General Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo)

Oral Communication Assessment Report

Fall 2014
Updated April 2015

Report authored by the General Education Oral Communication Subcommittee:
John Gronbeck-Tedesco, Shaziela Ishak, and Sangha Padhy

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Overview
Fall 2014 an assessment of the Oral Communication student outcome was conducted using one direct measure (via student presentations) and one indirect measure (syllabi audit). The curriculum map categorized First Year Seminar (FYS) courses under this outcome. There were a total of 36 different FYS courses offered during Fall 2014.

The components of the Oral Communication Student Outcome are:

• Formulate a theme or thesis, as appropriate for the oral or written communication task being undertaken.
• Develop and present coherent arguments in ways that are effective for the intended audience.

Assessment Procedures
The following assessment procedures were used:
• A sample of 6 courses was selected from a total of 36 courses that were listed in the First-Year Seminar category of the general education curriculum during that semester.
• The 6 courses were selected by earmarking every sixth course in a listing of course identification numbers in increasing numeric order*.
• Students provided consent by signing a form to have the presentations recorded and used for assessment purposes.
• The presentations were recorded using a digital video camera provided by Information Technology Services (ITS) and the video clips were uploaded to a restricted web site. For two of the classes (8 presentations) oral recordings were used instead of video recordings.
• The presentations were assessed by the 3 members of the subcommittee using a rubric adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The rubric is included at the end of this report and it is the same one that was used in the Fall 2011 assessment of Oral Communication. The raters attended a calibration session to ensure that each member had a common basis for scoring the presentations. The raters were supplied with the web address of their assigned presentations.
• Each presentation was scored by a pair of raters and the scores were deemed to be acceptable if they varied by no more than 1 point on a 4 point scale. A third rater reassessed the presentations if the score was not within the accepted ± 1 variance.
• The average score for each rubric category was calculated for the entire set of presentations and histograms were produced to show the scores as a function of percentage of students with the same scores.
• A second indirect assessment was conducted using syllabi collected from 32/36 FYS courses offered during the Fall 2014 semester. The syllabi were audited to determine if they listed one or more oral presentations as a course requirement.

*Only 34 presentations were scored instead of the planned 43 due to recording difficulties.

Achievement Targets:
The achievement target set by committee members for the direct measure was: 80% of oral presentations will score at “meets expectations” or higher for each criterion on the rubric.
The achievement target set by committee members for the indirect measure was: 80% of FYS syllabi will include oral presentations as a requirement.

Direct Assessment:
Of the 34 presentations that were scored, 18 of them were from individual students and 16 were group presentations. For 8 of the presentations raters did not score the “Supporting Material”
category because these presentations were creative writing of a reflective nature rather than evidence based and the group decided that supporting material was not appropriate for this form of oral communication.

The rubric scores are presented below as histograms showing the percentage of student presentation scores using the four rating scales for each of the five rubric categories.

![Histograms showing rubric scores for different categories](imageURL)
The achievement targets were met for three of the criteria as shown in Table 1. Table 1 also shows a comparison to the Fall 2011 Oral Communication assessment and the change over time.

Table 1. Summary of rubric scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric Category</th>
<th>Combined Acceptable Score</th>
<th>Achievement Target</th>
<th>Fall 2011 Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>49% +39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>42% +35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>Not Met</td>
<td>44% -12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Not Met</td>
<td>78% -28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material Central Message</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>51% +31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indirect Assessment: Syllabi Audit**

We obtained syllabi from 32 of the 36 different sections of FYS offered that fulfilled the oral communication requirement. They syllabi were reviewed for the presence of at least one oral presentation, a requirement of the course. The review yielded the following results.

- **Results**
  - 28 syllabi, or 88%, included at least one oral presentation each.
  - 4 syllabi, or 12%, did not include at least one oral presentation each.

The achievement target of 80% was met.

This does not rule it out as a requirement but we could not determine whether it was part of the course from the syllabus.

- **Recommendations**
  - Hold workshops on infusing oral communication into the curriculum for instructors
  - Ask instructors to teach students how to give presentations in class or at least provide instructions so that students can provide improved delivery and use of supporting information.
  - Encourage multiple presentations to give students more practice
  - Encourage the FYS director to remind FYS instructors of the oral communication requirement
  - Encourage the FYS director to review syllabi for this requirement
  - Consider other courses or categories in the current general-education curriculum or in a future iteration of it where students can practice oral presentations after their freshmen year. This would provide a more developmental framework for improvement of this outcome.
  - Consider more than one presentation per course so that students can learn from their first presentation and apply the feedback for their second presentation.
  - The task of gathering oral presentations is burdensome to assessment members and is generally considered intrusive to instructors and their classes. Future assessment of oral communication may consider other means beyond student presentations and evaluative methods other than video recording.
NOTES FROM CLOSING THE LOOP DISCUSSION SESSION
ON 4/8/15

1. Regarding the findings on delivery, supporting material, and language the group present discussed the need for a communication center where students could learn about both written and oral communication. It is possible that the writing center might be able to provide workshops/tips on giving oral presentations. The subcommittee will contact the writing center to see if this is possible.

2. Another medium might be a library resource page where students could find quick tips on oral presentations. Instructors could provide the link to the page on their syllabi. We will also contact the library to see if this is possible.

3. The current coordinator of FYS discussed the findings with the committee and also commented that the findings of our syllabus audit matched his own findings.

4. The syllabi for Fall 2015 will be online by June 1. The FYS coordinator will remind instructors about all of the learning outcomes, including oral communication and will follow up with individual instructors who may need more guidance.

5. Regarding the assessment itself: It is very intrusive to both students and instructors to record each presentation. Students’ delivery was likely affected by the presence of the camera. Furthermore, several recordings were lost for both this assessment and the previous one. An alternative method would be to have each rater do a live rating during the presentation. One drawback would be that there would be no way to have inter-rater reliability unless there were two raters present. This does not seem feasible unless the committee is made larger by at least 3 people.

6. We found that instructors used a variety of presentation styles, which bolstered the committee’s commitment to oral communication as a learning outcome. Some presentations had a formulaic format while others were more creative. It was problematic to use one rubric for the variety of presentations, but we do not think it would be beneficial to mandate that all students do the same kind of presentation. There are many purposes to express oneself and the College should ensure that our students are prepared to do so.

7. The committee will email this report to all of the FYS instructors so that they are made aware of the findings.
## Oral Communication Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exceeds expectations 4</th>
<th>Meets expectations 3</th>
<th>Approaches expectations 2</th>
<th>Does not meet expectations 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable and is skillful and makes the content of the presentation cohesive.</td>
<td>Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable within the presentation.</td>
<td>Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is intermittently observable within the presentation.</td>
<td>Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is not observable within the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>Language choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.</td>
<td>Language choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.</td>
<td>Language choices are mundane and commonplace and partially support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.</td>
<td>Language choices are unclear and minimally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is not appropriate to audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery</strong></td>
<td>Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation compelling, and speaker appears polished and confident.</td>
<td>Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation interesting, and speaker appears comfortable.</td>
<td>Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation understandable, and speaker appears tentative.</td>
<td>Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) detract from the understandability of the presentation, and speaker appears uncomfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Material</strong></td>
<td>A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</td>
<td>Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</td>
<td>Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that partially supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</td>
<td>Insufficient supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make reference to information or analysis that minimally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Message</strong></td>
<td>Central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)</td>
<td>Central message is clear and consistent with the supporting material.</td>
<td>Central message is basically understandable but is not often repeated and is not memorable.</td>
<td>Central message can be deduced, but is not explicitly stated in the presentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted with permission from *Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievement: Tips and Tools for Using Rubrics*, edited by Terrel L. Rhodes. Copyright 2010 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.