused?
  - f. how easily can they be contested as “proof?”
5. Given the answers to the first four questions, what is the relative importance of quantitative data, qualitative information, and personal judgment in determining what you want to know at the level you want to know it?
6. What is the time and other resource costs of obtaining the numbers-based information you want to use? To what extent are these costs worth the benefits expected?
7. How do your proposed decisions about use of numbers relate to the issues and possible dangers raised in Boyle’s Counting Paradoxes?
8. How can you minimize risks if you must evaluate using numbers in ways that are inappropriate or potentially misleading?

9. Once you have the numbers you want, how can you best present what they actually mean, and if appropriate, what they do not mean? How can you best relate them to other information and judgment?

### **BOYLE'S COUNTING PARADOXES**

Over-reliance on counting is a serious problem. It can lead to bad decision making and thus to all sorts of dysfunctions. For example, to an accounting firm, the purpose of business may appear to be to create numbers for accountants. But most, including accountants, see business fulfilling a broader range of functions. Accounting is just part of the whole, and at best, a service that helps the other parts function well.

Einstein is reported to have had the following statement on the wall in his study: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted, counts."

In *The Tyranny of Numbers* (HarperCollins, 2000), British mathematician David Boyle outlines a number of counting paradoxes. We have listed these below and provided annotations with arts example for each but the last.

1. **You can count people, but you can't count individuals.** For example, the relative success of all graduates of a program expressed in numbers does not predict what a specific individual has achieved or will achieve.
2. **If you count the wrong thing, you go backwards.** For example, if you reward high graduation rates, incentives for rigor at high levels are reduced.
3. **Numbers replace trust, but make measuring even more untrustworthy.** For example, any numbers that produce political, financial, or public relations disadvantages produce political challenges regarding the indicators chosen and the motives of those choosing them.
4. **When numbers fail, we get more numbers.** For example, when counting something doesn't seem to solve identified problems, there are calls to measure the thing more thoroughly or to find systems or people to measure it better. It is commonly said that the United States collects more education data than any other nation. Doing so does not seem to improve education. Nevertheless, most reform proposals call for more and better data collection.
5. **The more we count, the less we understand.** For example, when educational achievement is reduced to multiple choice test scores, significant information is lost about what a person or group really knows and is able to do, how well they can think and create with information, etc. This is why evaluation of educational achievement in music, for example, still relies so much on the audition or a portfolio of work to judge achievement and quality.
6. **The more accurately we count, the more unreliable the figures.** For example, quests for perfection in counting achievement can result in narrowing perspective to dysfunctional levels. We cannot tell much useful about the overall quality of a symphony performance by setting up measuring devices to count to high levels accuracy of the periodicity of all sixteenth notes played by the violins. Since we tend to count what can

be counted easily, this paradox and its attendant unreliability is magnified in systems where there is over-reliance on counting.

7. **The more we count, the less we can compare the figures.** For example, there are tendencies to produce cause-and-effect arguments with sets of figures that have little relationship to each other, particularly with regard to the conditions that produced them. Comparing graduation rates in institutions with different missions and student demographics produces information of little value with regard to providing educational opportunity, maintaining the integrity of degree levels, or assuring the quality of teaching and learning in disciplinary content.
8. **Measurements have a monstrous life of their own.** For example, false numbers repeated as fact, or real numbers repeated out of context produce conditions for false analyses and wrong decisions.
9. **When you count things, they get worse.** That is, official statistics tend to get worse when society is worried about something. This may be due to better reporting due to heightened concern, or heightened concern may produce new criteria that raise the numbers, or that heightened concern produces calls for more numbers with all the consequences that we have mentioned in points 1 through 8.

#### **RESOURCES REGARDING NUMBERS AND EVALUATION IN THE ARTS**

*The Tyranny of Numbers: Why Counting Can't Make Us Happy* by David Boyle, HarperCollins, 2000.

*The Sum of Our Discontent: Why Numbers Make Us Irrational* by David Boyle, TEXERE, 2001.

"The Propaganda of Numbers" by Clifford Adelman, *The Chronicle Review*, October 13, 2006 (a section of the Chronicle of Higher Education).

### **Crafting Unique Evaluations**

Evaluations concerning achievement and quality can be crafted to address specific issues or answer specific questions at various levels of complexity. A critical task is the development of a set of criteria and procedures that are truly consistent with the purposes of the evaluation. The questions below provide a framework to assist such development at the local level.

1. What is the nature of and specific purposes or characteristics applicable to the area(s) of achievement you wish to address?

For example, one or several or all of the characteristics outlined in this Web resource or by the institution regarding:

Individual Achievement

Institution, School, Department, or Program Achievement

External Perceptions about Achievement

2. What is (are) the purpose(s) of the evaluation?
  - a. A direct assessment of the area or areas chosen, usually to determine the level of quality being achieved, and as with all purposes, to determine goals for improvement.
  - b. A correlation of the assessments regarding one or more areas with one or more others, perhaps to determine the extent to which achievement and quality in one part is affecting another, or if there are larger scale or multiple cause and effect relationships.
  - c. A combination assessment of two or more of all areas perhaps to obtain a comprehensive overview, or if the relationship between parts and wholes is working effectively.
  - d. An internal or external comparison, perhaps to gain insights into levels being achieved, or to understand on substantive grounds the basis for competition, or to determine purposes for further evaluations.
  - e. Fulfillment of pragmatic goals such as: conduct a periodic review, evaluate against external or internal expectations, develop common perspectives among constituencies, focus on futures issues, orient new administrators or faculty, consider program deletions or additions, generate lists of concerns and needs, develop the basis for planning, create priorities, prepare for specific internal or external evaluations, produce information for internal reference, explain or justify achievements and quality to others.
  - f. Other purposes not listed above.
3. If there is more than one purpose, what are the priorities?
4. What do you need to know to fulfill your purpose or purposes given the priorities chosen? Some necessary knowledge may lie outside that of the art form.
5. What are the best, most efficient means to obtain what you need to know in terms that will be effective given your purposes? Are there roles for qualitative and/or quantitative means? What about individual or group professional judgment? If you chose multiple means, what are the priorities among them?
6. How practical are the means chosen given the time and resources available? After obtaining a comprehensive answer, do you need to revisit questions 2, 4, and 5?
7. As your evaluation proceeds, what checks and balances are needed to ensure that the results reflect the true sources and states of the achievements you are assessing? This is especially critical where correlations or comparisons are involved.
8. How does your process deal with unknown causes, or causes and influences beyond the control of the institution, students, or teachers?
9. Once you have your results, how can you best present what they actually mean, and if appropriate, what they do not mean? How do you place or work with the results in terms of different value systems that may be present or influential?

## Optional Resources and More Information

Complete Accreditation Standards: Purposes and Operations, Program Components, Undergraduate, Graduate, Non-Degree-Granting Programs:

- [Art and Design \(NASAD Handbook\)](#)
- [Dance \(NASD Handbook\)](#)
- [Music \(NASM Handbook\)](#)
- [Theatre \(NAST Handbook\)](#)

### Evaluation Perspectives

#### Concepts Associated with Quality in Works of Art

##### Evaluating Individual Achievement –

Basic Competency Index by Discipline and Specialization – Undergraduate Degrees  
Curricular Standards for Degree- and Non-Degree-Granting Programs

- [Art and Design \(NASAD Handbook\)](#)
- [Dance \(NASD Handbook\)](#)
- [Music \(NASM Handbook\)](#)
- [Theatre \(NAST Handbook\)](#)

##### Evaluating Elements and Conditions in Institutions, including:

Purposes Carefully Crafted and Regularly Fulfilled  
Clear Focus and Sustained Effort  
Realistic Analyses and Thoughtful Decision-Making  
High Levels Continuously Pursued and Raised Over Time  
Supportive, Challenging Environment

##### Evaluating External Perceptions, including

Reputation, history  
Exclusivity  
Appearances  
Self-regenerating renown  
Connections with the profession(s)  
Placement of graduates  
Promotional presence  
Financial condition

##### Evaluation Mechanisms in the Arts

##### Evaluation Cautions

##### Numbers and Evaluation in the Arts

##### Creative Work, Inquiry, Research, and Scholarship

Sourcebook for Futures Planning, Supplement IV: Creating Your Self-Study

- [Art and Design \(NASAD\)](#)
- [Dance \(NASD\)](#)
- [Music \(NASM\)](#)
- [Theatre \(NAST\)](#)

## Basic Competency Index By Discipline and Specialization – Undergraduate Degrees

Summary lists of specializations within each discipline are provided below. The detailed lists of specializations, along with their respective competencies, are available on the Achievement and Quality: Higher Education in the Arts Web site. A list of specializations is available for each discipline, each of which has a parallel downloadable PDF enumerating detailed competencies for that specialization. In this way, users of these resources may download only the specific information of interest.

Please note: The lists of competencies are derived from accreditation standards for the professional and liberal arts undergraduate degrees in the arts field listed.

**Essential Note: Competencies provided for each specialization are excerpts from the *Handbook for the arts discipline specified*. Items in each set of competencies indicate the content and natures of the competencies expected of those graduating with the specified degree, or recommendations for competency development.**

**Only the *Handbook in its entirety* contains all standards and guidelines applicable to and used by all phases of NASAD, NASD, NASM, or NAST membership reviews.**

In the competencies texts for each specialization, “H.” indicates the location of the excerpted text in the *Handbook*; the term “(All)” indicates standards applicable to all professional or liberal arts undergraduate degrees in the specified field including the specialization; “[Area of Specialization]” indicates specific standards for that major.

### ART AND DESIGN (professional undergraduate)

- Ceramics
- Digital Media
- Drawing
- Fashion Design
- Film/Video
- General Crafts
- General Design
- General Fine Arts
- Glass
- Graphic Design
- Illustration
- Industrial Design
- Interior Design
- Jewelry/Metals
- Painting
- Photography
- Printmaking
- Sculpture
- Teacher Preparation – Art Education
- Textile Design
- Theatre Design
- Weaving/Fibers
- Woodworking

### ART AND DESIGN (liberal arts undergraduate)

- Studio, Art History, Museum Studies
- Teacher Preparation – Art Education

### DANCE (professional undergraduate)

- Performance and Choreography
- Teacher Preparation – Dance Education

### DANCE (liberal arts undergraduate)

- General
- Teacher Preparation – Dance Education

### MUSIC (professional undergraduate)

- Performance
- Music Theory
- Composition
- Music History and Literature
- Sacred Music
- Jazz Studies
- Pedagogy
- Music Therapy
- Teacher Preparation – Music Education

### MUSIC (liberal arts undergraduate)

- General

### THEATRE (professional undergraduate)

- Acting
- Design/Technology
- Film/Video Production
- Teacher Preparation – Theatre Education
- Theatre for Youth

### THEATRE (liberal arts undergraduate)

- General
- Teacher Preparation – Theatre Education

*See additional information regarding competencies for specializations not listed above on the following page.*



**PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING REGARDING SPECIALIZATIONS NOT LISTED ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE.**

### **ART AND DESIGN**

**Art Therapy, Medical Illustration, Art Conservation.** Competency and standards statements regarding undergraduate preparation for advanced professional study in these fields may be found in the *NASAD Handbook*, Standards item XII.

### **MUSIC**

Competency and standards statements regarding undergraduate preparation for advanced professional study in the fields below may be found in the *NASM Handbook* as follows:

**Conducting** – *NASM Handbook*, Standards items XIV.B.3.; XVI.C. and D.4.b.; Appendix I.C.

**Music Industry** – *NASM Handbook*, Appendix I.D.

**Musicology, Ethnomusicology** – *NASM Handbook*, Standards items XVI.C. and D.4.e.

**Opera and Musical Theatre** – *NASM Handbook*, Appendix I.B.

### **THEATRE**

- **Musical Theatre.** Competency and standards statements regarding undergraduate preparation for advanced professional study in musical theatre may be found in the *NAST Handbook*, Appendix I.D.
- Focused professional study in the fields of **directing, history and criticism, or playwriting** is usually pursued at the graduate or advanced level after appropriate undergraduate preparation. Competencies for these fields are found in the *NAST Handbook* as follows:
  - **Directing** – *NAST Handbook*, Standards items XI.A.; XV.A.3. and B.2.; Appendix I.F.
  - **History and Criticism** – *NAST Handbook*, Standards items XI.B.; XV.C.
  - **Playwriting and Dramatic Writing** – *NAST Handbook*, Standards items XI.C.; XV.A.3. and B.3.
- **Drama Therapy.** Drama therapists are professionally educated at the graduate level. Undergraduate prerequisites for drama therapy may be found in the *NAST Handbook*, Standards item XI.D.

## Operational Standards Index By Discipline

The following necessities and characteristics expressed as standards are found in the *Handbook* of each arts accrediting association.

ART AND DESIGN  
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### Section II. Purposes and Operations

- A. Purposes of the Institution and [Arts] Unit
- B. Size and Scope
- C. Finances
- D. Governance and Administration
- E. Faculty and Staff
- F. Facilities, Equipment, Health, and Safety
- G. Library and Learning Resources
- H. Recruitment, Admission-Retention, Record-Keeping, and Advisement
- I. Published Materials and Web Sites
- J. Community Involvement
- K. Articulation with Other Schools
- L. Evaluation, Planning, and Projections
- M. Operational Standards for All Institutions for which [NASAD, NASD, NASM, or NAST] is the Designated Institutional Accreditor
- N. Operational Standards and Procedures for Proprietary Institutions
- O. Operational Standards for Branch Campuses, External Programs

### Section III. Program Components

- A. Credit and Time Requirements
  - B. Time on Task, Curricular Proportions, and Competencies
  - C. Forms of Instruction, Requirements, and Electives
  - D. Individual Program Continuity
  - E. Residence
  - F. New Programs
  - G. Independent Study
  - H. Distance Learning
  - I. Disciplines in Combination
  - J. Majors in or Based on Electronic Media
  - K. Non-Degree-Granting Programs for the Community
  - L. Content, Repertories, and Methods
  - M. Flexibility and Innovation
  - N. Quality Policies
- ART AND DESIGN, DANCE, THEATRE
- O. [Visual Arts] [Dance] [Theatre] in General Education
- MUSIC:
- O. Undergraduate Musicianship Studies
  - P. Responsibilities for Music in General Education