

Course orientation, learning goals, and professional expectations

MUSIC ENSEMBLE 2

Essential Knowledge and Practical Skills for Ensemble Performance

Course Focus

Music Ensemble 2 develops practical ensemble performance together with rehearsal planning and concert preparation. Students are expected to rehearse assigned repertoire, work effectively as a team, and take part in planning a public performance.

Learning Goals

- Perform assigned repertoire with secure rhythm, accurate notes or vocal lines, appropriate technique, and musical expression.
- Plan and manage rehearsal time, rehearsal space, performance time, and the basic format of a concert.
- Develop leadership and followership, teamwork, responsibility, punctuality, and professional ethics.
- Apply music theory and stylistic knowledge to rehearsal, interpretation, and performance.
- Prepare basic performance documents such as a rehearsal schedule, program information, and publicity materials.

Core Professional Habits

Habit	Expected Practice
Preparation	Know your part before full-band rehearsal.
Punctuality	Arrive early enough to set up, tune, and sound-check.
Communication	Use clear musical terms, cues, and respectful discussion.
Responsibility	Bring instruments, charts, cables, accessories, and required files.
Reflection	Record rehearsals, identify problems, and improve before the next session.

Key Principle

A successful ensemble is not a group of individuals playing at the same time; it is a team that listens, reacts, supports, and shapes the music together.

Organizing the band and planning efficient rehearsals

1. Ensemble Organization and Rehearsal Planning

A. Assign Clear Roles

- Band leader / rehearsal leader: coordinates the rehearsal, confirms the set list, gives cues, and keeps the group focused.
- Rhythm section: establishes pulse, groove, harmonic support, and stylistic foundation.
- Melody and harmony instruments: deliver lead lines, counter-lines, riffs, voicings, and supporting textures.
- Vocalist(s): communicate lyrics, melody, phrasing, and stage interaction while listening closely to the band.
- Every member: prepares individual parts, listens to the whole ensemble, and contributes to problem-solving.

B. Semester Repertoire Structure

Repertoire Planning

The course plan specifies 6 compulsory songs, 2 compulsory-choice songs, and 2 free-choice songs for the semester. Song selection should match the students' performance skills and the intended concert format.

C. Rehearsal Workflow

1. Set one clear goal for each rehearsal (for example: fix the intro, lock the groove, balance the chorus, or run the full set).
2. Begin with a short warm-up and a tempo check.
3. Rehearse difficult sections in short loops before playing the whole song.
4. Use sectional rehearsal when one instrument group needs focused work.
5. Run the full song without stopping, then discuss only the most important issues.
6. Record a final run and assign individual practice tasks before the next rehearsal.

D. Rehearsal Planning Checklist

Before Rehearsal	During Rehearsal
Confirm room and time	Count in clearly and agree on tempo
Prepare charts / lyric sheets	Listen for balance and timing
Bring required equipment	Mark cues, cuts, repeats, endings
Know song form	Record at least one complete run
Set rehearsal target	Write action points for next session

Time, listening, cues, balance, musical interaction, and style

2. Core Ensemble Performance Skills

A. Time and Groove

- Maintain a steady internal pulse even when the arrangement becomes quiet or complex.
- Agree on tempo before the count-in; use a metronome during problem-solving when necessary.
- Lock important rhythmic relationships: drums-bass, bass-keyboard/guitar, rhythm section-vocal phrasing.
- Avoid rushing transitions, fills, crescendos, and endings.

B. Starts, Stops, Cues, and Form

- Watch the leader for count-ins, cut-offs, fermatas, tempo changes, and dynamic cues.
- Know the form: Intro - Verse - Pre-Chorus - Chorus - Solo - Bridge - Outro, or the form appropriate to the piece.
- Mark repeats, codas, breaks, hits, and endings clearly in the chart.
- Practice difficult transitions separately before running the full song.

C. Listening and Balance

- Listen outward, not only to your own instrument.
- Control volume so that melody, lyrics, rhythmic detail, and harmony remain clear.
- Leave musical space; do not fill every gap.
- Match articulation, note length, phrasing, and dynamic direction with the ensemble.

D. Practical Ensemble Drills

Drill	How to Practice
Tempo Lock	Play one groove for 2-3 minutes without speeding up or slowing down.
Cue Drill	Practice 4 starts, 4 stops, 4 breaks, and 4 endings using visual cues only.
Balance Drill	Play one chorus at three dynamic levels: soft, medium, strong.
Form Drill	Call out the next section one bar before every transition.
Listen-and-Adjust	Record 60 seconds, identify one balance problem, then repeat and correct it.

Performance Standard

Accuracy is only the starting point. Ensemble quality depends on timing, interaction, balance, stylistic consistency, and musical communication.

Preparing assigned repertoire and evaluating performance

3. Repertoire Preparation and Assessment

A. Midterm and Final Performance Format

Performance Requirement

For the midterm and final ensemble examinations, each band performs 5 assigned songs: 3 compulsory songs, 1 compulsory-choice song, and 1 free-choice song.

B. Six-Step Song Preparation Process

1. Analyze the song: key, tempo, meter, form, important cues, dynamics, groove, and stylistic character.
2. Prepare individual parts before rehearsal.
3. Rehearse rhythm section / accompaniment and melody-vocal sections separately when needed.
4. Combine the ensemble and correct timing, balance, form, and communication.
5. Record a complete run and evaluate the performance.
6. Perform a mock exam or mock concert without stopping.

C. Self- and Peer-Evaluation Criteria

Criterion	What to Check
Accuracy	Notes, chords, lyrics, rhythm, form, and entrances
Time	Tempo stability, groove, subdivisions, transitions
Ensemble	Listening, balance, cues, interaction, coordination
Musicality	Dynamics, phrasing, articulation, expression, style
Performance	Confidence, stage awareness, communication
Professionalism	Preparation, punctuality, responsibility, teamwork

D. Quick Reflection Questions

- What is the strongest part of our ensemble performance?
- Where does the tempo or groove become unstable?
- Which section has unclear balance or musical roles?
- Are the intro, transitions, solos, and ending fully agreed?
- What must each member improve before the next rehearsal?

From rehearsal room to public performance

4. Performance Production and Professional Practice

A. Basic Concert Planning

- Venue: choose and organize a space appropriate to the ensemble, audience, equipment, and performance format.
- Schedule: prepare rehearsal times, sound-check time, performance time, call time, and a simple run sheet.
- Program booklet / program information: include the title of the event, repertoire, performers, and essential credits.
- Publicity: prepare suitable communication materials and share accurate event information.
- Stage plan: determine positions, monitor needs, microphones, amplifiers, power, stands, and safe cable routes.

B. Sound Check Sequence

1. Set instruments, microphones, amplifiers, keyboards, and playback devices.
2. Check each input and monitor level.
3. Check rhythm section balance first, then melody, harmony, and vocals.
4. Run the loudest and quietest sections of the set.
5. Confirm cues, count-ins, endings, instrument changes, and stage communication.

C. Final Performance Checklist

Music	Production / Professional
Correct repertoire and order	Venue and stage are ready
Tempos and count-ins confirmed	Equipment and backups checked
All cues and endings agreed	Program information prepared
Dynamics and balance controlled	Call time and sound check confirmed
Solos and transitions rehearsed	Professional dress and stage etiquette
Full set performed without stopping	Post-performance reflection completed

Final Goal

The aim of Music Ensemble 2 is to connect musical skill with teamwork, rehearsal discipline, performance planning, and professional presentation so that students can move from the rehearsal room to a real performance situation with confidence.