

FAQ's about National Music Certificate Program

What is our role at VMS? Village Music School in Cary, N.C. is an examination center for the National Music Certificate Program. This means we host the examiner and students on the scheduled dates.

Who should participate? NMCP is open to all students but in order to do well, students will need determination and be willing to practice consistently and effectively. The very first level, Preparatory A, is suitable for a student who has been studying for 1 to 2 years.

Will our VMS instructor tell us whether or not to participate? Open communication is key to productive lessons. Our teachers will guide you through the levels of this certificate program but typically the student's initial and continuing interest in the program must be brought to the teacher's attention. Quite often additional music and theory books will need to be ordered by the teacher. It is a good idea to have a conversation with the instructor about participation in this program many months before each registration takes place.

What is a practical exam? An examiner will listen to the student play 2 to 5 memorized pieces. The number is based on the level of the exam. In addition to the prepared pieces, there will be a technical section of the exam. Technical requirements for each level include rhythm clapback, melody playback, sight-reading both notes and rhythms, scales and triads. An evaluation and score will be posted on the NMCP website several weeks after the exam. Student ID information will be needed to retrieve the results.

What is a theory exam? These are written examinations received from and returned to NMCP in a sealed envelope. The test is taken under the guidance of a local proctor. Registering for written examinations is required and the process is similar to registering for a practical exam. The graded exam will be available on the NMCP website several weeks after the exam. Student ID information will be needed to retrieve the results.

Are theory exams required? Yes and no. If a student desires a certificate, then beginning at practical level 5, at least one written exam is required. If receiving the practice examination results is the primary objective, then students can continue on through level 5 and above without completing the written requirements. If this path is chosen, no certificates will be awarded after the level 4 practical exam. Also, the preparatory rudiments level is appropriate for students who have not yet reached a level 5 practical exam. This is an optional exam and is not required to receive Preparatory A through level 4 certificates. Navigate to "Tour the Certificate Program" – "Curriculum" on the NMCP website to see complete details. This is the link.
<http://nationalmusiccertificate.org/tours/tour3.htm>

Who is the examiner? NMCP provides a training apprenticeship program for qualified, degreed musicians who apply to The College of Examiners. Upon acceptance to and completion of this program, College members provide evaluations to students and teachers across North America on behalf of the National Music Certificate Program.

What is the grading structure for practical exams? First and foremost, U.S. students must understand the origin of NMCP. It is based from and almost identical to a Canadian program that is over 100 years old. In Canada grading is on a different scale than in the U.S. The NMCP scoring reflects this difference and therefore, the numerical values should be taken in context of this program. Scores are traditionally lower than U.S. students are accustomed to. 60 begins a passing grade. 70 – 79 is Honors, 80 – 89 is 1st Class Honors and 90 – 100 is 1st Class Honors with Distinction.

Do we have to participate in every level? No. For instance, if a student has progressed beyond the beginning preparatory levels when he or she decides to register for an exam for the first time, the appropriate level may be entered without completing the prior levels. Also, if a student takes some time away from the exams but continues with lessons, he or she may register for an exam again at the appropriate level, with the possibility of skipping one or more levels.

Can we register for the same level more than once? Yes. If for some reason a student would like to repeat a level, this is acceptable. The NMCP transcript will only reflect and report the highest grade achieved when a level is completed more than once.

When do we sign up? Registration is available online at nationalmusiccertificate.org. Registration for the spring session is usually from about the 3rd week in January to the 3rd week in February. Registration for the winter session is usually mid-September through mid-October.

What is the difference between the spring and winter examination sessions? The spring examinations are held sometime between the end of April and the beginning of June. The winter examinations are held sometime from November through January. A specific date will be available during the registration process. The practical (performance) exams are held *once* per year during the spring session only. Theory (written) exams may be available during the winter and spring sessions. Some students prefer to register for the written exams during the winter session so the spring examination will be dedicated to the practical requirements.

Where do we find the books to prepare for the exams? Supporting materials such as repertoire, etudes, technique, sight reading, rhythm and ear training books will be needed and ordered by your VMS instructor in the same way as other music is ordered for the students. These materials typically are ordered from a Canadian publisher and take a little longer to arrive so advanced planning is advisable.

How much does this program cost? All testing fees are payable directly to NMCP during registration. Examination Information / Fees and Additional Services is the path to follow on the NMCP website for details. This is the link.
<http://nationalmusiccertificate.org/examinations/fees.htm>