

Improvisation Procedures - Certificate of Merit 2007 Revision

The Current Improvisation Policy for the Certificate of Merit™ Program 2007-2008:

- Improvisation is an **optional performance element**. Any improvisation may be played during the performance portion of the evaluation.
- Improvisation is not rated by the evaluator.
- Improvisation is limited to 5 – 60 seconds in length, as listed in the CM Syllabus according to the CM level.
- Improvisation is done in addition to and not in place of the other required elements of the CM evaluation (technique, sight-reading, and repertoire). Students must prepare the entire technical requirements as indicated for their level. All elements (including improvisation) need to be performed within the appropriate evaluation length of each level.
- Improvisation may be from any resource and is independent of a student's registered CM level.

Teacher Procedures:

- The teacher and student must consider the length (5 - 60 second limit) of the Improvisation so as to not exceed the slotted evaluation time (10 minutes for Levels Prep through 2; 15 minutes for Levels 3 through 5; 20 minutes for Levels 6 and 7; 25 minutes for Levels 8 and 9; 30 minutes for Advanced).
- Improvisation may be done at any time during the performance evaluation. A post-it note attached to the student's music indicating that the student plans to play the optional improvisation would be helpful so the evaluator is aware of that at the beginning of the evaluation time.

Evaluator Procedures:

- The text on the evaluation report will include "Optional Improvisation Played: Yes or No."
- Evaluators are not required to provide written comments on the improvisation; however they are requested to mark a "yes" if an improvisation is performed.

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Questions and Answers

Question: Why is Improvisation offered as an optional element in Certificate of Merit (CM)?

Answer: There are many reasons. One of the biggest reasons is to give students an opportunity to improvise. Many branches throughout the state do not offer any opportunities for students to improvise and this is just one small way for MTAC to offer this performance option to students.

Another vital reason is that for some students, improvisation is a normal part of their musical education and experience. Being able to incorporate this element in CM is a natural extension of this. This option may act as an additional or primary motivator and more importantly make the student more at ease in the evaluation; it can be a great warm-up or something the student looks forward to sharing with the evaluator. Students in CM are participating in a well-rounded program of musicianship, and improvisation is one facet of total musical proficiency.

Question: What if the improvisation goes over the time limit allotted for the level?

Answer: Please do your best to stay within the time limit. The teacher and student must remember that the evaluation time limit cannot be altered. All the performance elements (technique, sight-reading, repertoire, and improvisation) must not exceed the scheduled evaluation time allowed for the student's level (i.e. 10 minutes at level 2, etc). Please remember to allow time for evaluators to write comments when timing the student's performance elements.

Question: Is this really improvisation if the student prepares the assignment?

Answer: Yes. Using skills they have already learned, students will be creating an original improvisation that can be changed and perfected and later performed during the CM Evaluations. Improvisation includes the first-time creation of music, the changes that take place as it is further developed, as well as the final arrangement the student decides he likes best. The student is learning the skill of improvisation by experimenting and practicing the assignment.

Question: I have woodwind students interested in improvisation; what are the procedures for CM?

Answer: The procedures are standardized for use by all disciplines. Please check with your discipline chair if you have additional questions.

The *Improvisation Syllabus and Guide* (ISG) and *Games and Activities for Improvisation* (GAI) are two sources provided by MTAC. These books may be ordered from the MTAC State Office, 1-800-834-3340.