

Component Area Assessment Yearly Report
Oral Communication Component Area
2004-2005 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 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; c) recognizing and adjusting to nonverbal feedback.*

This outcome is measured by students' strategic planning outlines, in which they describe their strategic planning activities. They discuss their audience analysis activities and relate that analysis to the selection of organizational patterns, arguments, and supporting material. The assessment criteria for examining sample speeches include a set of criteria which focuses on audience adaptation as a basis for determining the competency of the speaker. Results of the videotape review will be reported in Section I.C.

Outcome 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.*

The focus on critical thinking in the course is reflected in all assignments, especially the outlines, brief speeches, and self-analysis assignments. In addition, exam scores can be used to test students' understanding of evidence and reasoning. Using exam scores on selected test items allows us to account of the performance of every student in the class. Although exam scores do not reflect the specific critical thinking activities associated with students' 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 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, videotapes of student persuasive speeches were collected. Each instructor was asked to collect two randomly selected student videos from each section of the CMM 103 course in the fall and spring semesters. A total of 48 usable videotapes were collected this year. That is a significant decrease in the number of usable tapes over the past (72 tapes in 2003-2004 and 63 tapes in 2002-2003). A contributing factor in the collection of videotapes is that submission of tapes must be voluntary and the instructors this year found far fewer willing contributors than in the past. In the coming year, each instructor will be asked to collect 3 tapes per section to increase the sample.

The sample speeches were evaluated using an 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 (two Communication Studies faculty members and one teaching assistant with experience teaching the public speaking course) rated the videotaped speeches. Sample speeches were considered minimally competent if rated with a score of sixteen (16). 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 I.C.

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.*

Students' competency in eye contact, gestures and 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.*

Due to an office move during the summer of 2005, the test score data for Fall 2004 were lost. The analysis for this report is based only on test score data from Spring 2005. The Spring 2005 final exam had 13 questions measuring critical thinking. The average score of students on these items was 54 percent, a substantial decline from the 71 percent score achieved in the previous year.

2. *Review of videotaped student speeches.*

Using a score of 16 as the baseline for minimal acceptable competence, 62.5 percent (30 of 48) of the speeches met the standard.

Summary of Results
GER Assessment; Oral Communication Requirement
AY 2004-2005

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	62.5 percent (30 of 48) of speeches pass	Slight decline from AY 03-04 (65%). Focus greater attention on audience analysis and strategic planning.
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: 54% for Spring 2005	Substantial decline from AY 03-04 (71%). New lesson plans for critical thinking will be developed.
3. Produce organized informative and persuasive messages	Review of sample student speeches for minimal competence	Satisfactory performance on 8 evaluation criteria (average score = 16)	62.5 percent (30 of 48) of speeches pass	Some decline from AY 03-04 (68%). Will attempt to implement stricter standards on the structural elements of outlines.
4. Demonstrate effective extemporaneous speaking skills	Review of sample student speeches for minimal competence	Satisfactory performance on 3 evaluation criteria (average score = 6)	52 percent (25 of 48) of speeches pass	Substantial decline from AY 03-04 (68%). More in-class practice and feedback on delivery skills is needed.

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 37.5 percent of the student speeches reviewed failed to meet the standard set by the Oral Communication program. This is approximately the same failure rate as measured last year (35 percent), but a continued decline from the AY 02-03, when only 21 percent of the sample failed to meet the standard.

III. Plan for the Current Year

In the coming year, the decline in assessment measure scores should be addressed.

1. *Communication as a transaction.*

Strategic planning outlines were intended to strengthen student understanding of audience analysis and adaptation. The strategic planning elements, however, are often looked at as busy work and even instructors do not grade this part of the outline as carefully as the traditional outline. It may help to separate the strategic planning element from the outline proper and give feedback on the planning document before the outline itself is due. This would encourage students to do more prior planning, and encourage instructors to focus more on that aspect of the assignment.

2. *Critical thinking.*

The critical thinking component of the course is important. Scores which had been at our target two years ago have declined. New lesson plans for the logic and critical thinking units in the course need to be developed. Some exercises involving critical thinking practice should be incorporated to aid students' comprehension and retention. Further, the exam items used to measure critical thinking will be reviewed to determine whether they are an appropriate measure of critical thinking skill.

3. *Extemporaneous speaking skills.*

The delivery element of assessment shows a substantial decline which is difficult to explain. The course has seven "stand up" assignments at present. Increasing student practice in front of class comes at the expense of content coverage. We currently devote one class period to the chapter on delivery. Perhaps devoting two days to that topic and including two or three focused practice exercises during that time would reinforce the importance of delivering one's message with conviction. Instructors should give increased attention to basic delivery skills in grading speeches as well.

IV. **Assistance needed.**

Review of videotaped speeches is labor intensive. We must have continued funding for reviewers to work on that part of the assessment project in the summer. Our plan is to collect at least 50 percent more tapes than we have in the past, which will certainly require more man-hours from the review team.