

**Component Area Assessment Annual Report
Oral Communication Component Area
2007-2008 Academic Year**

I. Assessment Activities

A. Component Area Goals

After completing the Oral Communication general education experience, students will be able to:

1. recognize communication as a transactional process by:
 - a. determining audience orientation toward a message
 - b. identifying the supporting material most relevant to the intended receivers
 - c. recognizing and adjusting to nonverbal feedback
2. demonstrate critical thinking in both the production and evaluation of spoken messages by:
 - a. identifying reasoning that links observations to conclusions
 - b. understanding the limitations of different types of evidence
 - c. differentiating between various types of supporting evidence
 - d. identifying weaknesses in reasoning
3. produce organized informative and persuasive messages by:
 - a. demonstrating the ability to capture audience attention
 - b. stating a thesis and previewing oral remarks
 - c. using signposts and transitions to clarify the organization of a message
 - d. concluding with a summary of main ideas or arguments
4. demonstrate effective extemporaneous speaking skills by:
 - a. maintaining eye contact with intended receivers
 - b. using gestures which complement the verbal message
 - c. using varied vocal cues in the oral delivery of a message

B. Learning Outcomes/Data Collection

Outcome 1: Recognizing communication as a transactional process by a) determining audience orientation toward a message; b) identifying the supporting material most relevant to the intended receivers; and c) recognizing and adjusting to nonverbal feedback.

This outcome is measured by the students' speech proposals (a new assignment) and their strategic planning outline. They choose supporting material, do an audience analysis, and select their specific purpose and thesis based on the analysis and research. This information is then used to develop the strategic planning outline for their speech in which they choose an appropriate organizational pattern, arguments and supporting material. The assessment criteria for examining sample speeches include a set of criteria that focuses on audience adaptation as a basis for determining the competency of the speaker. Results of the recorded speeches review are reported in section IC.

Outcome 2: *Demonstrating critical thinking in both the production and evaluation of spoken messages by a) identifying reasoning that links observations to conclusions; b) understanding the limitations of different types of evidence; c) differentiating between various types of supporting evidence; d) identifying weaknesses in reasoning.*

The focus on critical thinking in the course is reflected in all assignments, especially the speech proposals, outlines, Creating an Argument assignment, self-analysis assignment and of course the informative and persuasive speeches. In addition, exam scores can be used to test students' understanding of evidence and reasoning. Using exam scores on selected test items allow us to account for the performance of every student in the class. Although exam scores do not reflect the specific critical thinking activities associated with student speeches, exam scores provide a reliable measure.

Outcome 3: *Producing organized informative and persuasive messages by a) demonstrating the ability to capture audience attention; b) stating a thesis and previewing oral remarks; c) using signposts and transitions to clarify the organization of a message; d) concluding with a summary of main ideas or arguments.*

The structural elements of speaking are evident in speech performances. To assess the basic competencies of students, video recordings of student persuasive speeches are collected. Each instructor collects 2-3 randomly selected student videos from each section of the CMM 103 course in the fall and spring semesters. This procedure yields a sample of approximately 10 percent of all final speeches delivered in the course each semester.

This year 96 useable speech recordings were collected. The sample speeches were evaluated using the assessment instrument sanctioned by the National Communication Association. The instrument measures eight basic competencies on a three-point scale (Unsatisfactory=1, Satisfactory=2, Excellent=3). A panel of three reviewers rated the recorded speeches. Sample speeches were considered minimally competent if rated with a score of 16 out of 24. Where there was a difference between raters' scores, the speech was rated as competent if two of the three reviewers awarded a score of 16 or above. Results of this review will be reported in Section IC.

Outcome 4: *Demonstrating effective extemporaneous speaking skills by a) maintaining eye contact with intended receivers; b) using gestures which complement the verbal message; c) using varied vocal cues in the oral delivery of a message.*

Student competency in maintaining eye contact, using gestures and employing vocal variety are directly observable in their speech performances. These competencies were assessed by the instrument described in Section I.B.3 above. Results are reported in the following section.

C. Results

1. *Review of student test scores related to critical thinking*

Critical thinking results show that students answer critical thinking question on the exams at a rate of 77 percent for Fall 2007 and 72 percent for Spring 2008. These results show that students reached or nearly reached the standard of 75 percent. It is difficult to determine if this significant improvement is the result of changes in the course and/or TA training or the result of an unreliable method of measurement.

2. *Review of recorded student speeches*
 96 usable sample recordings were reviewed for this assessment report. This is an increase over last year's sample number (90). The review resulted in 67 percent of speeches being rated as minimally competent, an increase over the last three years (62% 2006-2007, 63% 2005-2006 and 62.5% 2004-2005).

Summary of Results
GER Assessment; Oral Communication Requirement
AY 2007-2008

Outcome	Method of Assessment	Standard	Evaluation	Conclusion/Action
1. Recognize public speaking as a transactional process	Global assessment on 7 of 8 review criteria	Minimum score of 14 on the 7 relevant criteria	77 percent of speeches pass (74 out of 96)	Significant improvement from previous years. The speech proposal assignment and instructor feedback prior to speech performance seems to be a factor in the improvement
2. Demonstrate critical thinking in both the production and evaluation of spoken messages	Review of exam scores on items related to critical thinking	Average score of 75%	Average scores: 77% for Fall 2007 72% for Spring 2008	Significant improvement over previous years. Continued emphasis on reasoning during TA training. Need to develop a more consistent (over time) measurement instrument to more accurately assess this objective.
3. Produce organized informative and persuasive messages	Review of sample student speeches for minimal competence	Satisfactory performance on 8 evaluation criteria (average score = 16)	67 percent of speeches pass (64 out of 96) (average score of sample = 16.7)	Improvement over previous years. Continued emphasis on basic organizational features of in class presentations.
4. Demonstrate effective extemporaneous speaking skills	Review of sample student speeches for minimal competence	Satisfactory performance on 3 evaluation criteria (average score = 6)	69 percent of speeches pass (66 of 96)	Continued improvement over previous years. Continued focus on basic delivery skills.

II. BOT Initiative Compliance

The assessment procedures described in this report are consistent with BOT Initiative 2. In particular, a randomly selected sample of student work in the oral communication component of the general education curriculum is reviewed to determine the level of competency in both oral communication and critical thinking. This year 67 percent of student speeches reviewed met the minimum standard for competency in the course, 31 percent failed to meet the standard. This is an improvement over the failure rate of the year before (38 percent).

III. Plan for the Current Year

1. *Communication as a transaction.*
The introduction of the speech proposal assignment which includes library research for supporting material, audience analysis, specific purpose statement and thesis allows the instructor to provide helpful feedback during the invention stage. The significant improvement in scores after the introduction of this assignment indicates that the speech proposal assignment has been successful in helping students in strategic planning and audience analysis. Continued emphasis on providing useful feedback during the invention stage should continue with TA training.
2. *Critical thinking.*
Although there was a dramatic improvement in the exam scores on selected questions about reasoning and evidence, the results may be misleading. Both the exams and the questions selected for review were chosen by the new director and the results may reflect that difference. A measuring instrument or specific questions on the final exam devoted to reasoning and evidence will be developed for the 2009-2010 academic year if the improvement in critical thinking does not continue in this assessment year. The revised unit and emphasis during TA training may be the reason for the improvement and will continue.
3. *Organization*
Some improvement in this area has been recorded but is still an area of concern. Effective organization or arrangement is an important part of successful speeches and has been emphasized in this course. With the success of the speech proposal in improving scores on the first objective, it seems prudent to add a section of the assignment that asks students to propose and justify an appropriate organizational pattern for instructor feedback. This section can be added to the workbook for the 2009-2010 academic year and will be piloted this spring..
4. *Extemporaneous speaking skills.*
Improvement was also recorded on this objective but the standard has not yet been reached. Continued emphasis on instructor feedback and focus on the delivery chapter may help to continue the trend.

IV. **Assistance needed**

The review of increasing numbers of speeches is labor intensive. We must have continued funding for reviewers to work on the recorded speeches review project in the summer.

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