



## Jury Requirements Proposal for the Vocal Jazz Program at Rangsit University: A Comparative Analysis

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### Abstract

Jury requirements are essential for both instrumental and vocal music programs to assess student progress and proficiency effectively. Instrumental programs have established criteria, but vocal jazz programs often lack standardized standards, leading to challenges in student growth and program credibility. This study explores the significance of defined jury standards in vocal jazz programs, aiming to address challenges and enhance program quality. Drawing on models from instrumental and vocal jazz programs, the research examines how implementing clear jury standards can improve teaching practices and student outcomes. Proficiency across various dimensions, including repertoire selection, memorization, transcription, analysis, improvisation, technical proficiency, musicianship, interpretation, communication skills, preparation, and professionalism, is crucial in jazz performance. This study focuses on vocal jazz programs at prominent institutions like the Manhattan School of Music, California State University Long Beach, and the University of North Texas, along with instrumental jazz programs at Rangsit University. The findings highlight the rigorous standards and multifaceted approaches used to assess musical abilities, providing insights for curriculum development and pedagogical practices. Recommendations are proposed to enhance the vocal jazz program at Rangsit University, aiming to align its standards with industry norms and improve program competitiveness. This research contributes to advancing jazz pedagogy practices and improving student learning outcomes in vocal jazz pedagogy.

**Keywords:** *Jazz Pedagogy, Vocal Jazz, Jury Requirements, Comparative Analysis*

### 1. Introduction

Having clear and well-defined jury requirements is crucial for instrumental and vocal music programs (Wesolowski, 2012, p. 36). While instrumental programs have established criteria for evaluating student progress and proficiency, vocal jazz programs often lack standards (Mesiä, 2019, p. 57). This gap not only hampers the growth of jazz vocalists but also diminishes the credibility and rigor of the programs. Throughout history, universities offering instrumental and vocal jazz programs have faced challenges in establishing comprehensive assessment criteria (Ciorba & Smith, 2009, p. 7). Unlike their instrumental counterparts, which benefit from a wealth of literature and established norms, vocal jazz pedagogy has developed more organically, relying on individual instructors' expertise and preferences (Mesiä, 2019, p. 155). While such flexibility has allowed for diverse teaching approaches in jazz pedagogy, it has also led to inconsistencies in evaluation methods and expectations across programs.

Previous reviews of vocal jazz programs have pointed out issues caused by the absence of jury requirements. These include grading practices, limited opportunities for student feedback and self-assessment, and difficulty tracking student progress over time (Mesiä, 2019, p. 44). Furthermore, a lack of criteria makes it challenging for vocal jazz programs to compare themselves against industry standards and effectively compete for recognition and funding. Against this background, the researchers aim to delve into defined and organized requirements for juries in vocal jazz programs. Recognizing the role that assessment plays in shaping the journey of jazz vocalists, the researchers intend to explore how implementing clear jury standards can address the challenges as well as enhance the quality and credibility of vocal jazz programs.

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By studying models used in both instrumental and vocal jazz programs and conducting research within these contexts, valuable insights and recommendations can be provided to improve teaching practices and student outcomes in this specialized field.

In music performance, especially within the context of jazz, proficiency across various dimensions is crucial for aspiring musicians. The intricacies of jazz demand a multifaceted skill set, encompassing not only technical mastery but also artistic expression and improvisational fluency. Therefore, jury requirements in jazz pedagogy must reflect the diverse facets of musical development. Repertoire selection serves as a foundation for exploring different styles (Cooper, 2022, p. 81), while memorization ensures a deep internalization of musical material, facilitating spontaneous expression during performance (Chaffin & Logan, 2006, p. 113). Transcription and analysis cultivate an understanding of jazz language, harmony, and structure, laying the groundwork for informed improvisation (Laohverapanich, 2022, p. 46; Small, 2006, p. 3). Technical proficiency, encompassing instrumental or vocal dexterity and control, is essential for executing musical ideas with precision and finesse (Moore, 2016, p. 26). Musicianship and interpretation underscore the importance of musicality, expression, and nuance in performance, elevating renditions beyond mere technical proficiency (Mesiä, 2019, p. 111). Furthermore, communication skills foster meaningful engagement with audiences and fellow musicians, enhancing the overall performance experience (Mesiä, 2019, p. 172). Preparation and professionalism round out the skill set, emphasizing the importance of diligence, punctuality, and dedication in achieving musical excellence (Chaffin & Logan, 2006, p. 115).

The researchers selected the vocal jazz programs at the Manhattan School of Music, California State University Long Beach, and the University of North Texas since these institutions are renowned for their strong music programs and have established reputations in jazz education. The Manhattan School of Music, located in New York City, is particularly esteemed for its jazz studies department, attracting top faculty and students from around the world (Kerr et al., 2007, pp. 257-258). California State University Long Beach and the University of North Texas also have reputable music departments with dedicated jazz studies programs (Ninmer, 2014). Each institution offers a unique approach to vocal jazz pedagogy, providing a diverse range of perspectives and methodologies. By studying multiple programs, the researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of different pedagogical approaches, curriculum structures, and performance expectations. These universities typically offer extensive resources for jazz students, including access to faculty mentors, ensemble opportunities, performance venues, recording facilities, and guest artist residencies. Investigating these resources can provide insights into how institutions support vocal jazz students in their artistic and professional development.

Given the focus on jazz education at Rangsit University (Suwannabhum & Fyr, 2022, p. 86), studying instrumental jazz jury requirements provides a broader research context and facilitates a more nuanced analysis of the institution's music program as a whole. This approach contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of jazz education practices within the university's specific cultural, institutional, and pedagogical context. Understanding the instrumental jazz jury requirements alongside the vocal jazz requirements allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the overall jazz education program at Rangsit University. This holistic perspective enables the researchers to assess the curriculum's breadth and depth as well as align assessment practices with program goals and objectives.

## 2. Objectives

1. To examine and compare the vocal jazz jury requirements at the Manhattan School of Music, California State University Long Beach, and the University of North Texas.
2. To analyze and compare the instrumental jazz jury requirements at Rangsit University.
3. To identify similarities and differences in the jury requirements between vocal and instrumental jazz programs.
4. To propose jury requirements for vocal jazz at Rangsit University based on the findings and analysis of the selected institutions.



### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Methodological Delimitation

1. This research employs a content analysis approach to examine and compare jury requirements in vocal and instrumental jazz programs. The study will not include interviews, surveys, or observational studies. While content analysis offers valuable insights into the assessment criteria and pedagogical practices employed by the selected institutions, it may not capture the full range of factors influencing jazz pedagogy. Therefore, the findings of this study are limited to the scope and methodology of content analysis.
2. The study focuses specifically on three prominent institutions known for their strong vocal jazz programs (the Manhattan School of Music, California State University Long Beach, and the University of North Texas) and one institution for instrumental jazz (Rangsit University). While these institutions provide valuable insights into the assessment criteria and pedagogical practices in jazz education, the findings may not be generalizable to all vocal jazz programs or instrumental jazz programs globally.
3. The research specifically examines jury requirements in vocal and instrumental jazz programs. While these requirements are crucial for assessing student proficiency, other aspects of jazz pedagogy, such as curriculum structure, teaching methodologies, and student experiences, are not within the scope of this study.

#### 3.2. Materials and Methods

1. Select three prominent institutions known for their strong vocal jazz programs: Manhattan School of Music, California State University Long Beach, and the University of North Texas, and one institution for instrumental jazz: Rangsit University.
2. Collect detailed information on the vocal jazz jury requirements from the selected institutions, including handbooks, program websites, and other relevant documents.
3. Compile and analyze the vocal jazz jury requirements, focusing on aspects such as repertoire selection, memorization, transcription, analysis, improvisation, technical proficiency, musicianship, interpretation, communication skills, preparation, and professionalism.
4. Gather information on the instrumental jazz jury requirements at Rangsit University and analyze them using the same criteria.
5. Compare and contrast the findings from the vocal jazz programs at the selected institutions with the instrumental jazz program at Rangsit University.
6. Based on the analysis, propose adapted jury requirements tailored specifically for the vocal jazz program at Rangsit University.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The researchers focused on several aspects including repertoire selection, memorization, transcription, analysis, improvisation, technical proficiency, musicianship, interpretation, communication skills, preparation, and professionalism for jury requirements in jazz education due to their critical importance in developing well-rounded and proficient jazz musicians (Chaffin & Logan, 2006; Cooper, 2022; Laohverapanich, 2022; Mesiä, 2019; Moore, 2016; Small, 2006). Each aspect contributes to different facets of musical growth and performance excellence in jazz.

#### 4.1. Vocal Jazz Jury Requirements from the Manhattan School of Music, California State University Long Beach, and the University of North Texas

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Several key observations can be made after analyzing the vocal jury requirements from the Manhattan School of Music (2023), California State University Long Beach (2023), and the University of North Texas (2023).

**Repertoire Selection:** All three institutions emphasize the importance of a diverse repertoire selection, including jazz standards, contemporary tunes, and original compositions or arrangements. This ensures that students develop a comprehensive understanding of various jazz styles and demonstrate their artistic versatility.

**Memorization:** Memorization of repertoire is a consistent requirement across all institutions, which not only enhances students' connection to the music but also fosters a deeper level of musical expression and stage presence during performances.

**Transcription and Analysis:** The inclusion of transcription and analysis of jazz solos is evident in the requirements of all three institutions. This emphasizes the development of students' ear-training skills, improvisational vocabulary, and understanding of jazz phrasing and style.

**Improvisation:** Demonstrating improvisational skills is a fundamental aspect of vocal jazz performance, as reflected in the requirements of all three institutions. Students are expected to improvise over chord changes and create melodic lines spontaneously, showcasing their creativity and musicality.

**Technical Proficiency:** Technical proficiency on the instrument or voice is assessed across the board. This includes aspects such as tone quality, intonation, articulation, and range, ensuring that students develop strong foundational skills to support their musical expression.

**Musicianship and Interpretation:** Evaluating students' musicianship and interpretation of the music is a common focus in the jury requirements of all institutions. This encompasses aspects such as phrasing, dynamics, rhythmic feel, and expression, enabling students to convey their unique artistic voice.

**Communication Skills:** Effective communication with accompanists and other musicians is emphasized in the requirements of all three institutions. This underscores the importance of collaboration and teamwork in ensemble performance settings, facilitating a cohesive and engaging musical experience.

**Preparation and Professionalism:** Professionalism and preparation are key criteria in all vocal jury requirements. Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality, organization, and a high level of preparedness, reflecting the standards of professionalism required in the music industry.

Overall, the vocal jury requirements from the Manhattan School of Music, California State University Long Beach, and the University of North Texas collectively provide a comprehensive framework for assessing students' musical abilities, technical proficiency, improvisational skills, and artistic expression in the context of vocal jazz performance.

#### **4.2. Instrumental Jazz Jury Requirements from Rangsit University**

An analysis of the instrumental jazz jury requirements at Rangsit University (2023) focuses on various aspects, as below.

**Repertoire Selection:** All instruments require students to learn and perform pieces from a selected repertoire list. The repertoire includes jazz standards and compositions at increasing levels of complexity as students progress through the program.

**Memorization:** Memorization is essential for all instruments, indicating that students are expected to internalize the pieces they perform. This helps develop a deeper understanding of the music and enhances performance quality.

**Transcription and Analysis:** All instruments require students to transcribe solos from historically significant players like Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Wes Montgomery, J. J. Johnson, and Freddie Hubbard. This promotes ear training, stylistic awareness, and analysis of improvisational techniques.

**Improvisation:** All instruments emphasize improvisation skills, starting with basic scales and progressing to more advanced modes, bebop scales, and altered scales. Students are expected to improvise over chord changes, demonstrating fluency and creativity in their solos.



**Technical Proficiency:** Each instrument includes technical exercises such as scales, arpeggios, and etudes designed to develop technical proficiency and finger dexterity. These exercises are crucial for mastering the instrument and executing challenging passages in repertoire pieces.

**Musicianship and Interpretation:** The jury requirements encourage the development of musicianship skills through sight-reading, ear training, and jazz theory studies. Understanding harmonic progressions, chord voicings, and jazz concepts enhances students' overall musicality. Students are expected to interpret the selected repertoire pieces with attention to stylistic nuances, dynamics, phrasing, and expression. This involves studying recordings of jazz masters and incorporating their stylistic elements into performances.

**Communication Skills:** While not explicitly mentioned, effective communication is inherent in jazz performance. Musicians must communicate with each other during ensemble playing and express themselves clearly through their instruments to convey musical ideas to the audience.

**Preparation and Professionalism:** Students are required to prepare diligently for their jury performances, including learning repertoire, practicing technical exercises, and refining improvisational skills. Professionalism encompasses aspects such as punctuality, attitude, and presentation during performances and interactions with faculty and peers.

The instrumental jazz jury requirements at Rangsit University aim to cultivate well-rounded jazz musicians with a strong foundation in repertoire, technical skills, improvisation, and musical understanding, while also emphasizing professionalism and dedication to their craft.

### 4.3. A Comparative Analysis of Jury Requirements

Detailed information on the vocal jazz jury requirements from the Manhattan School of Music (MSM), California State University Long Beach (CSULB), and the University of North Texas (UNT) reveals nuanced approaches to assessing student proficiency in vocal jazz. The analysis of these requirements, along with those from Rangsit University's instrumental jazz program, provides valuable insights into the standards and expectations across different institutions.

**Repertoire Selection:** MSM emphasizes a diverse repertoire, including jazz standards, contemporary jazz compositions, and original works. Students are expected to demonstrate versatility across various styles. CSULB focuses on a mix of classic jazz standards and contemporary arrangements, with an emphasis on showcasing vocal range and expression. UNT's repertoire includes traditional jazz standards, bebop tunes, and contemporary jazz compositions, reflecting a comprehensive approach to vocal jazz. Rangsit University's instrumental jazz program emphasizes repertoire selection tailored to the student's level, covering a range of jazz styles and compositions.

**Memorization:** All three vocal jazz programs require students to memorize repertoire, demonstrating their ability to internalize lyrics, melodies, and harmonic progressions. Memorization is also essential in Rangsit University's instrumental jazz program, where students are expected to perform repertoire from memory to showcase their familiarity with the material.

**Transcription and Analysis:** MSM, CSULB, and UNT incorporate transcription and analysis of jazz vocal solos as part of their jury requirements, fostering students' understanding of phrasing, articulation, and stylistic nuances. Rangsit University similarly emphasizes transcription and analysis but focuses on instrumental jazz solos, encouraging students to explore improvisational techniques and harmonic concepts.

**Improvisation:** Improvisational skills are central to vocal jazz programs at MSM, CSULB, and UNT, with students expected to demonstrate their ability to improvise melodies and scat sing over chord changes. In Rangsit University's instrumental jazz program, improvisation is a key component, with students required to demonstrate proficiency in soloing over jazz standards and chord progressions.

**Technical Proficiency:** Vocal technique, including breath control, intonation, and articulation, is assessed in vocal jazz programs through live performances and studio recordings. In Rangsit University's program, instrumental technique is evaluated through proficiency in scales, arpeggios, and chord voicings, as well as technical exercises and etudes.



**Musicianship and Interpretation:** All programs prioritize musicianship and interpretation, evaluating students' ability to convey emotion, phrasing, and dynamics in their performances. Vocalists are assessed on their ability to convey lyrics with authenticity and emotional resonance, while instrumentalists focus on conveying the melody and improvising with expression.

**Communication Skills:** Effective communication with accompanists and band members is essential in vocal jazz, as students collaborate on arrangements and interpretations. Instrumentalists in Rangsit University's program must also demonstrate effective communication through their interaction with other ensemble members during performances.

**Preparation and Professionalism:** Students are expected to demonstrate professionalism in all aspects of their performance, including punctuality, attire, and stage presence. Preparation involves thorough rehearsal, internalization of repertoire, and engagement with the material beyond surface-level understanding.

The analysis highlights the rigorous standards and multifaceted approach to assessment in vocal and instrumental jazz programs, providing valuable insights for curriculum development and pedagogical practices.

#### 4.4. Discussion

The content analysis approach utilized in this study provides valuable insights into the jury requirements of vocal and instrumental jazz programs at selected institutions. However, it is important to acknowledge the methodological delimitations that may impact the interpretation and generalizability of the findings. These limitations include the exclusion of other research methods like interviews, surveys, or observations, which could offer complementary perspectives on jazz pedagogy. Additionally, the study's focus on specific institutions in the United States and Thailand, primarily operating in English-speaking environments, may limit the generalizability of the results to other regions and cultural contexts.

Despite these limitations, the analysis uncovers significant findings regarding the jury requirements in vocal and instrumental jazz programs. Notably, there is a strong emphasis on repertoire selection across all institutions, with variations observed in the balance between traditional and contemporary pieces. This suggests a need for Rangsit University to diversify its vocal jazz repertoire to align with industry standards and cater to evolving musical preferences. Furthermore, all programs prioritize key elements such as memorization, transcription, analysis, improvisation, and technical proficiency, but variations exist in the specific skills emphasized. For instance, the Manhattan School of Music places a notable emphasis on transcription and analysis, which could enhance students' understanding of jazz language and stylistic nuances. Similarly, the focus on musicianship, interpretation, and communication skills underscores the importance of conveying emotion and storytelling in jazz performance. Rangsit University could benefit from incorporating more opportunities for students to develop these skills within its vocal jazz program.

The emphasis on preparation and professionalism in all institutions highlights the industry's expectations for jazz musicians. Rangsit University can enhance its vocal jazz program by providing students with ample opportunities for performance preparation and professional development. By aligning its program with industry standards and incorporating best practices from established institutions, Rangsit University can improve the quality and competitiveness of its vocal jazz program. Future research could explore the implementation of proposed changes and assess their impact on student learning outcomes, thereby contributing further to the advancement of jazz pedagogy.

#### 4.5. Proposed Vocal Jazz Jury Requirements for Rangsit University

Based on the analysis of vocal jazz jury requirements from the Manhattan School of Music, California State University Long Beach, and the University of North Texas, as well as the instrumental jazz jury requirements from Rangsit University, the proposed vocal jazz jury requirements for Rangsit University aim to incorporate elements that ensure a comprehensive assessment of students' musical abilities. The proposed requirements are as follows:

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**Repertoire Selection:** Students will be required to prepare a diverse repertoire of jazz standards and contemporary tunes. This should include a mix of ballads, medium-tempo tunes, and up-tempo tunes to demonstrate a well-rounded understanding of different jazz styles.

**Memorization:** Memorization of repertoire will be emphasized to deepen students' connection to the music and enhance their stage presence during performances.

**Transcription and Analysis:** Students will transcribe and analyze jazz solos from recordings to develop their ear-training skills, improvisational vocabulary, and understanding of jazz phrasing and style.

**Improvisation:** Students will be expected to demonstrate improvisational skills by improvising chord changes and creating melodic lines spontaneously. This may involve trading solos with a rhythm section or improvising within an ensemble setting.

**Technical Proficiency:** Technical proficiency will be assessed, including aspects such as tone quality, intonation, articulation, and range.

**Musicianship and Interpretation:** Students will be evaluated on their musicianship and interpretation of the music, including aspects such as phrasing, dynamics, rhythmic feel, and expression.

**Communication Skills:** Effective communication with accompanists and other musicians will be crucial. Therefore, students will be assessed on their ability to interact with the rhythm section, communicate musical ideas, and collaborate effectively within an ensemble.

**Preparation and Professionalism:** Students will be expected to demonstrate professionalism in their preparation and presentation during the jury. This includes being punctual, organized, and well-prepared while maintaining a professional demeanor throughout the evaluation process.

By incorporating these elements into the vocal jazz jury requirements at Rangsit University, students will receive a comprehensive assessment of their musical abilities, preparing them for successful careers as professional jazz musicians.

## 5. Conclusion

The examination and comparison of vocal jazz jury requirements at the Manhattan School of Music (MSM), California State University Long Beach (CSULB), and the University of North Texas (UNT), alongside the analysis and comparison of instrumental jazz jury requirements at Rangsit University (RSU), have provided valuable insights into the assessment criteria and pedagogical practices in jazz education. Through this research, several key observations and findings emerged.

Firstly, a wide range of approaches exists to assess student proficiency in jazz performance across different institutions. While vocal jazz programs at MSM, CSULB, and UNT prioritize repertoire selection, memorization, transcription, analysis, improvisation, technical proficiency, musicianship, interpretation, communication skills, preparation, and professionalism, RSU's instrumental jazz program emphasizes similar criteria tailored to instrumentalists.

Secondly, similarities and differences between vocal and instrumental jazz jury requirements have been identified. Both vocal and instrumental programs prioritize technical proficiency, musicianship, interpretation, and preparation. However, vocal programs place additional emphasis on lyric interpretation, expression, and scat singing, while instrumental programs focus more on improvisational skills and instrumental technique.

Based on the findings and analysis, recommendations for enhancing the vocal jazz program at Rangsit University can be proposed. These recommendations include:

1. Incorporating transcription and analysis of vocal jazz solos to deepen students' understanding of phrasing, articulation, and stylistic nuances.
2. Providing opportunities for students to develop improvisational skills through scat singing and spontaneous vocal improvisation exercises.
3. Enhancing communication skills by fostering collaboration with accompanists and band members, simulating real-world performance scenarios.



4. Implementing clear and structured assessment criteria aligned with industry standards, ensuring consistency and fairness in evaluation.
5. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration between vocal and instrumental jazz programs, promoting the cross-pollination of ideas and approaches.

In conclusion, this research has shed light on the complexities and nuances of jury requirements in vocal jazz programs. By synthesizing insights from prominent institutions and proposing recommendations for curriculum enhancement, this study aims to contribute to the continuous improvement of jazz pedagogy practices at Rangsit University and beyond.

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