Arts

Description and Learning Outcomes

Mason courses in the film making, visual and performing arts stress generative, inquiry-based learning through direct aesthetic and creative experience in the studio environment. Art History courses address the intrinsic relationship of personal and cultural creativity, and the manifestation of aesthetics, visual culture and visual narrative within historical contexts.

Courses in the Arts category must meet the first learning outcome and a minimum of two of the remaining four learning outcomes:

1. **Artistic Processes & Concepts:** Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic process, and a work's underlying concept, and where appropriate, contexts associated with the work.

2. **Formal Elements & Vocabulary:** Identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary and critique appropriate to that form.

3. **Cultural Productions:** Analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form, as well as the works cultural significance and context.

4. **Social, Historical, and Personal Contexts:** Analyze and interpret the content of material or performance culture through its social, historical, and personal contexts.

5. **Engage in Artistic or Creative Processes:** Engage in generative artistic processes, including conception, creation, and ongoing critical analysis.

Approved Courses and Enrollment

Students are required to pass one course approved for Arts or transfer in an appropriate course. During the assessment period, 88 courses were approved to meet the Arts requirement. The College of Visual and Performing Arts and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences host all of the Mason Core Arts courses. See page 24 for the list of approved courses.

Mason Core Arts courses enroll almost 9,000 students each year with an average class size of 28 (see Table 2). Figure 5 shows enrollment trends over the past five years. The School of Music teaches the most students, enrolling 28.5% of all Mason Core Arts students, followed by School of Art (17.6%), School of Dance (17%), and History & Art History (15.6%).

Students in the Honors College take HNRS 122: Reading the Arts to fulfill their learning outcomes in this category. Although not formally a part of the Mason Core, HNRS 122 is also included in this assessment.

Courses Included in Assessment

The assessment period included 163 sections of Mason Core Arts courses taught in fall 2018 and nine sections of Honors 122. All but 20 sections offered in the assessment period were expected to participate. Of the 152 course sections included in the assessment period, 86% submitted materials.

Enrollment and Grades Distribution

A total of 4,579 students enrolled in Arts courses, and 216 enrolled in HNRS 122 in the assessment period. Of these students, 92% passed their courses with a C- or above (0.9% audited courses) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Grades Distribution for Mason Core Arts Courses, Fall 2018
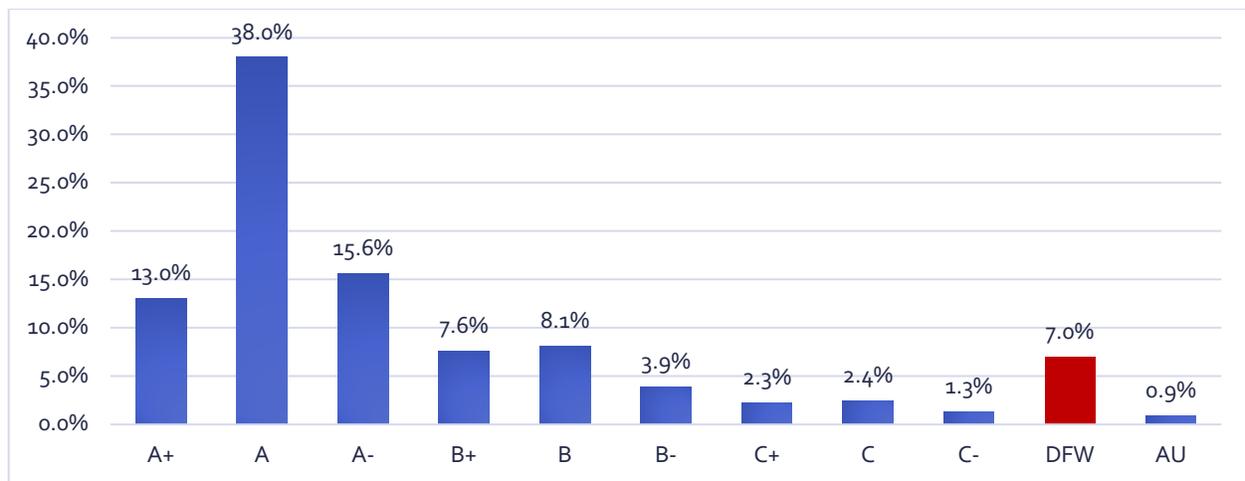
Assessment Methods

Student work samples of all kinds—written, audio, visual—were requested from all course sections taught in the assessment period. Faculty were asked to submit samples that represented student submissions completed in the final third part of the semester and that allowed students to demonstrate their learning on one or more of the expected course learning outcomes. Samples were selected using randomized course enrollment lists to insure the best possible representative sample.

The **Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Arts Courses** was used for this assessment. The rubric was developed by Mason faculty as a tool to assess individual student work on five learning tasks or outcomes. The rubric uses four performance descriptors: Benchmark, Emerging Milestone, Advanced Milestone, and Capstone, as well as an option for "no evidence." The performance descriptors are developmental, identifying student

performance levels in a context of learning and growth. The rubric is intended to be used across all of the years of a student's college experience, and is not limited to a single course, assignment, or student class level.

Using a process modeled after the VALUE Institute reviewer calibration, faculty reviewers were trained to use the rubric to assess student work. Reviews were normed to produce consistent ratings across reviewers. Reviewers met for an in-person, one-day training and review session and completed the reviews of student work by the end of the day. Reviewers were faculty members who have taught Mason Core Arts courses. Reviewers earned a small stipend for their efforts.

Each student work sample was assessed twice. Results were analyzed for interrater reliability; discrepant reviews were resolved using a third review.

One set of issues arose in conversations with Music faculty about how to assess student performance of learning outcomes in music ensemble courses (e.g. jazz ensemble, Chorale, etc.). Because individual performance in these settings is interdependent with others and thus cannot be assessed in a single sample of student work, the assessment strategy had to be different. In collaboration with the School of Music's undergraduate curriculum committee, a holistic rubric was developed. The **School of Music Rubric for Evaluating Mason Core Outcomes Student Ensemble Holistic Assessment** asked instructors to assess individual students' holistic performance on four learning outcomes over the entire semester. These scores were averaged for each student and rolled into Outcome #5, **Engage in Artistic or Creative Processes**.

Learning Outcomes Assessment Results

Figures 2 and 3 display results from 343 randomly selected student work samples rated on the rubric, including 39 students rated on the holistic rubric. Figure 2 includes "no evidence" ratings; a rating of "no evidence" was used when the learning outcome could not be seen in the sample; this could mean that either the assignment did not require application of the outcome, or that the student did not demonstrate it. A "no evidence" rating provides important information in aggregate but is given no value for an individual sample.

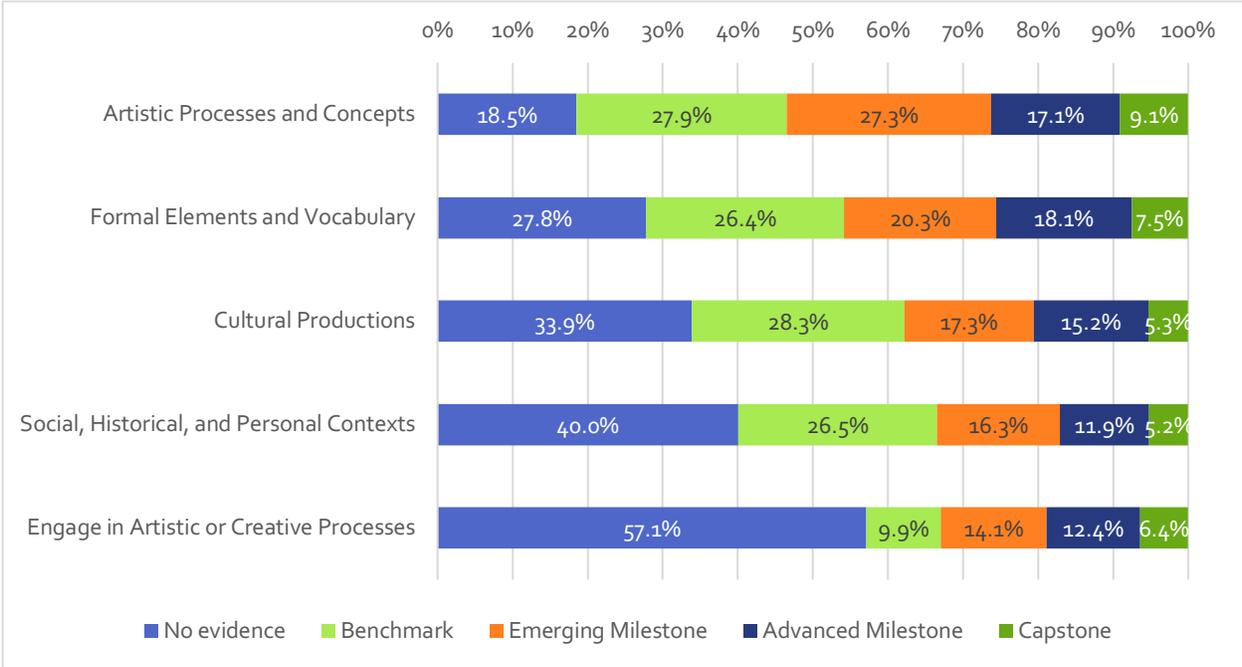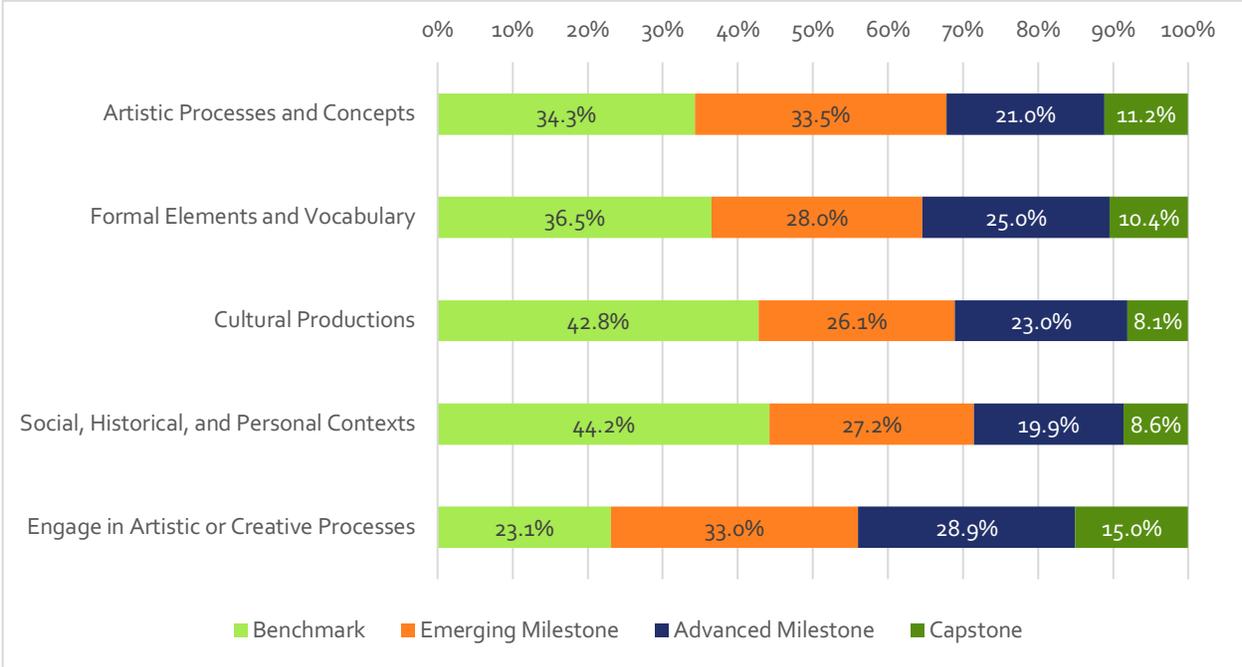*Figure 2. Assessment Results, Aggregated, including "No Evidence" Ratings*

Artistic Processes and Concepts: No evidence 18.5%, Benchmark 27.9%, Emerging Milestone 27.3%, Advanced Milestone 17.1%, Capstone 9.1%

Formal Elements and Vocabulary: No evidence 27.8%, Benchmark 26.4%, Emerging Milestone 20.3%, Advanced Milestone 18.1%, Capstone 7.5%

Cultural Productions: No evidence 33.9%, Benchmark 28.3%, Emerging Milestone 17.3%, Advanced Milestone 15.2%, Capstone 5.3%

Social, Historical, and Personal Contexts: No evidence 40.0%, Benchmark 26.5%, Emerging Milestone 16.3%, Advanced Milestone 11.9%, Capstone 5.2%

Engage in Artistic or Creative Processes: No evidence 57.1%, Benchmark 9.9%, Emerging Milestone 14.1%, Advanced Milestone 12.4%, Capstone 6.4%

Legend: ■ No evidence ■ Benchmark ■ Emerging Milestone ■ Advanced Milestone ■ Capstone

Figure 3. Assessment Results, Aggregated, excluding "No Evidence" Ratings

Artistic Processes and Concepts: Benchmark 34.3%, Emerging Milestone 33.5%, Advanced Milestone 21.0%, Capstone 11.2%

Formal Elements and Vocabulary: Benchmark 36.5%, Emerging Milestone 28.0%, Advanced Milestone 25.0%, Capstone 10.4%

Cultural Productions: Benchmark 42.8%, Emerging Milestone 26.1%, Advanced Milestone 23.0%, Capstone 8.1%

Social, Historical, and Personal Contexts: Benchmark 44.2%, Emerging Milestone 27.2%, Advanced Milestone 19.9%, Capstone 8.6%

Engage in Artistic or Creative Processes: Benchmark 23.1%, Emerging Milestone 33.0%, Advanced Milestone 28.9%, Capstone 15.0%

Legend: ■ Benchmark ■ Emerging Milestone ■ Advanced Milestone ■ Capstone

Highlights from Analysis of Results

Data were analyzed to ascertain differences among courses in achieving the five learning outcomes. Comparison tests were conducted using nonparametric statistics because rubric data are ordinal; Independent-Samples Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to analyze differences across courses. "No evidence" was treated as missing. Significant findings ($p < .05$) are noted in the discussion below and in Table 2.

Work samples were least likely to show evidence of **Engage in Artistic or Creative Processes**. Although many of the Arts courses are focused on making or performing art, many faculty members expected this to be too challenging to submit (i.e. video or audio recordings) or to assess (i.e. group choreography), and many (but not all) chose to submit written work instead. This outcome was most likely to be evident in Art & Visual Technology and Music.

Forty percent of samples showed no evidence for **Social, Historical, and Personal Contexts**. This outcome was most likely to be evident in Art History, Honors, Integrative Studies, and Philosophy.

For courses that are classified as "Lecture," student work samples were rated significantly higher than courses classified as "Studio" for Outcome #3, Cultural Productions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, work samples from "Studio" courses were rated significantly higher for **Engage in Artistic or Creative Processes**.

Because the Mason Core Arts courses offer a mix of introductory and advanced courses, it was important to disaggregate the assessment results by lower- and upper-division courses. There were differences in ratings of work samples across lower-division subjects. The highest significant ratings for each learning outcome are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of Ratings Across Subjects, Lower- and Upper-Division Course Comparisons

Outcome	Significant Ratings: Lower Division	Significant Ratings: Upper Division
Artistic Processes and Concepts	Art and Visual Technology; Game Design	Integrative Studies
Formal Elements and Vocabulary	Art History; Game Design	Art History; Integrative Studies
Cultural Productions	Game Design; Philosophy	No significant differences
Social, Historical, and Personal Contexts	No significant differences	Art History; Integrative Studies
Engage in Artistic or Creative Processes	Game Design; Honors	Dance; Music

Student Self-Assessment

All students who were enrolled in a Mason Core Arts course during the assessment period received an online self-assessment survey at the end of the semester. The retrospective pre-post self-assessment asked students to rate their knowledge and skills on five learning outcomes at the beginning of the semester (pre), and then again at the end of the semester (post). In total, 264 students completed both the pre and post items, resulting in a 5.5% response rate. A t-test pairwise comparison showed significant perceived learning gains on all five outcomes (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Mean Scores on Student Learning Self-Assessment
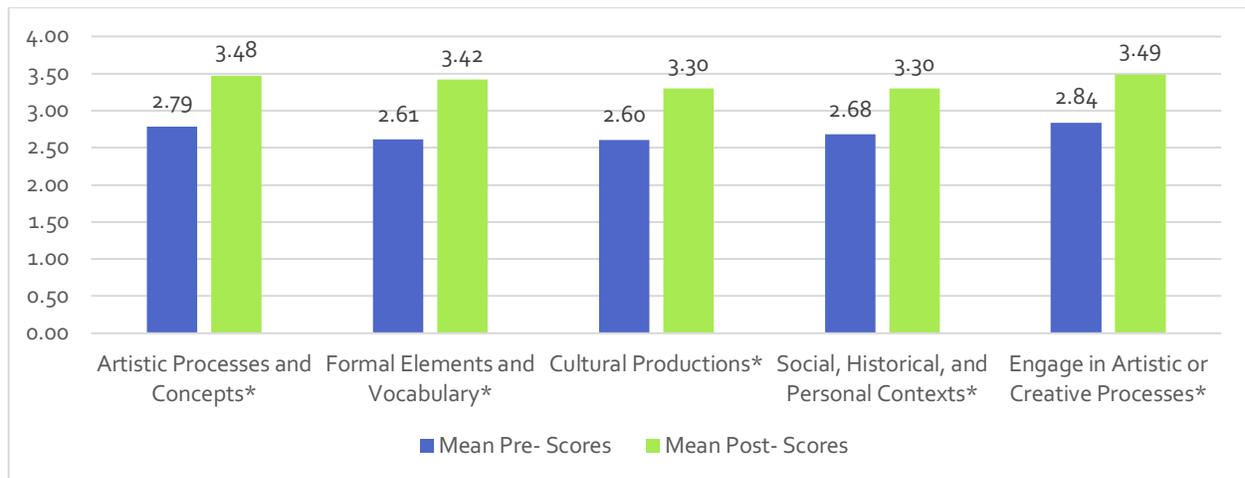
Mean scores, self-reported on a scale of 1-4, n=264, * $p < .05$

How do the Results Meet Expectations?

Because this was the first time that Mason used this rubric to assess student work, these data provide baseline information. For the next assessment cycle, refinements will need to be made to the assessment strategy so that the assessment better aligns with courses that emphasize arts production (see "Limitations of this Assessment" below).

How are Results Being Used to Improve Students' Educational Experience?

A series of open meetings were held in fall 2019 to share results. Faculty were encouraged to discuss the results of the assessment within their units. All Mason Core Arts faculty were expected to participate in a pre-semester workshop on syllabus and assignment design; School of Music faculty took the opportunity to revise their syllabi for Mason Core courses, using the guidance provided in the workshop. In spring 2020, the new director for the School of Art shared plans to evaluate and restructure the school's curriculum to reach more students across campus, and is drawing upon the data for this purpose.

Limitations of this Assessment

How to assess learning across the Arts? The assessment of student learning outcomes in a general education arts program is not a straightforward task. There is little guidance for assessing general education arts outcomes in higher education (Joe, Harmes, & Barry, 2008). Mason Core Arts courses span 11 disciplines and experiences from arts appreciation, literary criticism, choreography, original painting, jazz ensemble performance, and more. This assessment piloted a new rubric that attempted to create performance descriptors inclusive of all disciplines.

Did it work? Some samples aligned to the rubric better than others. In arts production, much of the effort is team-based, so individual performance is difficult or inappropriate to discern. Also, the results of artistic work (e.g. Dance, photography) may not articulate the underlying elements; that is, it is unlikely that the process of producing art would be evident in a final product.

Recommendation: The **Student Ensemble Holistic Assessment** rubric was developed to assess student performance on key learning outcomes in music ensembles. Scores on this rubric can be rolled up into the primary rubric for analysis and reporting. It is recommended that similar holistic rubrics be developed for Mason Core assessment in other subjects, such as Dance, Art and Visual Design, and Theatre.

Assessment Rubric(s)

The **Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Arts Courses** was developed by a team of Mason Arts faculty to evaluate student work for the Mason Core learning outcomes in the Arts. The rubric was modeled after the AAC&U VALUE rubrics. The rubric is designed to evaluate student performance on five learning outcomes, with four increasingly sophisticated performance descriptors for each outcome. The rubric can be used with many types of student work. Most student work will not show evidence of all five outcomes; in this case, an additional category for "no evidence" should be made available.

The School of Music Rubric for Evaluating Mason Core Outcomes: Student Ensemble Holistic Assessment was developed by the School of Music Undergraduate Committee to assess individual student performance in ensemble music courses.

Courses Approved for Mason Core Arts in Fall 2018

ARTH 101 Introduction to the Visual Arts

ARTH 102 Symbols and Stories in Art

ARTH 103 Introduction to Architecture

ARTH 200 History of Western Art I

ARTH 201 History of Western Art II

ARTH 203 Survey of Asian Art

ARTH 204 Survey of Latin American Art

ARTH 206 Survey of African Art

ARTH 321 Greek Art and Archaeology

ARTH 322 Roman Art and Archaeology

ARTH 324 From Alexander the Great to Cleopatra

ARTH 333 Early Christian and Byzantine Art

ARTH 334 Western Medieval Art

ARTH 335 Arts of Medieval England

ARTH 340 Early Renaissance Art in Italy, 1300-1500

ARTH 341 Northern Renaissance Art

ARTH 342 High Renaissance Art in Italy, 1480-1570

ARTH 344 Baroque Art, 1600-1750

ARTH 345 Northern Baroque Art, 1600-1750

ARTH 350 History of Photography

ARTH 360 Nineteenth-Century European Art

ARTH 362 Twentieth-Century European Art

ARTH 370 Arts of the United States

ARTH 372 Studies in 18th- and 19th-Century Art of the US

ARTH 373 Studies in 20th-Century Art of the US

ARTH 376 Twentieth-Century Latin American Art

AVT 103 Introduction to the Artist's Studio

AVT 104 Two-Dimensional Design and Color

AVT 215 Typography

AVT 222 Drawing I

AVT 232 Painting I

AVT 243 Printmaking I

AVT 252 Darkroom Photography I

AVT 253 Digital Photography I

AVT 262 Sculpture I

AVT 272 Interdisciplinary Arts

AVT 385 EcoArt

DANC 101 Dance Appreciation

DANC 119 Dance in Popular Culture: Afro-Latino

DANC 125 Modern/Contemporary Dance I

DANC 131 Beginning Jazz Technique

DANC 145 Ballet I

DANC 161 Beginning Tap Dance

DANC 225 Modern/Contemporary Dance II

DANC 231 Intermediate Jazz Technique

DANC 245 Ballet II

DANC 301 What is Dance?

DANC 325 Modern/Contemporary Dance III

DANC 331 Advanced Jazz Dance

DANC 345 Ballet III

DANC 390 Dance History I
DANC 391 Dance History II
DANC 425 Modern/Contemporary Dance IV
DANC 445 Ballet IV
ENGH 370 Introduction to Documentary
ENGH 371 Television Studies
ENGH 372 Introduction to Film
ENGH 396 Introduction to Creative Writing
FAVS 225 The History of World Cinema
GAME 101 Introduction to Game Design
INTS 200 Visual Thinking and the Creativity
INTS 245 Visual Culture and Society
INTS 346 Art as Social Action
INTS 446 Art, Beauty, and Culture
MUSI 100 Fundamentals of Music
MUSI 101 Introduction to Classical Music
MUSI 102 Popular Music in America
MUSI 107 Jazz and Blues in America
MUSI 280 Athletic and Ceremonial Ensemble
MUSI 301 Music in Motion Pictures
MUSI 302 American Musical Theater
MUSI 380 Wind Symphony
MUSI 381 University Chorale
MUSI 382 Piano Ensemble
MUSI 383 Symphonic Band
MUSI 385 Chamber Singers
MUSI 387 Symphony Orchestra
MUSI 389 Jazz Ensemble

MUSI 485 Chamber Ensembles
PHIL 156 What Is Art?
THR 101 Theatrical Medium
THR 150 Greeks to Restoration
THR 151 Romanticism to Present
THR 210 Acting I
THR 230 Fundamentals of Production
THR 395 Theater as the Life of the Mind
THR 411 Great Film Directors
THR 412 Great Film Performances

Table 3. Enrollment in Mason Core Arts Courses by Academic Unit, AY2015-19

	AY2015		AY2016		AY2017		AY2018		AY2019	
	#Sections	Enroll	#Sections	Enroll	#Sections	Enroll	#Sections	Enroll	#Sections	Enroll
Coll Visual & Performing Arts (Game Design; Film and Video Studies)	17	634	18	696	20	771	19	717	22	736
English	14	318	16	334	18	367	18	395	18	385
History & Art History	27	1,240	31	1,333	30	1,374	32	1,332	31	1,380
School of Integrative Studies/New Century College	6	140	6	121	1	24	1	25	7	169
Philosophy	2	84	3	104	3	103	2	49	2	85
School of Art	80	1,389	82	1,420	82	1,462	87	1,602	86	1,618
School of Dance	56	1,437	56	1,406	56	1,503	56	1,423	56	1,458
School of Music	70	2,154	65	2,157	72	2,566	75	2,706	75	2,550
Theatre	23	495	21	543	22	567	26	587	29	603
TOTAL	**295**	**7,891**	**298**	**8,114**	**304**	**8,737**	**316**	**8,836**	**326**	**8,984**

Figure 5. Five-Year Enrollment Trends in Mason Core Arts Courses, AY2015-19

Legend: AY2015, AY2016, AY2017, AY2018, AY2019
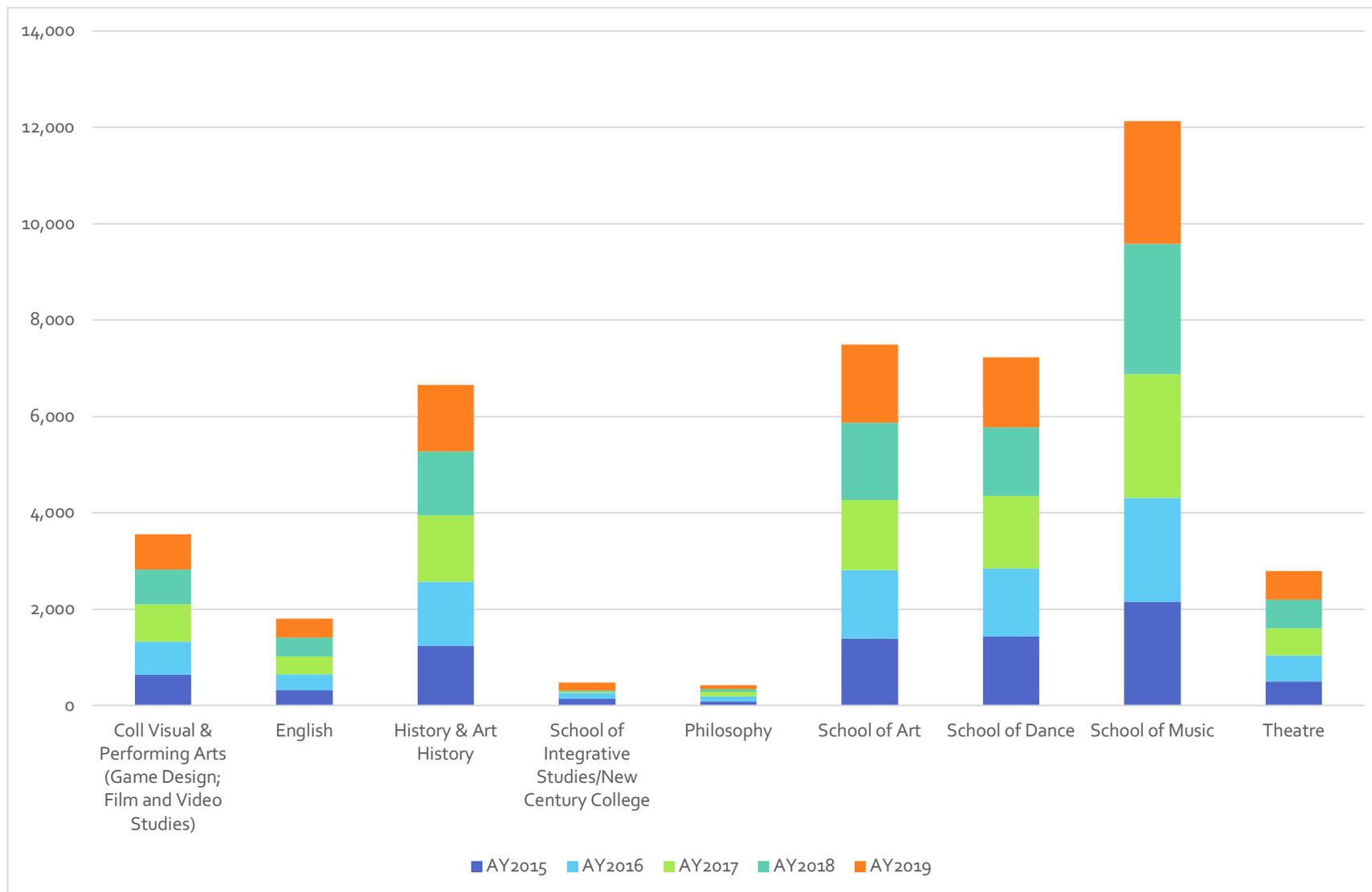
Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Arts Courses

This rubric was developed by a team of faculty experts to evaluate student work for the Mason Core learning outcomes in Arts. For more information about the learning outcomes and approved courses, https://masoncore.gmu.edu/arts-2/

How to use this rubric: This rubric is designed to evaluate student performance on five learning outcomes, with four increasingly sophisticated performance descriptors for each outcome. This rubric can be used with many types of student work (i.e. written, visual, performance). Most student work will not show evidence of all five outcomes; in this case, an additional category for "no evidence" should be made available.

Student Learning Outcomes	Level of Performance			
	Capstone	**Advanced Milestone**	**Emerging Milestone**	**Benchmark**
Artistic Processes and Concepts (demonstrate through doing or writing about)	Analyze and synthesize connections among form, techniques, content and context to interpret the work's underlying concept	Examine how concepts develop through the artistic process using form, techniques and content	Identify the various elements of the artistic process; articulate connection between process and underlying concept	Identify basic artistic techniques and forms
Formal Elements and Vocabulary	Critique, compare or create original work based on sophisticated discipline-specific vocabulary in relation to genre	Recognize formal/disciplinary conventions using discipline-specific vocabulary; apply appropriate vocabulary to explain the relationship of the parts to the whole	Apply disciplinary vocabulary to an artistic work or form and begin to identify genre/style conventions	Define key disciplinary vocabulary and terms, and relate them to an artistic work or form
Cultural Productions	Generate relationships within art forms and talk about specific works within that context; synthesize and incorporate own ideas based on these relationships	Evaluate how elements are used in the art form, and analyze how a piece fits within cultural, formal, and contextual elements	Discuss how basic elements are used to create meaning within the art form; begin to analyze/evaluate the cultural or contextual elements of an art form	Identify the basic elements of the art form, and begin to relate those elements to a larger significance/context
Social, Historical, and Personal Contexts	Evaluate through social, historical, and personal factors the cultural expressions and cross-cultural commonalities of the artistic content	Critique or interpret the cultural significance of the artistic content, drawing connections to its social, historical, and personal patterns and contexts	Explain or perform a basic analysis of the content of material or performance culture making at least one connection between the work's characteristics and its contexts	Begin to identify and explain the content of artistic material or performance through at least one relevant context (social, historical, or personal)

Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Arts Courses

Student Learning Outcomes	Level of Performance			
	Capstone	**Advanced Milestone**	**Emerging Milestone**	**Benchmark**
Engage in Artistic or Creative Processes	Synthesize the constituent elements into a new creation, pattern, or structure. Critique own work within the artistic medium	Analyze material into constituent elements and apply these procedures into the given artistic medium	Examine and begin to apply appropriate procedures, techniques or technologies in the given artistic medium	Understand the basic generative process in relation to the given artistic medium

School of Music Rubric for Evaluating Mason Core Outcomes | Student Ensemble Holistic Assessment

Course: _____   **Instructor:** _____

Student: _____

Circle the performance descriptor how you would rate the student's **overall consistent level of performance** on each of the four learning outcomes throughout the semester.

Student Learning Outcomes	Performance Descriptors			
	Capstone	**Advanced Milestone**	**Emerging Milestone**	**Benchmark**
Student will demonstrate historical awareness through stylistically appropriate performance.	Student consistently and fluently applies stylistic conventions and performs comfortably in the appropriate style.	Student demonstrates facility in applying stylistic conventions in much of the performance.	Student shows some awareness of appropriate aspects of style but may apply them inconsistently or with halting facility.	Student recognizes basic elements of stylistic playing in at least some instances.
Student will demonstrate awareness of theory and form through stylistically appropriate performance.	Student consistently and fluently responds to formal landmarks and harmonic/melodic constructs, applies stylistic conventions, and performs comfortably.	Student shows consistent awareness of formal landmarks and harmonic/melodic constructs in applying stylistic conventions in much of the performance.	Student shows more awareness of formal landmarks and harmonic/melodic constructs but may respond to them with halting facility or inconsistently.	Student responds to formal landmarks and responds to harmonic/melodic constructs with stylistic playing in at least a few instances.
Student will demonstrate technical and expressive proficiency in support of the ensemble's performance.	Nearly flawless technique and expression consistently.	Playing errors and technical difficulties are few; expression is free and fluent.	Playing errors and technical difficulties are less evident; expression is freer but still inconsistent.	Student performs their part, but technical limitations limit expression and impede tight ensemble.
Student will demonstrate musical communication skills by collectively creating a collaborative musical environment.	Fluent communication; expressive student generated ensemble interpretation.	Consistent communication across the ensemble with minimal errors caused by inattention.	Some communication allows for better group cohesion and collaborative expression.	Minimal ensemble communication, student "locked" in their own parts.