

## Advice for students who want to improve their grade in MUTC 102

### 1. COME TO CLASS!!!

Many students who fail this course do so because they do not regularly come to class, which means they do not get the information necessary for correct completion of their homework. Students who do not come to class also miss opportunities to turn in their assignments.

### 2. DO YOUR HOMEWORK!!

Even if a student understands the subject matter, it is meaningless unless they can prove it through completing their homework assignments. Even if you do not completely understand a topic, working through the homework will either help clarify the point or at least make clear to you and your teacher what you do not know and therefore need to work on.

### 3. GET A TUTOR

Tutors are available at no charge for Shenandoah University students through the Academic Success Center located in 204 Howe Hall (Phone: 540-665-4928). Working with a tutor will allow you to ask many specific questions, receive personalized responses and instructions, and concentrate on specific areas you may find confusing.

### 4. COME TO OFFICE HOURS

While your professor's main job is to instruct you in class (and in this case, teach bassoon), there are also office hours available. These are generally used to clear up smaller questions you may have concerning the week's lectures. They are also a good time to express any concerns you may have regarding the class or your grade. It is generally not advisable to come to office hours without a specific question or set of questions in mind. A sheet is passed around class at least once a week for people to sign up for times. If you find yourself in need of regular detailed explanations of class work, please see #3 and secure a tutor.

### 5. FORM A STUDY GROUP

Friends helping friends is a great way to receive extra help and to also explore a topic from many different viewpoints. It can also help the group clarify specific questions to ask in class, and give individuals the courage to speak up, since they now know that other people have the same issues with the subject matter as they do.

I understand that students in study group will often work together on homework assignments. This is acceptable provided your product is better than if you had

done it on your own. Consistent, blatant errors in a group's work will be construed as plagiarism.

*Do not join or stay in a study group that does not help you. You have better ways to spend your time.*

#### 6. HAVE THE PHONE NUMBER OF AT LEAST ONE OTHER CLASS MEMBER

If you miss a day of class, call your classmates and ask if there are any new assignments due. While assignments are posted on Blackboard, the primary medium for assigning work is verbally, in class. Assignments are usually written on the classroom board by the end of each class.

Also, ask that friend if you can borrow their notes or if they have time to explain to you the general concepts discussed in the class you missed.

#### 7. BECOME WELL-ACQUAINTED WITH BLACKBOARD

The Blackboard site for this class has many useful bits of information for you. You can check what assignments are due and when (there are sometimes even pdf files you can print out and fill in), you can check your current grade, and you can see what assignments you have not turned in. Blackboard is the secondary method by which you receive your assignments.

#### 8. CHECK YOUR EMAIL

As a courtesy, your teacher often provides a copy of the homework assignment via email. Sometimes this message will even include extra helpful hints. Be warned, it is dangerous to rely on email for all of your assignments. There are times when your teacher will not have the time to extend this courtesy to you.

#### 9. ASK TO RECORD CLASS

While it is generally not your teacher's responsibility to record class sessions for you, you may, with teacher consent, bring an audio recording device to class. Some students find that listening to lectures again on their own to be helpful in reinforcing difficult concepts.

#### 10. SECURE AND SUBMIT FORMS FOR SPECIAL ALLOWANCES

Many students have recognized learning needs that can be accommodated by the teacher. However, the teacher is only responsible for those needs that have been documented by Academic Support Services (Debbie Wyne at phone: 540-665-4928; email: [dwyne@su.edu](mailto:dwyne@su.edu)) and have been submitted to the teacher in the proper format with the proper signatures. Allowances can include extended testing time, access to a note-taker, etc.

## 11. CARE

Care about your grade and your success in this course. You are training for careers in music. Not knowing how theory works is akin to a racecar driver not knowing how cars work. If you would like to waste both of our time and your money on something you care nothing about, feel free. But remember, it is still a waste. I pass students based on what they can prove they can do. Even if you are the world's nicest person, if you cannot earn a passing grade on your work, you will not pass.

## 12. SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Many learning issues such as dyslexia are not discovered until college age. If you find you are having trouble understanding the placement of notes or words on a page, it would be worth your time to be tested. From there, a professional can work with you to form a plan for greater academic success.

## 13. UNDERSTAND THAT THEORY CAN BE DIFFICULT

Theory is often not easy. It involves spatial reasoning, writing skills, aural skills, logic, and historical knowledge. It comes naturally to only a handful of students. Knowing that it can be difficult (but also worthwhile), set aside the appropriate amount of time for each assignment to do your work accurately and thoughtfully.

## 14. CREATE GAMES FOR YOURSELF AND FRIENDS

If you have fun learning, you will probably learn better. Improvise solfege in the shower. See how fast you can recite all of the major triads. Play interval games with soda bottles/water glasses. Try to write out your favorite melodies by ear. Anything to keep your mind active and interested.

## 15. LISTEN TO/PLAY THROUGH THE MUSIC

Assignments will never have the appropriate impact if you do not know what they sound like. Often, certain concepts are clearer if you hear them rather than just look for them on the page. If you can't play the examples, find a friend who can, enter them into Finale, or find a recording online or in the library. Even if a piece is beyond your piano skills as a whole, still play through each voice individually or pair up with a friend, or play only the outside voices. Any link whatsoever to the actual physical sensation of playing and hearing will help your written theory more than you know.

## 16. PAY ATTENTION IN PIANO CLASS

Many theory concepts are made much clearer when we can play or imagine them on a keyboard. Through keyboard training we gain a knowledge of spacing, distance, and timbre that we otherwise would not have.

## 17. PAY ATTENTION IN AURAL SKILLS

Many of the same ideas that are being taught through writing in MUTC 102 are also taught through singing and listening in your aural skills class. Take the time to make connections between the two.

## 18. WORK THOUGHTFULLY

Use your reasoning skills to discern the educational goal of your homework assignments. For example, if you learned about vi chords in class that day, your homework will probably ask you to use vi chords in all of the different ways discussed in class. When writing harmonizations or completing analyses, follow the steps we outlined together in class during the first week.

Approach your homework in small manageable bits, maybe split between two days, so you can have time to think (and dream) about the problems and solutions.

If you have a question, ask it early. Emails sent late at night before the due date will probably not be answered.

## 19. SPEAK UP

If you do not understand a concept, do yourself the favor and ask if the teacher has time to explain it again or in a different way. Who knows? You may help someone else out too. It is also more than acceptable to ask questions after class is over so long as the teacher has time to talk. But again, try to be as precise with your questions as possible.

## 20. RESPECT YOURSELF

You came to college for a reason. Shouldn't you respect yourself enough to carry through with your goals? If you find theory class to be an insurmountable roadblock to your dreams, you need to either find a way around/over that roadblock or reevaluate your short and long-range educational goals. Music is a dangerous profession to be ambivalent about. Jobs are scarce and they go either to the most-qualified or the most-well-connected. Respect yourself enough to do the work that is required to be successful.