

2010-11 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT UPDATE: BBA IN ECONOMICS (ECN)

1. The College-Wide Undergraduate Student Learning Goals

A. The faculty of the COB have established a set of four Learning Goals (i.e., Student Learning Outcomes) for all undergraduate major programs. Since then, our BBA-level student population as a whole has been assessed in accord with these Learning Goals.

B. The four BBA Learning Goals are as follows:

1) **General/Core Knowledge:** *The student will acquire the general or core knowledge required to understand the environment within which business operates.*

2) **Written Communications:** *The student will be able to communicate effectively in writing within a business environment.*

3) **Oral Communications:** *The student will be able to communicate orally in an effective and professional manner.*

4) **Problem Solving & Critical Thinking:** *The student will develop the thought processes necessary to use logic, information, and assumptions to successfully solve problems.*

2. During 2010-11 the ECN Faculty implemented an assessment effort in the Spring 2011 ECN Capstone Course in order to assess our ECN Majors' attainment of the **General/Core Knowledge** and **Oral Communications** Learning Goals. We also identified one additional Learning Goal—**Teamwork**—that we decided to assess in the Spring 2011 ECN Capstone. The **Teamwork** Learning Goal we have established for the ECN Major reads as follows:

The student will function effectively as a member of a team, and contribute productively to completing group projects or solving problems.

3. Assessment of **Oral Communications Skills** in the ECN Major

A. In the Spring 2011 ECN Capstone Course (ECN 466: Economics Workshop) we implemented the following (new) plan to improve and assess Oral Communications Skills:

1) We agreed to videorecord all final student Capstone Presentations, and to score them using the approved BBA Oral Communications Rubric. This Rubric highlights eight criteria that we use in the COB to assess student Oral Communications skills: *Clear Topic Coverage, Organization, Audience Appropriateness, Voice Quality, Grammar/Word Choice, Eye Contact & Body Language, Communication Aids, and Personal Appearance.*

2) We included the BBA Oral Communications Rubric in the Course Syllabus, so that students (a) would know the dimensions of Oral Communications Skills that we want them to focus upon, and (b) could learn what performance characteristics lead to a rating of Excellent (4), Proficient (3), Needs Improvement (2), or Unacceptable (1) for each Rubric Criterion.

3) Each student was required to make three oral presentations during the semester: the first two presentations were considered “practice”; the third was the final, graded-and-scored Group Presentation at the end of the term.

4) The practice presentations were videorecorded. After giving these presentations the students were required to watch themselves on tape (in class), and to score themselves using the BBA Oral Communications Rubric. This gave them a chance to see themselves in action, and to learn more fully—via self-scoring—what characteristics make for Excellent, Proficient, and (in general) non-Proficient presentations. In these self-scoring sessions, the students discovered for themselves their relative strengths and weaknesses as presenters.

5) After each set of practice presentations and self-scoring, the instructor led a classroom discussion on the presentations and the students’ strengths and weaknesses.

6) The final presentations were videorecorded, and graded by the instructor using the Rubric. In June 2011, after the semester ended, an outside assessor trained in the use of the BBA Communications Rubric by CMM faculty assessed independently all of the student presentations. It was this Summer 2011 assessment effort that generated the Oral Communications assessment results reported here, which the faculty reviewed and analyzed as we prepared for the Spring 2012 version of the ECN Capstone Course.

B. The Assessment Results

1) The Rubric itself is attached in Appendix I. Embedded in this Rubric are the descriptive statistics (sample size, mean, standard deviation) for each of the eight Rubric criteria, along with the overall Rubric mean and standard deviation.

2) Overall, our ECN Majors scored at the Proficient level (3.23 out of 4) across the entire Rubric. At the individual criterion level, we computed a series of t-statistics to test whether each criterion score was significantly different from the overall sample mean. These tests tell us that the scores for *Clear Topic Coverage* and *Voice Quality* are significantly different, statistically, from the overall sample result.

3) Relative Strengths: *Clear Topic Coverage* and *Communication Aids*

A) The Rubric criterion our students scored best on was *Clear Topic Coverage*. We are very pleased to see our students score so high on this criterion (3.94—at the Excellent level), since the course instructor worked them so hard on topic coverage all term long.

B) Students also scored relatively high (3.56 on average) on the use of *Communication Aids* (although the difference between this mean and the overall sample mean is not statistically significant).

4) Relative Weaknesses: *Voice Quality* and *Personal Appearance*

A) The Rubric criterion our students scored most poorly on was *Voice Quality*. The sample mean was 2.72 (out of 4), and significantly lower than the overall sample mean of 3.23.

B) Students also scored relatively poorly (2.88 on average) on *Personal Appearance* (although the difference between this mean and the overall sample mean is not statistically significant).

5) Visual Presentation of the Data: Histograms of Student Performance

A) In Appendix I, after the Oral Communications Rubric, is a set of histograms (one for each criterion) that highlights visually the distribution of scores.

C. Comparison of the ECN Assessment Results with those for the BBA student population as a whole

1) During Spring 2011 the COB videorecorded, and assessed with the Oral Communications Rubric, all the final student presentations in MGT 460 (Business Strategy and Policy). MGT 460 is the BBA Capstone Course, the final culminating experience for all BBA students, regardless of major.

2) A set of histograms that compares ECN Major performance against the performance of the BBA student population as a whole (i.e., the MGT 460 presentations) is also presented in Appendix I. (Only a very few of the ECN students are in both samples.)

A) These comparison histograms highlight the relative strength of our ECN students when it comes to *Clear Topic Coverage*. They also show, visually, that the ECN students perform better than the BBA population as a whole on *Organization, Audience Appropriateness, Grammar/Word Choice, and Communication Aids*.

B) These histograms show that *Voice Quality* is a weakness, in general, across the entire BBA student population, not just in our ECN students. There is also a wide distribution of scores for both the ECN students and the overall student population for *Eye Contact & Body Language*. A segment of both the ECN and BBA-level student populations performs below the Proficient level on this criterion. *Personal Appearance* also scores relatively low across the entire undergraduate student population, not just in ECN.

D. Changes to be implemented in the Spring 2012 ECN Capstone

1) The root of the problem with *Personal Appearance* in Spring 2011, we have decided, lay in the instructions given by the instructor. The instructor assumed the students knew what constitutes “Highly Professional Appearance.” In Spring 2012 the instructor will lay out very specific, explicit dress instructions for the presentations.

2) In Spring 2012 each student will give six presentations, each of which will be recorded (instead of the three done last spring). The first of these presentations will take place during Week One, and the rest will be spread evenly across the semester. The students will then have to score themselves using the Rubric, on each and every one of their presentations, during class sessions devoted to self-scoring. We hope that this program will help students get more comfortable in front of an audience, and lead to improved performance on *Voice Quality* and *Eye Contact & Body Language*.

3) To emphasize and improve Organization, the presentations done in groups will be preceded by “competition sessions.” We have learned that student groups generally put one of their weakest students first, to do the Introduction, when they don’t understand the importance of the Introduction to a presentation. We will run an “Introduction Competition” in which each student in each group will deliver his/her own Introduction to the Group Presentation. The students in each group will then vote on which Introduction is best. Students will also do a “topic statement competition session” in which each student in each group will deliver his/her own statement of the Topic to be covered by each group during its final presentation. This will help the student members of each group get a better feel for the overall focus on the presentation, and should (we hope) improve the overall coherence of the group presentation.

4. Assessment of Teamwork Skills in the ECN Major

A. Recall that we have specified our ECN Teamwork Learning Goal as: *The student will function effectively as a member of a team, and contribute productively to completing group projects or solving problems.*

B. We designed our Assessment Instrument to be a Peer-Critique Rubric, on which each student scores each of his teammates on each of the Rubric Criteria. We identified four criteria for our students to score each other on, as follows: *Group Goal Setting; Friendliness, Optimism, & Trust; Communication; and Accomplishing Tasks.*

C. After completing the major Group Project at the heart of the Capstone, the instructor asked each student to score his/her teammates, using the Rubric, on their teamwork skills. The Rubric, and the descriptive statistics for each criterion and for the overall Rubric, can be found in Appendix II. We include a set of histograms, one for each criterion, to show the distribution of scores across each criterion.

D. As you can see, the students scored each other as Exemplary essentially across the board. The mean scores for the four criteria were 3.65, 3.81, 3.8, and 3.79. And the standard deviations were very small. Our students basically gave each other “high fives” on their teamwork skills. Despite the fact that all semester long many complained long and loud about their free-riding teammates.

E. We decided that, even though the instructor emphasized that this Peer-Critique effort would not affect anyone’s grade, the students thought it did. In general, we have decided that the students were not prepped properly for this exercise.

F. Changes to be implemented for the Spring 2012 ECN Capstone

1) We will implement the Peer-Critique Exercise three times during the semester.

2) We will add a second stage to this exercise. Specifically, during the first implementation of this exercise we will simply ask each student to rank each of his/her teammates on each of the four Rubric criteria in terms of what s/he is relative best at and what s/he is relatively weak at. The student will be required to give each of his/her teammates one 4 (Exemplary), one 3 (Proficient), one 2 (Needs Improvement), and one 1 (Unacceptable). This should make the student think about the relative strengths and weaknesses of each teammate, and so develop a more complex, nuanced view of his/her teammates’ skills.

3) For the second administration of this exercise, students will once again perform the ranking exercise as they did the first time. Then, they will complete the Rubric for each teammate.

4) For the third administration of this exercise, the students will simply complete the Rubric. We hope that the earlier administrations of this exercise, and the ranking activity, will enable the students to score each other more accurately, and give us better data to work with, in the future.

5. Assessment of ECN Core Knowledge in the ECN Major

A. Spring 2011 marked the first time we have attempted to assess our ECN Majors’ mastery of discipline-specific knowledge as they complete the program. To do this, we put together a test to see what our graduating majors can do with the microeconomic and macroeconomic theories and tools we have taught them in the required ECN curriculum. The test we came up with consisted of 3 components:

1) A set of multiple choice questions covering basic concepts taught in Principles of Microeconomics and Principles of Macroeconomics, the two introductory courses in the major.

2) Four problems to solve, taken from the material taught in Intermediate Macroeconomic

Analysis.

3) Four problems to solve, taken from the material taught in Intermediate Microeconomic Analysis.

B. In reviewing the results, we noted that the students did quite well on the multiple choice section. Extremely well, in fact. Better than we expected. Reassuring information, but not “actionable” information. So, we don’t report the statistical results here.

C. The Intermediate Macroeconomic Problems required the students to solve:

1) Two graphical problems using the standard, accepted, graphical model of the economy as a whole that is taught across undergraduate ECN programs throughout the country in order to understand how and why the economy experiences fluctuations in economic growth, unemployment, inflation, and its international economic position (e.g., international trade; debt)

2) One mathematical Money-Market problem, designed to show whether students can apply the concept of “market equilibrium” properly—in a specific numerical context.

3) One problem on Exchange Rates, asking them to do a few simple exchange-rate calculations using data for different national currencies, and to determine—again using data—whether certain currencies are appreciating, depreciating, or holding steady. The understanding of exchange rates and how to interpret exchange rate data is fundamental to an understanding of the global economy and any economy’s interactions with the global economy.

D. The Intermediate Microeconomic Problems required the students to solve:

1) Two quantitative supply-and-demand problems, to demonstrate their understanding of market activity and to apply the concepts of supply, demand, equilibrium, and elasticity to a specific numerical context.

2) A problem requiring the use of Benefit-Cost Analysis and Search Theory, to decide on the optimal job-market strategy for a particular worker in a particular labor-market context.

3) A Game Theory problem, to demonstrate their knowledge of individual behavior as driven by incentives and information.

E. We do not include the specific test questions in this report. But in Appendix III you will find the results for the Intermediate Theory exam questions: One page shows the Microeconomics results, and one page shows the Macroeconomics results. Notice that we have broken down the results, also, to show the performance of each student based on what semester s/he took each of these courses. For the Microeconomics questions the three cohorts were the students who took

the class in Fall 2008, Fall 2009, or Fall 2010. For the Macroeconomics questions the three cohorts were the students who took the class in Spring 2009, Spring 2010, or Spring 2011. These cohort definitions covered all students in the ECN Capstone.

1) The Intermediate Microeconomics scores are lower than the Macroeconomics scores. But, as we reviewed the data and the test questions, we decided we were quite pleased with the Microeconomics scores. The questions we wrote were tough, probably tougher than they should've been. To be more precise, we asked some technically specific questions that tested mastery of a particular technique more so than mastery of concepts and conceptual analysis.

2) We decided, upon review of the data and the Macroeconomics question scores, that we asked the right types of questions in this section. We didn't ask for so much technique that students who could think their way through a problem, but who didn't quite remember all the technical details, had no chance. The students could use their mastery of the concepts, and of the workings of the economy as a whole, to work back into the solution techniques needed for each problem—and thereby give us good information on their conceptual/analytical thinking ability.

F. Changes to be implemented for the Spring 2012 ECN Capstone

1) Since Spring 2011 was our first test of graduating majors' discipline-specific knowledge, we will use the Spring 2011 scores as our baseline against which to understand and assess the results we obtain at the end of Spring 2012.

2) We will keep the principles-level multiple-choice questions intact. The students' performance on these questions warmed them up for the Intermediate-level problems, by bringing them back to the basics and helping them see that they do remember key material.

3) We think we have the right type of Macroeconomics problems on the exam, so we won't change the level or style of those questions, just some of the specifics.

4) We agreed to rewrite a couple of the Microeconomics questions to give students more of a chance to demonstrate their thinking and reasoning skills. If test questions prevent students from demonstrating such skills, because the questions demand too much specific technique, then we aren't testing for the right kind of "core knowledge." Looking at these test results helped us again articulate the fact that we want our students to **know how to think**, more than anything else, when they graduate.

APPENDIX I: ORAL COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS DATA

ECN Oral Communications Rubric, Cycle 2: 2011

Category	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Needs Improvement (2)	Unacceptable (1)
<p>Clear Topic Coverage Sample size: 16 Mean: 3.94 Standard deviation: 0.25</p>	The speaker presents a topic and a focus that are exceptionally appropriate for the purpose, time constraints, and audience.	The speaker presents a topic and a focus that are appropriate for the purpose, time constraints, and audience.	The speaker presents a topic or a focus that is inappropriate for the purpose, time constraints, or intended audience.	The speaker presents a topic and a focus that are inappropriate for the purpose, time constraints, or intended audience.
<p>Organization Sample size: 16 Mean: 3.28 Standard deviation: 0.55</p>	The speaker uses an exceptional introduction and conclusion and provides an exceptionally clear and logical progression within and between ideas.	The speaker uses an appropriate introduction and conclusion and provides a reasonably clear and logical progression within and between ideas.	The structure of the presentation interferes with the clarity and logic of the ideas being presented.	The speaker fails to use an introduction or conclusion and fails to provide a reasonably clear and logical progression within and between ideas.
<p>Audience Appropriateness Sample size: 16 Mean: 3.31 Standard deviation: 0.48</p>	The speaker uses language that is exceptionally clear and appropriate for the intended audience.	The speaker uses language that is reasonably clear and appropriate for the intended audience.	The speaker uses some inappropriate language that would distract the intended audience.	The speaker uses unclear or inappropriate language that would result in substantial miscommunication with the intended audience.
<p>Voice Quality Sample size: 16 Mean: 2.72 Standard deviation: 0.45</p>	Delivery is clear, natural, conversational, and enhanced by good vocal variety. Vocal quality is used effectively to emphasize points and reinforce structure.	Delivery is mostly clear and natural. Limited instances where speaker could not be heard or understood. With few exceptions, voice quality is used to emphasize points.	Delivery contains significant instances where speaker could not be heard or understood. Voice quality is erratic.	Presenter mumbles or speaks too quietly for all audience members to hear. Delivery is forced with little or no vocal variety.

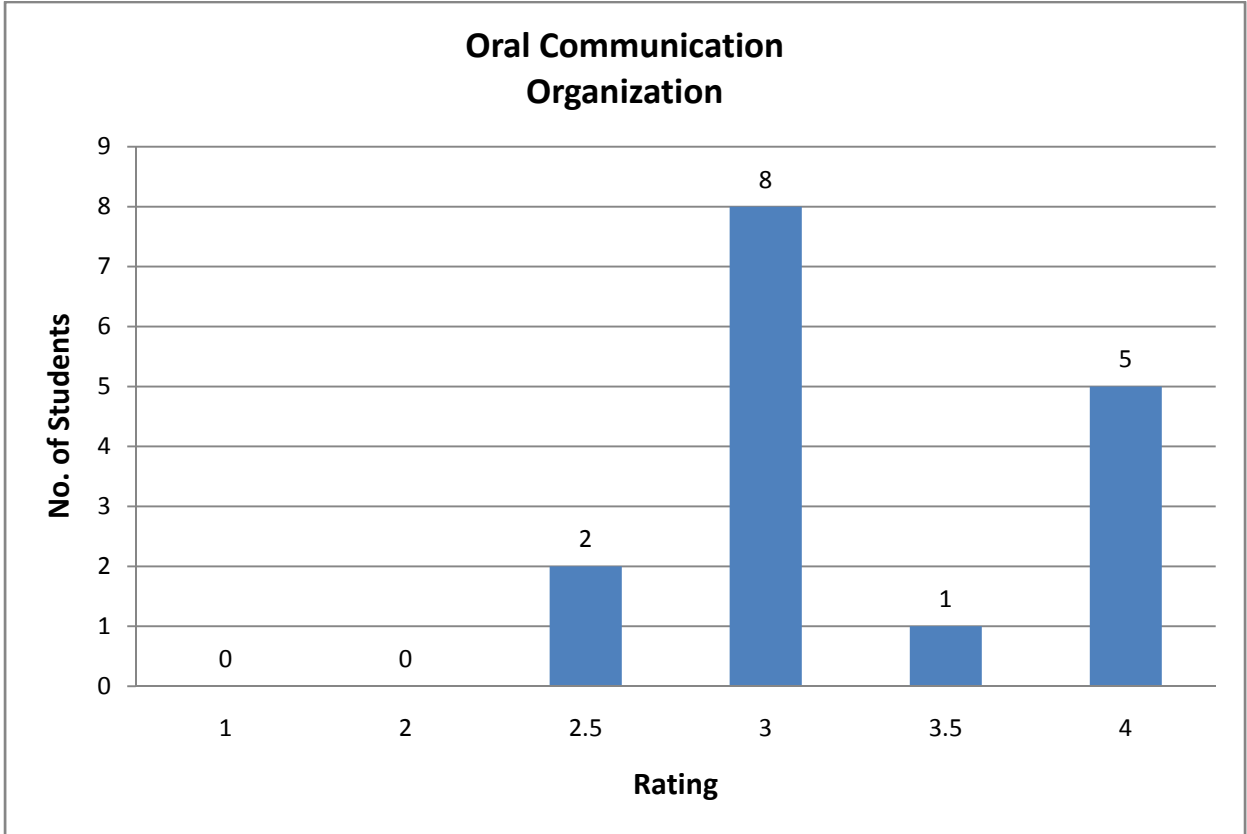
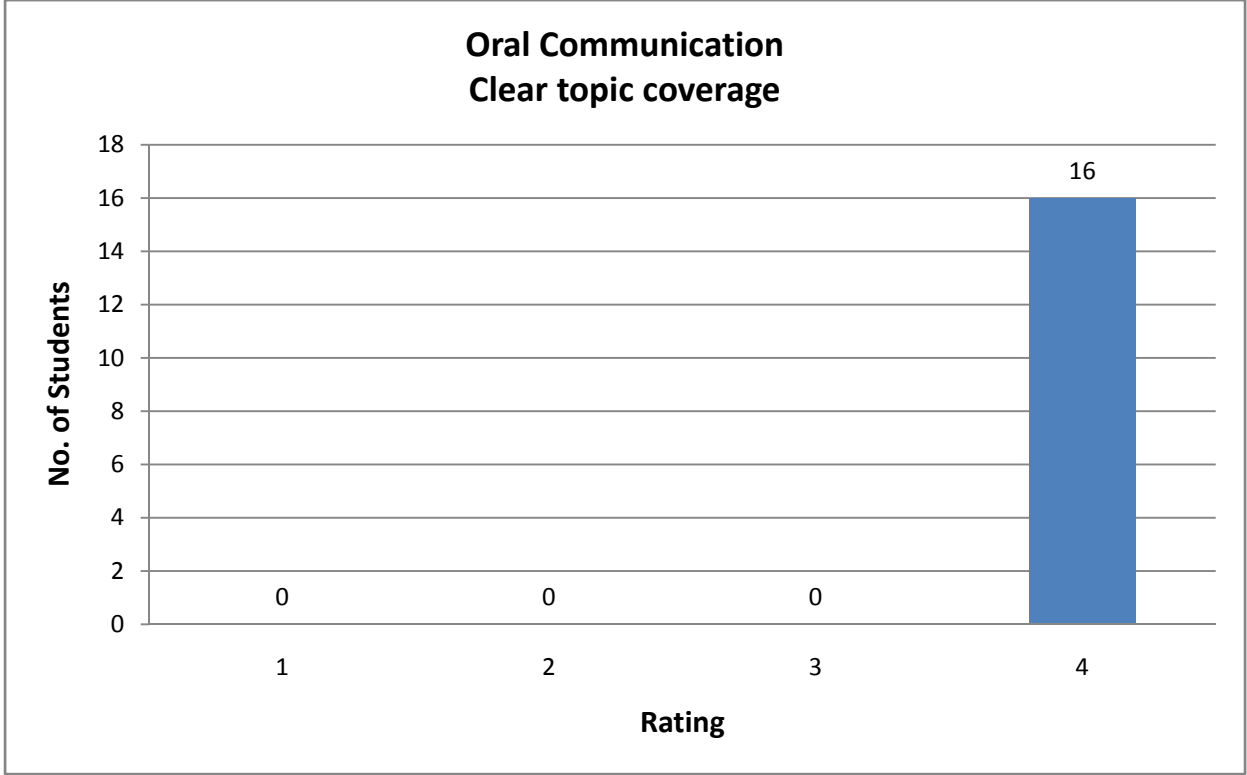
Category	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Needs Improvement (2)	Unacceptable (1)
Grammar/Word Choice Sample size: 16 Mean: 3.13 Standard deviation: 0.29	Insignificant grammatical errors and appropriate word choice. Sentences flow together well.	Some grammatical errors; some incomplete sentences or run on sentences; some poor word choice.	Frequent grammatical errors, incomplete sentences, and run on sentences; Frequent poor word choice.	Listeners are distracted by grammatical errors. Inappropriate word choice. Sentences do not flow well.
Eye Contact & Body Language Sample size: 16 Mean: 3.03 Standard deviation: 0.69	Body language and eye contact reflect comfort interacting with audience.	Body language and eye contact reflect some discomfort interacting with audience.	Body language and lack of eye contact reflect reluctance to interact with audience.	Distracting body language and lack of eye contact prevent effective communications with audience.
Communication Aids Sample size: 16 Mean: 3.56 Standard deviation: 0.40	Communication aids enhance presentation. Aids appear professional and important information is included.	Communication aids contribute overall but have errors, are difficult to read, or include too much or too little information.	Communication aids have numerous errors that interfere with effectiveness of presentation.	Communication aids distract or are used inappropriately, are difficult to read, and contain unimportant information.
Personal Appearance Sample size: 16 Mean: 2.88 Standard deviation: 0.47	Highly professional appearance.	Appropriate for audience and/or topic.	Questionable for audience and/or topic.	Inappropriate for audience and/or topic.

Overall

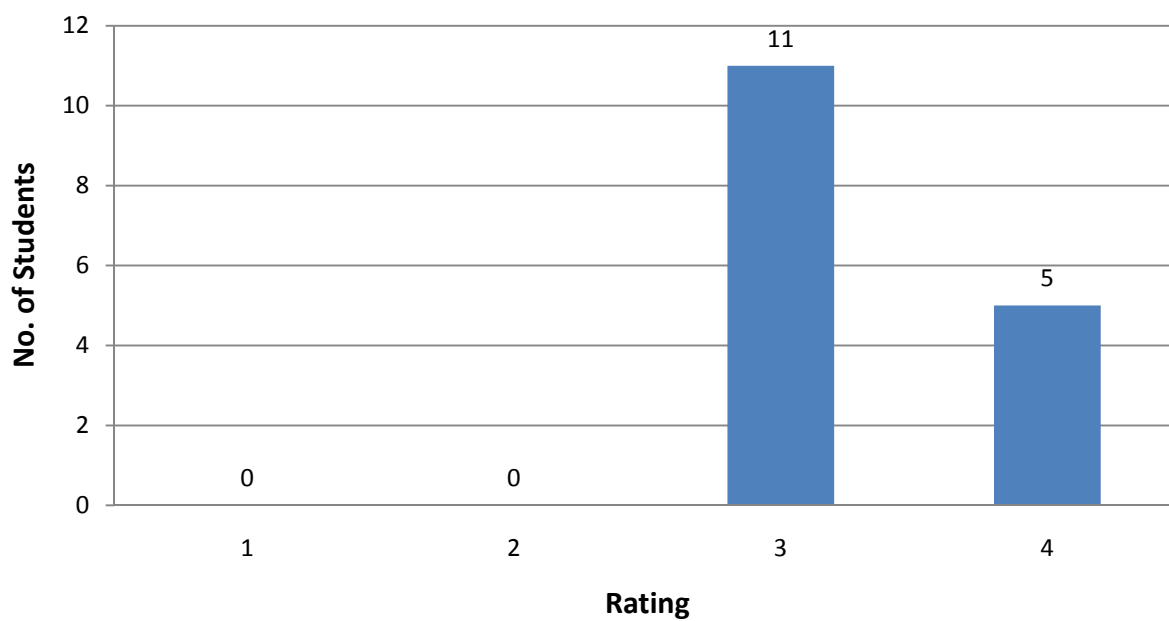
Sample Size: 16 oral presentations, drawn primarily from the ECN Course

Mean: 3.23

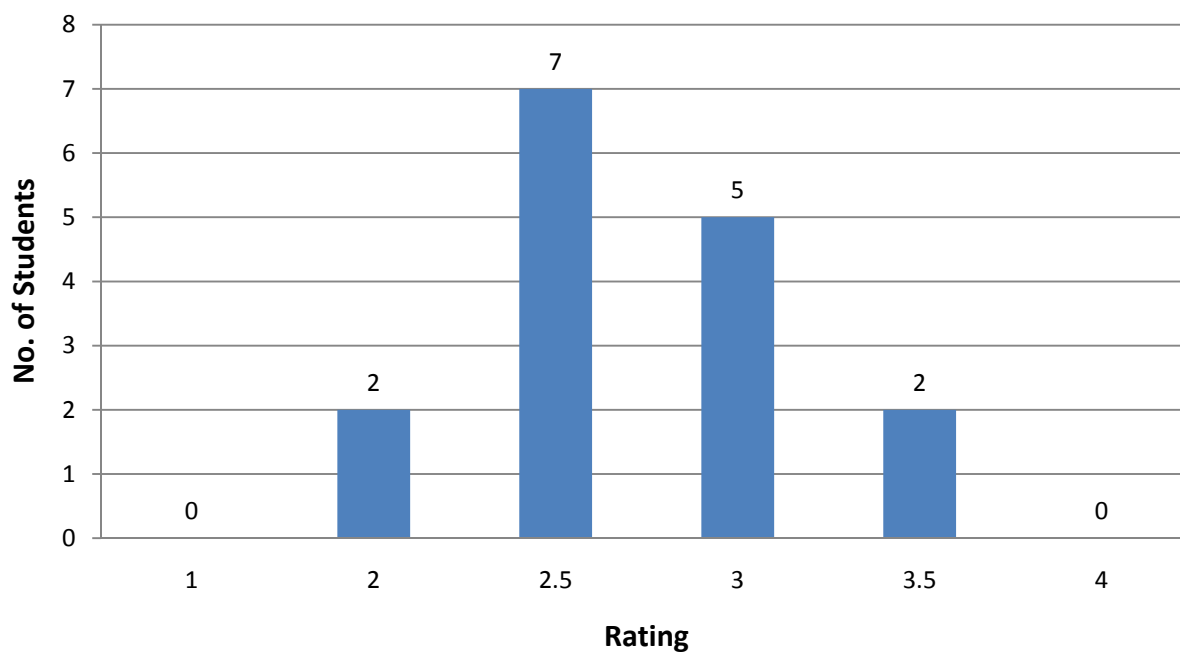
Standard deviation: 0.58



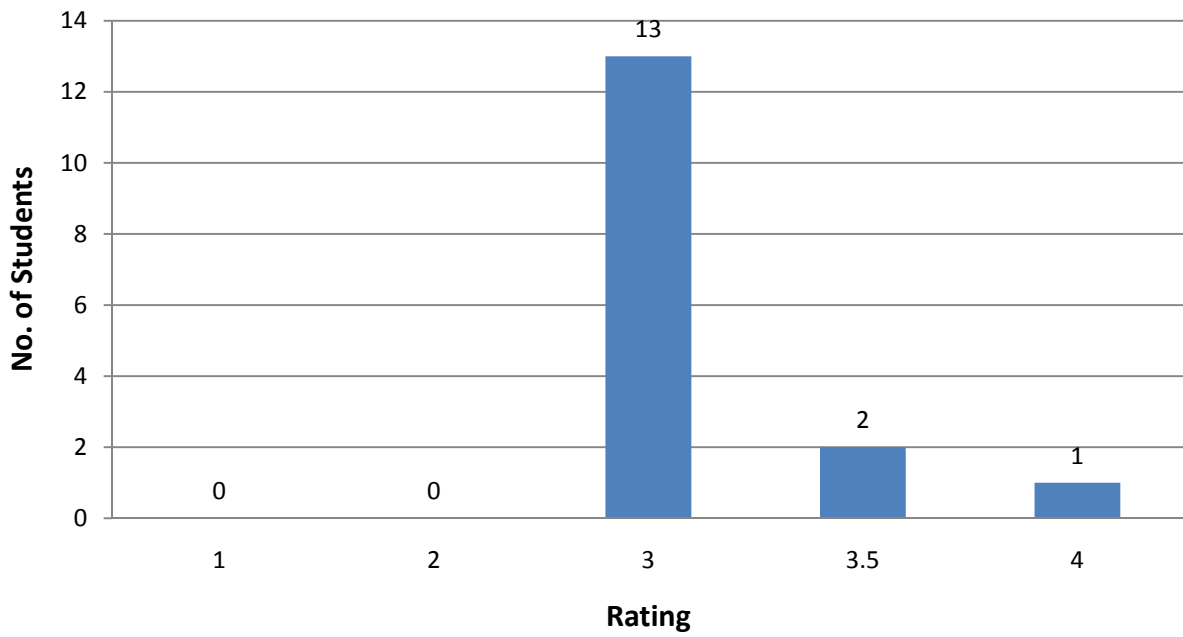
Oral Communication Audience appropriateness



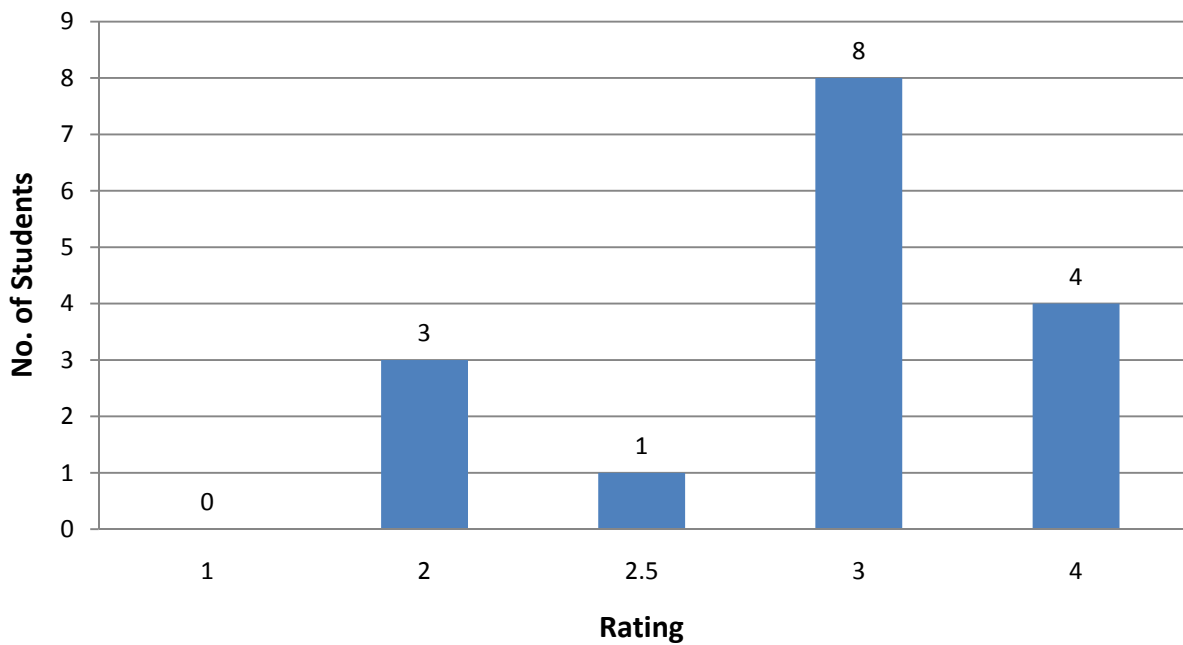
Oral Communication Voice quality

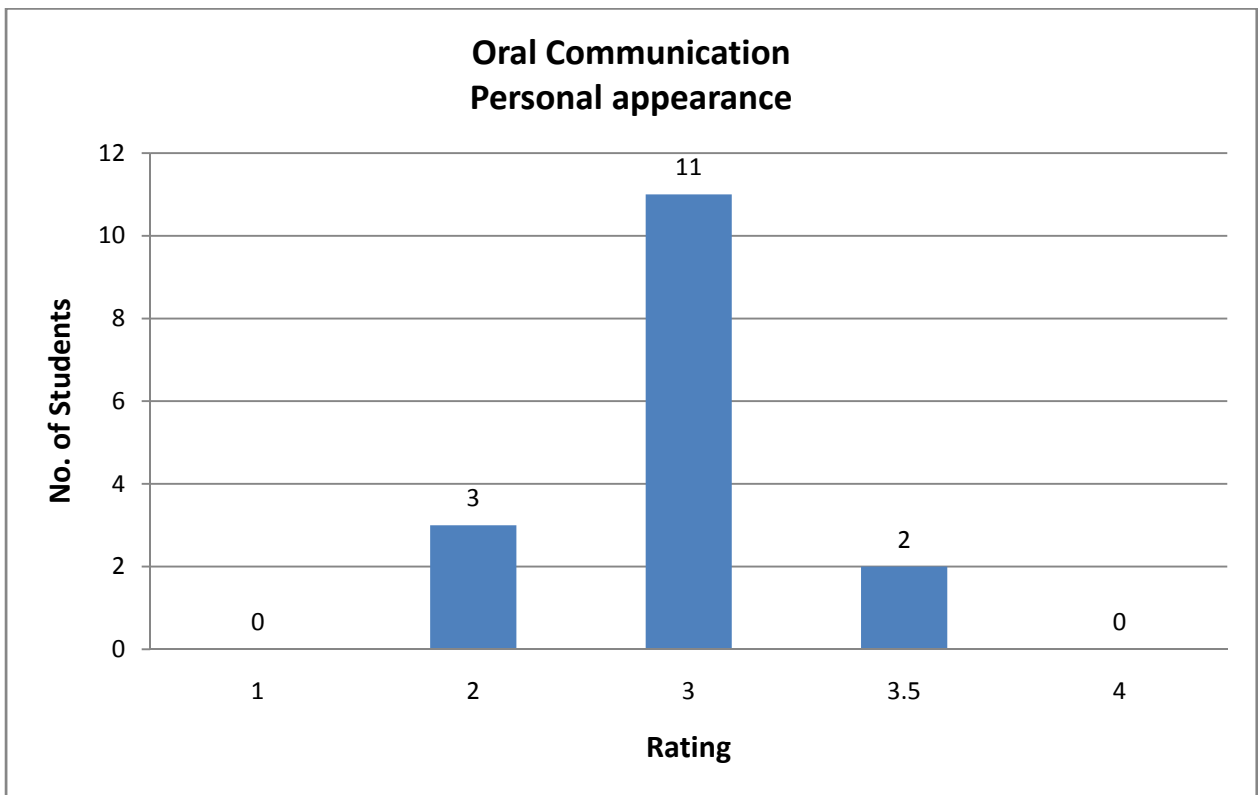
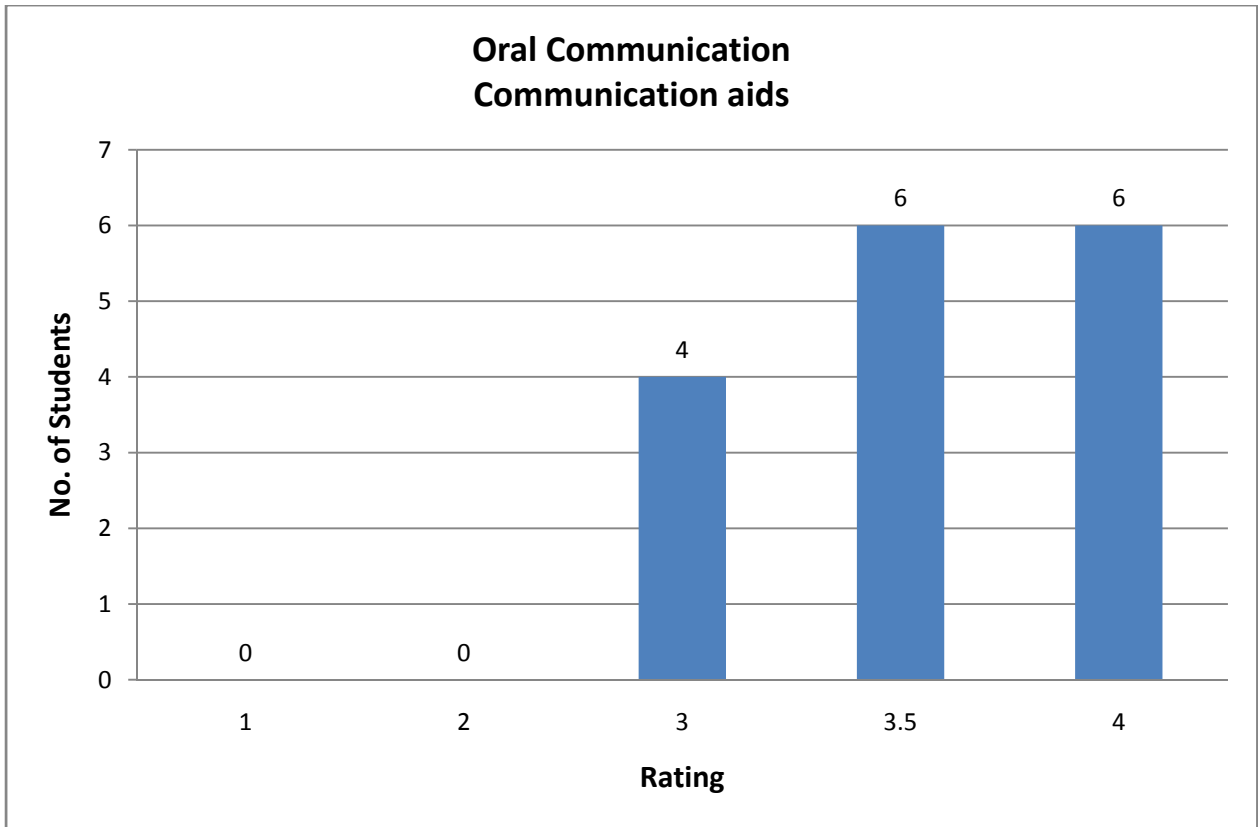


Oral Communication Grammar/ Word choice

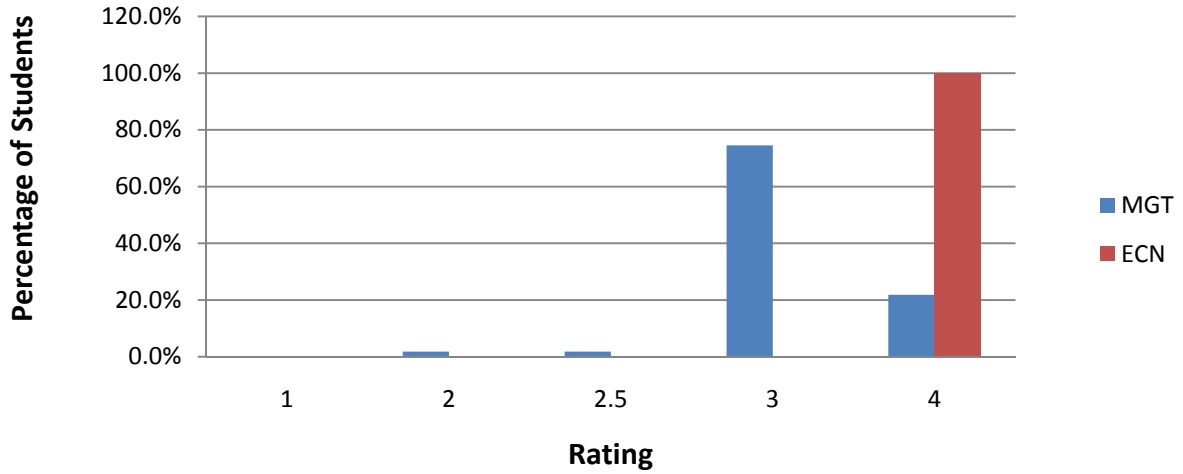


Oral Communication Eye contact & body language

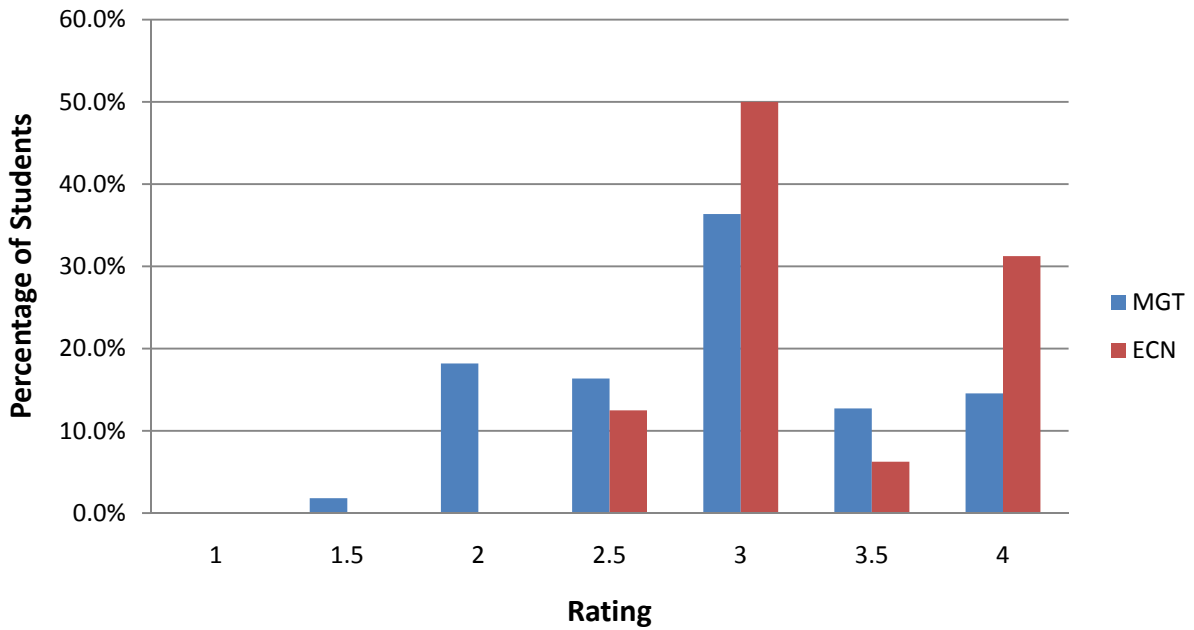




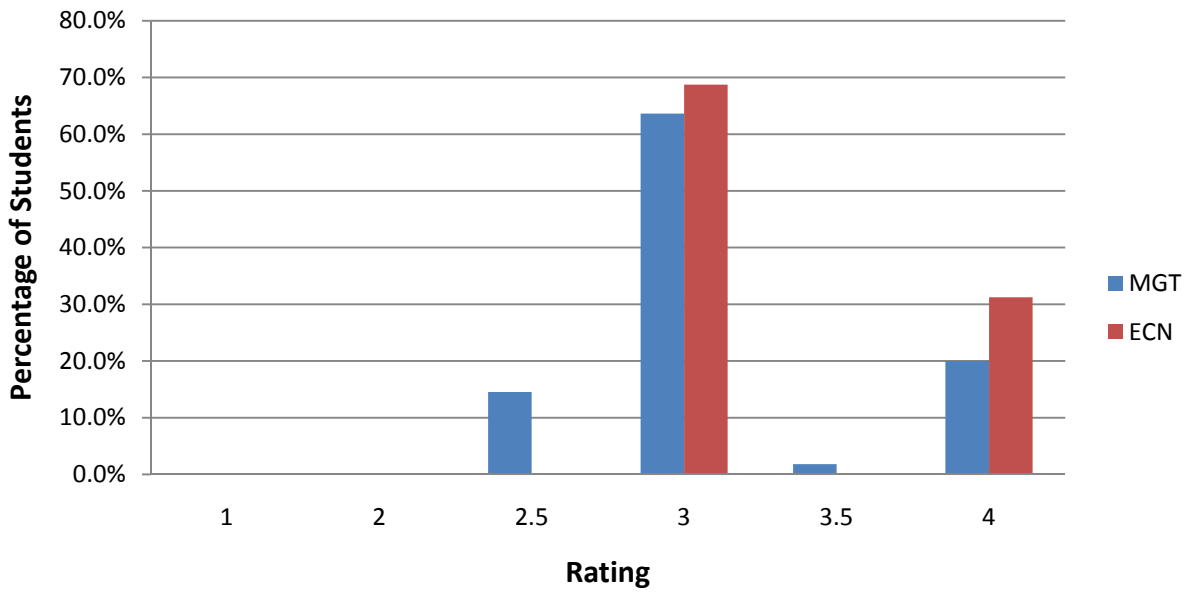
Oral Communication Clear topic coverage



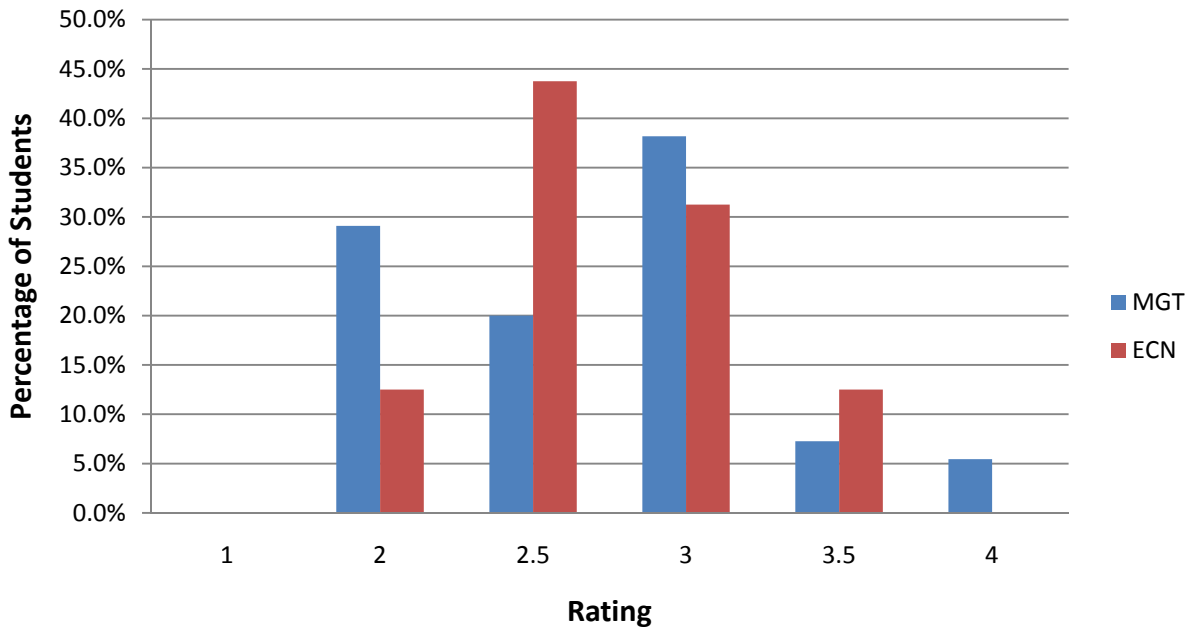
Oral Communication Organization

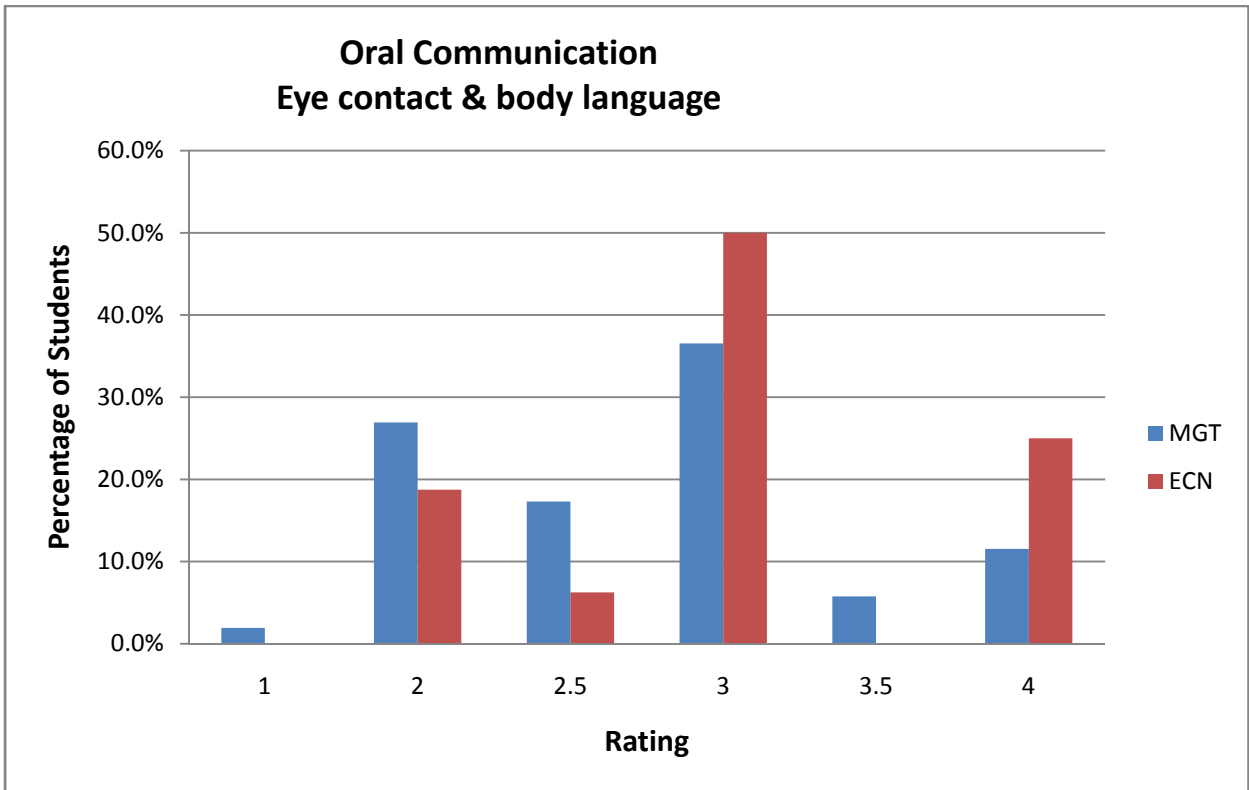
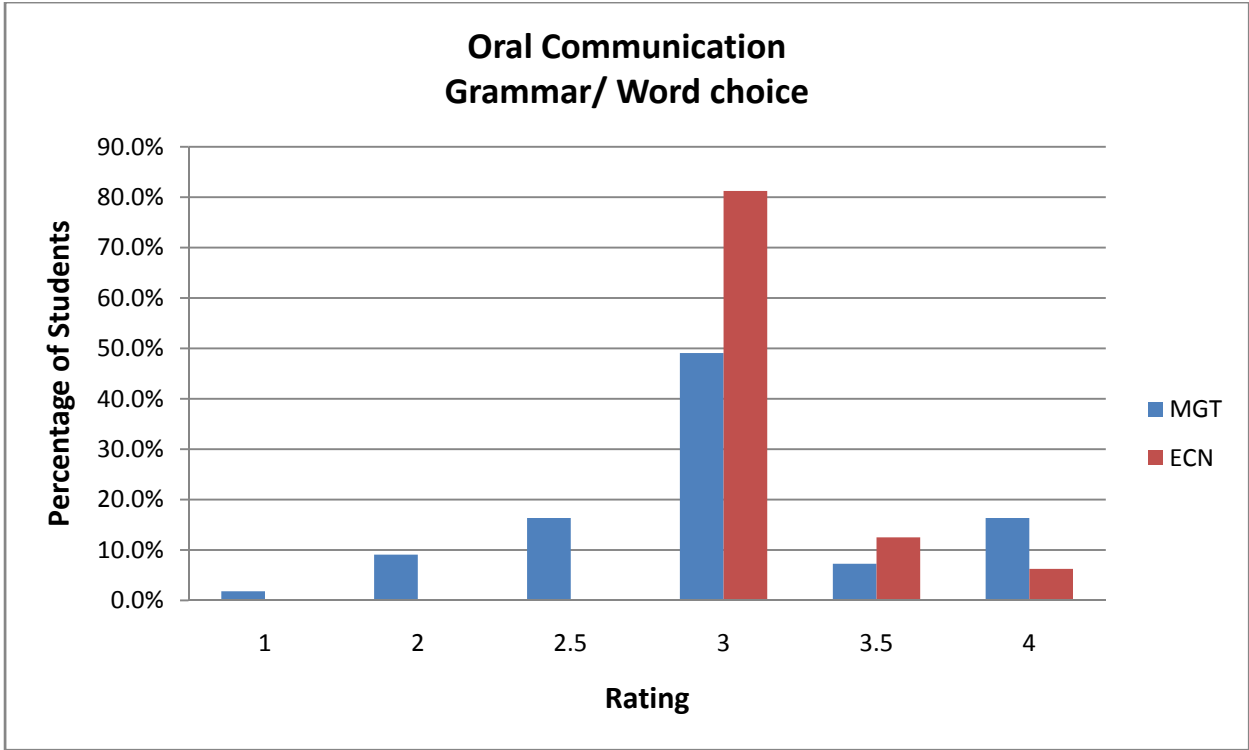


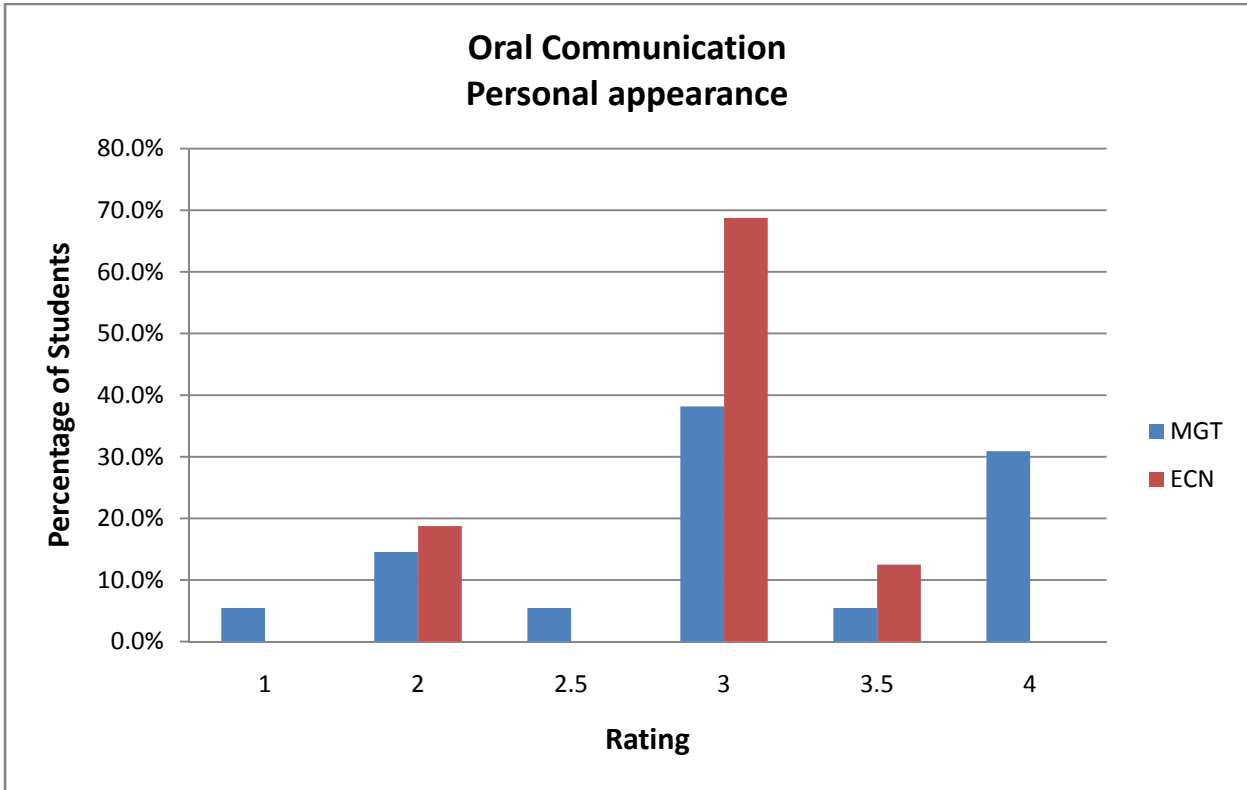
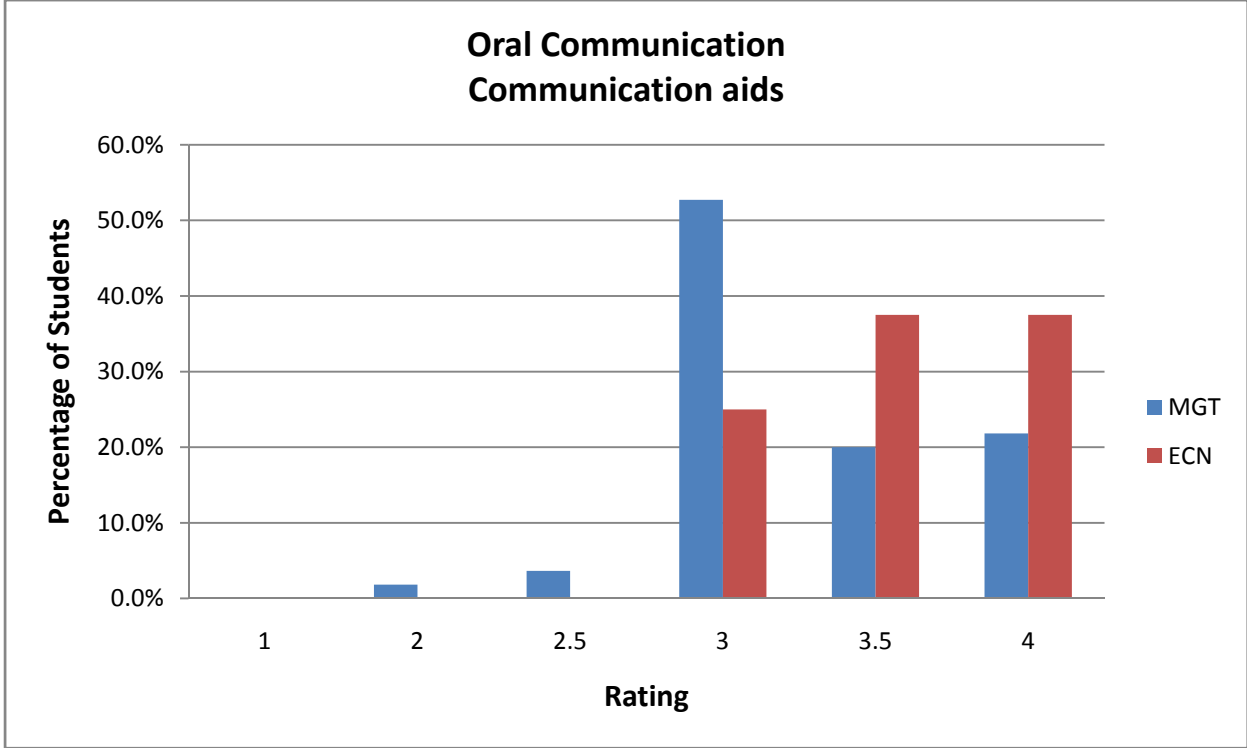
Oral Communication Audience appropriateness



Oral Communication Voice quality







APPENDIX II: TEAMWORK SKILLS DATA

UNDERGRADUATE ECN TEAMWORK SKILLS RUBRIC: SPRING 2011

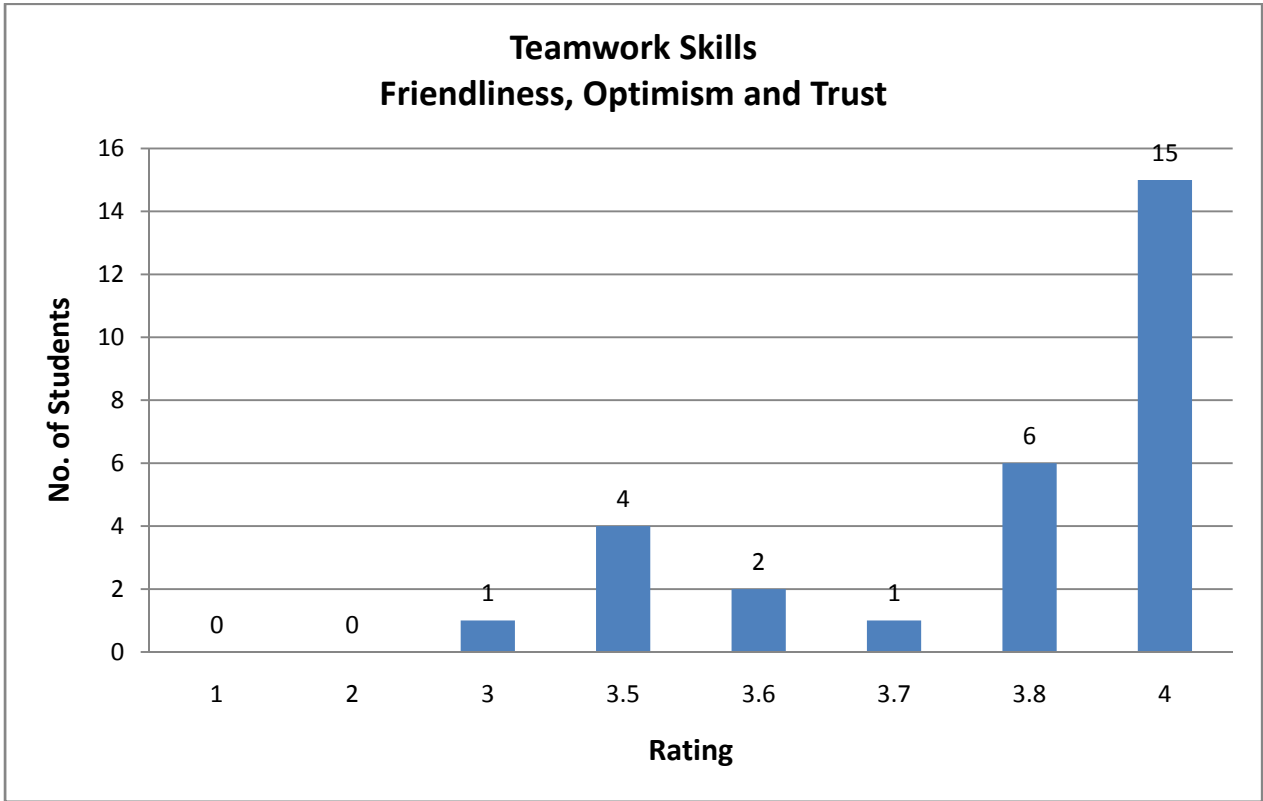
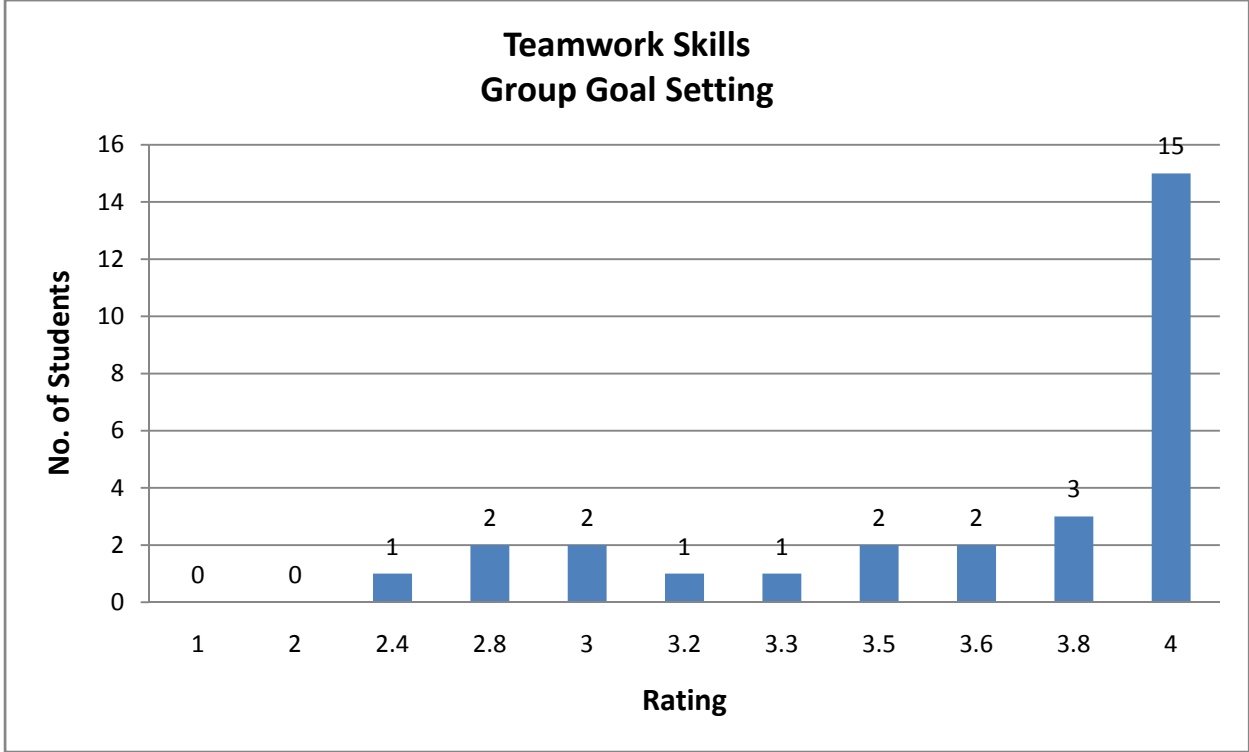
Criteria	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Needs Improvement (2)	Unacceptable (1)
<p><u>Group Goal Setting</u> Helps develop the group's goals; Focuses on the purpose of the project; Includes all team members in goal setting & decision making; Helps keep team members on task/ on target.</p> <p>Mean: 3.65 Standard deviation: 0.47</p>	<p>The level of performance expected of an effective team member. Teamwork performance is more than expected, or "above and beyond" what you expect from your fellow majors.</p>	<p>The level of performance expected of the average Economics major; satisfactory or average performance.</p>	<p>Limited evidence of being a team member; performance is inconsistent and/or inadequate.</p>	<p>There is little or no evidence of any teamwork skills; often free-rider.</p>
<p><u>Friendliness, Optimism, and Trust</u> Is friendly and approachable; Looks out for the welfare of the group; Does little things to make it pleasant to be part of the group; Is optimistic about the team's future; Builds trust & cooperation.</p> <p>Mean: 3.81 Standard deviation: 0.25</p>	<p>The level of performance expected of an effective team member. Teamwork performance is more than expected, or "above and beyond" what you expect from your fellow majors.</p>	<p>The level of performance expected of the average Economics major; satisfactory or average performance</p>	<p>Limited evidence of being a team member; performance is inconsistent and/or inadequate.</p>	<p>There is little or no evidence of any teamwork skills; often free-rider.</p>
<p><u>Communication</u> Listens attentively to other team members; Offers suggestions & listens to those of others; Considers others suggestions thoughtfully.</p> <p>Mean: 3.80 Standard deviation: 0.33</p>	<p>The level of performance expected of an effective team member. Teamwork performance is more than expected, or "above and beyond" what you expect from your fellow majors.</p>	<p>The level of performance expected of the average Economics major; satisfactory or average performance</p>	<p>Limited evidence of being a team member; performance is inconsistent and/or inadequate.</p>	<p>There is little or no evidence of any teamwork skills; often free-rider.</p>
<p><u>Accomplishing Tasks</u> Contributes to work being done; Completes assigned tasks; Helps to decide what should be done; Meets group deadlines.</p> <p>Mean: 3.79 Standard deviation: 0.31</p>	<p>The level of performance expected of an effective team member. Teamwork performance is more than expected, or "above and beyond" what you expect from your fellow majors.</p>	<p>The level of performance expected of the average Economics major; satisfactory or average performance</p>	<p>Limited evidence of being a team member; performance is inconsistent and/or inadequate.</p>	<p>There is little or no evidence of any teamwork skills; often free-rider.</p>

Overall

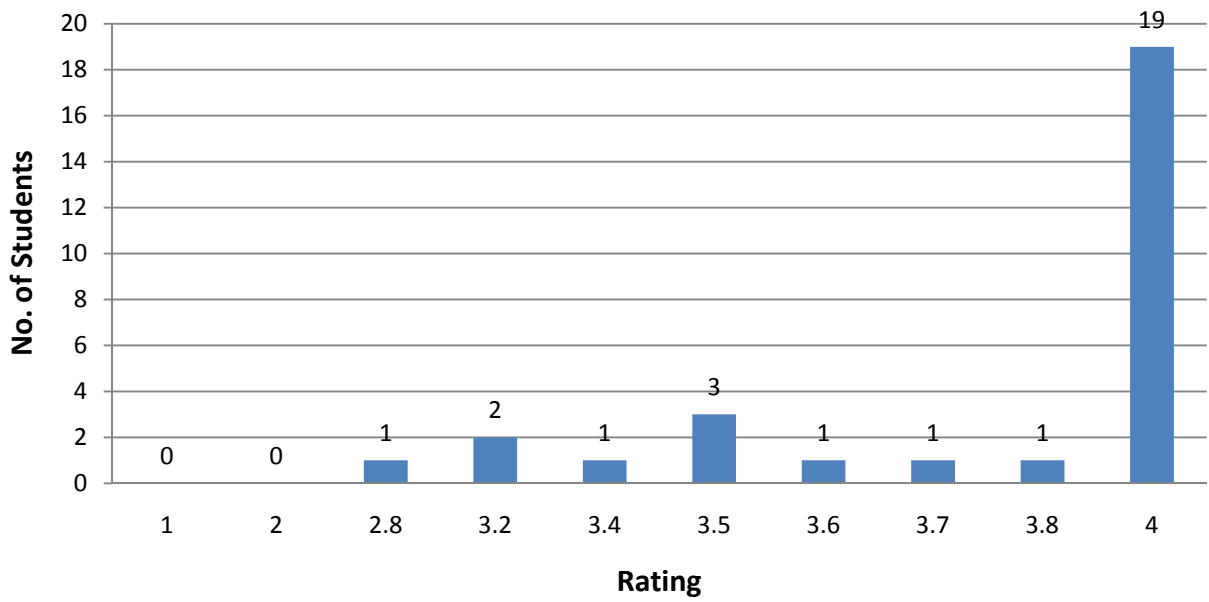
Sample Size: 29 students

Mean: 3.76

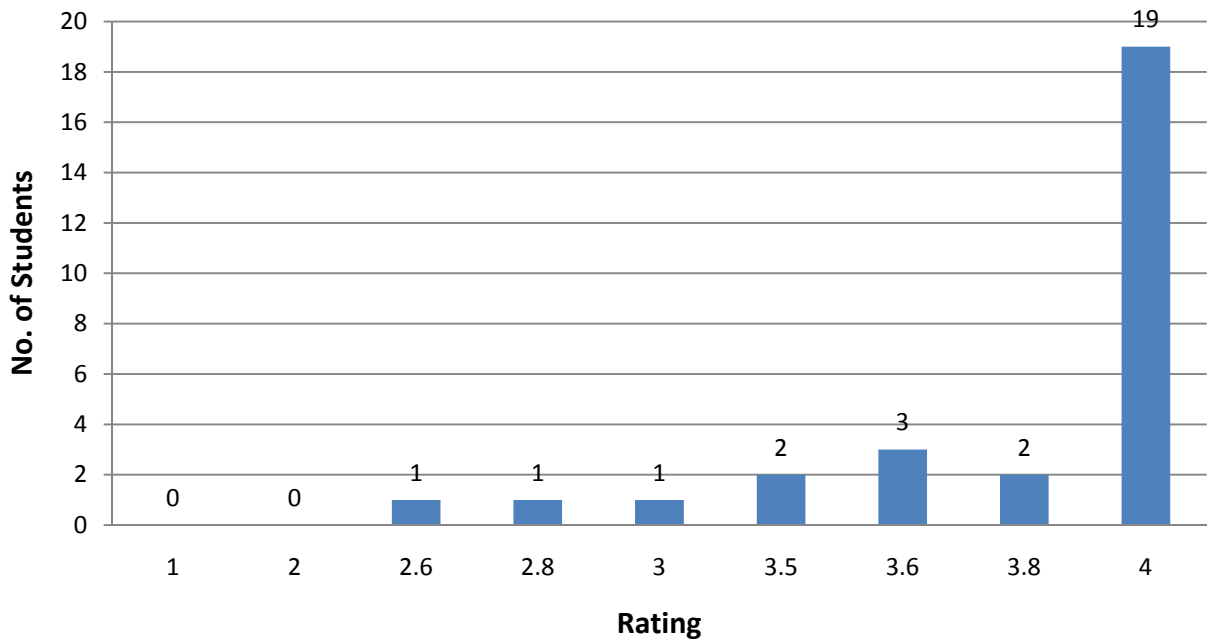
Standard deviation: 0.37



Teamwork Skills Communication

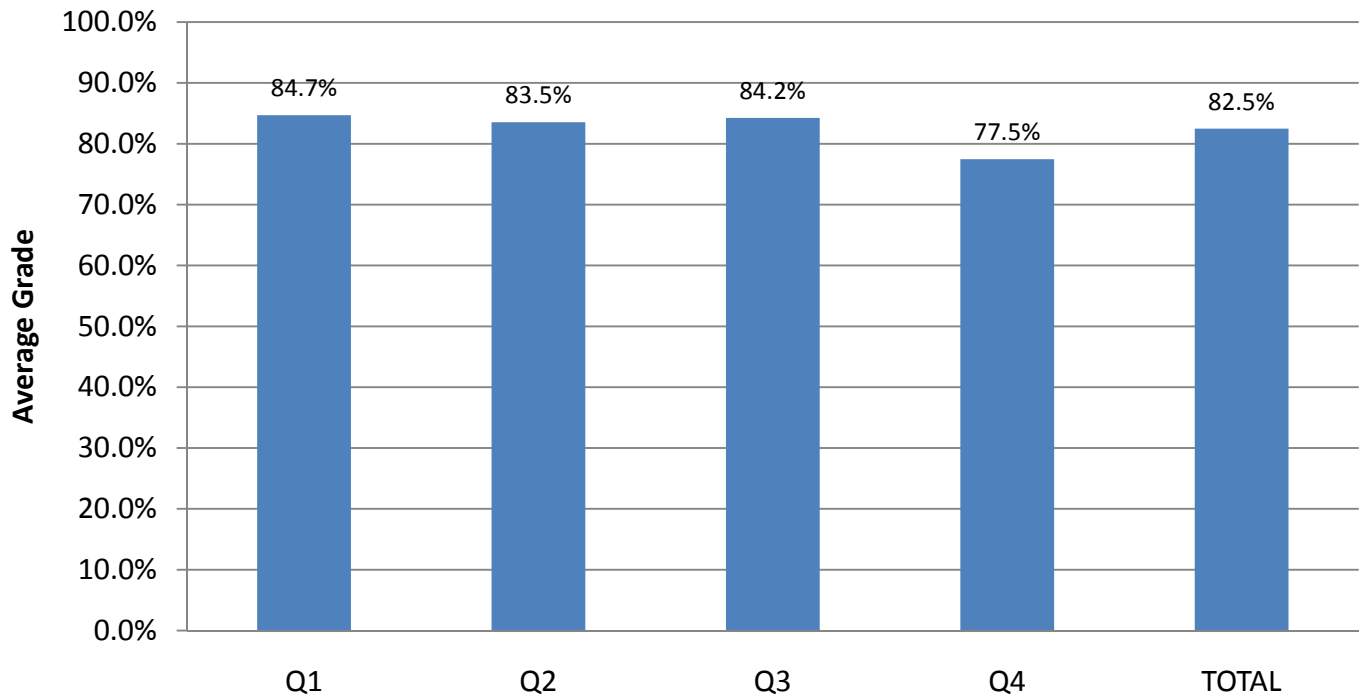


Teamwork Skills Accomplishing Tasks

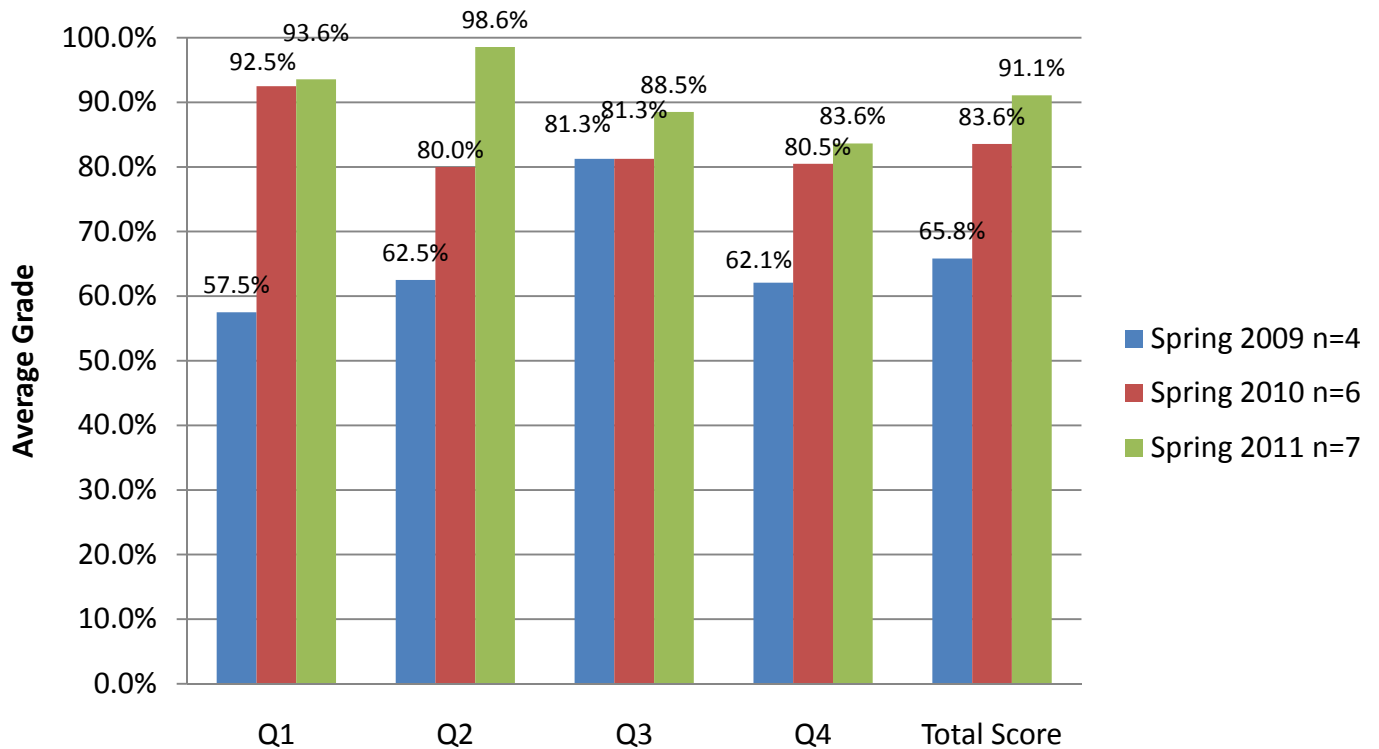


APPENDIX III: DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE DATA

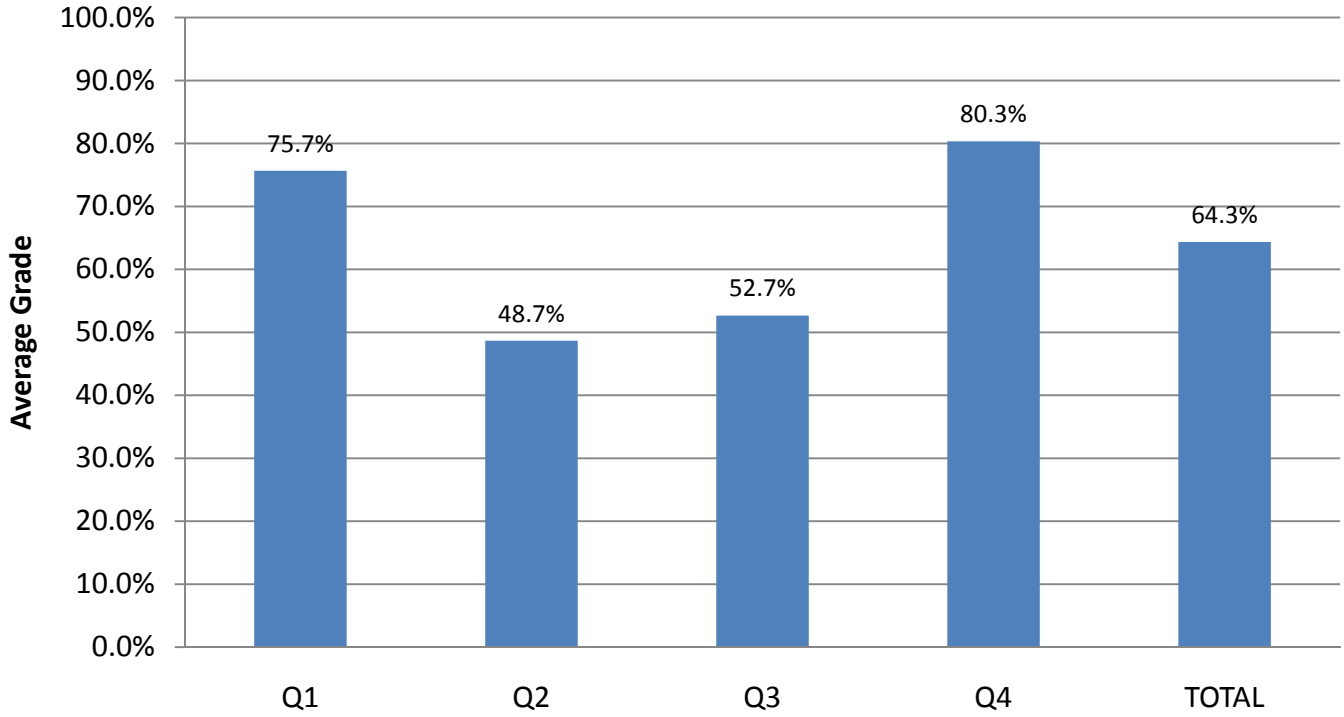
Intermediate Macro - Average Grade



Intermediate Macro Average Grades for each semester



Intermediate Micro - Average Grade



Intermediate Micro Average grade for each semester

