

**Summary of Institutional Assessment of Core Competencies:
Oral Communication
August 5, 2017**

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Background:

In Fall 2016, the Assessment Team comprised of the Interim Director of Assessment, the Director of GE Assessment, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Associate Director of Institutional Research proposed a plan to assess student achievement in oral communication at Cal State LA. The team chose a known and widely used instrument, the VALUE rubric (see Appendix). The plan was presented to and endorsed by the Educational Effectiveness and Assessment Council (EEAC). According to the WASC Handbook of Accreditation, Component 4 of the Institutional Review Process asks that institutions “describe how the curriculum addresses each of the five core competencies, explain their learning outcomes in relation to those core competencies, and demonstrate, through evidence of student performance, the extent to which those outcomes are achieved.” The core competency examined was *oral communication*, which is defined by WASC as:

Oral Communication - communication by means of spoken language for informational, persuasive, and expressive purposes. In addition to speech, oral communication may employ visual aids, body language, intonation, and other non-verbal elements to support the conveyance of meaning and connection with the audience. Oral communication may include speeches, presentations, discussions, dialogue, and other forms of interpersonal communication, either delivered face to face or mediated technologically.

This competency is aligned with two of Cal State LA’s Institutional Learning Outcomes:

Knowledge: Mastery of content and processes of inquiry and *Proficiency: Intellectual skills:*

Knowledge: Mastery of content and processes of inquiry - CSULA graduates have a strong knowledge base in their academic major and can use powerful processes of inquiry in a range of disciplines. They engage contemporary and enduring questions with an understanding of the complexities of human cultures and the physical and natural world and are ready to put their knowledge into action to address contemporary issues.

Proficiency: Intellectual skills - CSULA graduates are equipped to actively participate in democratic society. They are critical thinkers who make use of quantitative and qualitative reasoning. They have the ability to find, use, evaluate and process information in order to engage in complex decision-making. They read critically, speak and write clearly and thoughtfully and communicate effectively.

Method and Results:

In spring 2017, instructors from 10 senior-level courses agreed to have their student presentations recorded. Faculty and students were told that the purpose of the assessment was to

examine student oral communication proficiency and not to evaluate individual faculty. Students were given a consent form to sign (see Appendix) and presentations were recorded with a laptop computer set up in the classroom.

Descriptive information regarding the number of students and length of presentations by college is provided in Table 1. Presentations were given by 171 students (109 female, 62 male) in total and were collected from all 5 of the colleges: A&L (COMM 4300, COMM 43900), B&E (BUS 4150, BUS4970), CCOE (COUN 4940A), HHS (COMD 3190, KIN4250), NSS (ANTH 4970, CHEM4311, PSY 3040). The majority of students presented as part of a group (84%) rather than in a single student presentation and most students presented for over two minutes (67%), while 27% presented for 1-2 minutes, and 6% presented for less than 1 minute.

The evaluators were 4 faculty from different departments (Psychology, Modern Languages & Literatures, Geosciences & Environment, and Kinesiology & Nutritional Science) who participated in a 4-hour norming session in which they discussed the criteria for each of the 5 domains (organization, language, delivery, supporting material, central message) and scored examples of high, medium, and low presentations. Each presentation was scored by 2 evaluators and reliabilities was assessed using intraclass correlation coefficients: ICC = .63 for organization, .74 for language, .83 for delivery, .73 for supporting material, and .68 for central message.

Reliability was judged to be generally acceptable, although the coefficient for organization and central message were somewhat low. Organization and central message were particularly difficult to score due to limitations in the presentations such as the variety in presentation length, types, topics, and requirements. For example, some classes were assigned to describe their personal experiences in higher education, while others were required students to describing the results of research studies or the outcomes of their business ventures. As noted above, about 1/3 of the presenters spoke for less than 2 minutes. Although the majority of presentations required the use of slides, the poor visibility of the slides in the recordings did not allow to evaluators to judge the quality of these in detail.

The results showed that the majority of students' scores met competency or better in all domains of oral communication. As shown in Table 2, 98-100% of students across the 5 domains scored in the "*milestone/minimal competency*" or above, and most scored "*milestone/meets competency*" or above (73% for organization, 79% for language, 58% for delivery, 81% for supporting materials, and 85% for central message). Table 3, shows a break- down of mean scores in each domain by college. In general, Cal State LA students' strongest areas of competency involved supporting materials and central message, while their weakest domain was delivery. There were only minor differences across colleges. These results indicate that, based on this sample, the majority of Cal State LA students are achieving adequate proficiency in their oral communication skills near the time of graduation.

These results demonstrate adequate student achievement in oral communication at the senior level across the colleges. Although most students met competency, there is still room for improvement since few students “exceeded competency” across the five domains of oral communication. In particular, programs should look for ways to promote improvements in student delivery techniques. Delivery might be improved by giving students increased opportunities to give presentations so that they become more comfortable with this type of communication. Students should also be encouraged to practice their presentations in order to improve their vocal expressiveness and nonverbal behavior and to enhance the overall effectiveness of their communication.

Our programs can be strengthened by addressing the weaknesses we found and these results will strengthen our WSCUC self-study report. In addition, the evaluators who participated in the pilot study will form a core of expertise, and can train new evaluators in the degree programs and colleges, helping us maintain infrastructure to continue effective, meaningful, and manageable assessment of oral communication skills.

A written report of the findings will be shared with the EEAC and reports will be distributed to all participating departments. Findings will be discussed at a meeting of the EEAC in order to seek input on further actions to be taken based on results and ways to further disseminate findings.

Reflection and Recommendations for Next Steps:

The results of the pilot study indicate that the procedures developed can yield results that provide the university community with valuable information about student proficiency in oral communication near graduation. Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges and limitations to these procedures which must be acknowledged. Based on input from the assessment team and faculty evaluators, below is a set of recommendations for next steps:

- 1) A strength of the pilot study was the sample size which allowed us to examine difference across colleges. Unfortunately, one college did not participate (ECST) and one college had only 4 student presentations submitted (CCOE). We recommend that **at least 2-5 classes in each college** be recruited for participation.
- 2) The method of recording presentations with a laptop was an efficient means of collecting presentations, however, the coordinator should be careful when setting up the computer to ensure that it is placed in the best location (center, in front of students). Students should be instructed to speak loudly and clearly. Front lights can be turned down to allow better view of the slides, but the lights should not be turned off in the room.
- 3) When recruiting classes for participation, efforts should be made to ensure that the presentations recorded meet some minimal criteria in order to achieve greater consistency in the length and requirements of presentations. For example, we might stipulate that students must be expected to **speak for 2 minutes or more** and that **slides are used**. We might also ask instructors to encourage their students to practice

- giving their presentations and remind them to dress and speak professionally. This would help ensure that students are demonstrating their best proficiency possible.
- 4) Although the pilot study allowed us to assess oral communication proficiency near graduation from Cal State LA, it did not allow us to gauge student growth in these skills over time. A longitudinal within-subjects design would allow optimal assessment of student growth over time and provide a clear indication of the learning that occurs while students attend the university. Longitudinal designs tend to be costly and difficult to coordinate, however. As an alternative, **future assessment of oral communication should include a comparison group of freshman who have recently completed their GE oral communication course.** A third group of students at the mid-level (such as recent transfer students or students in their second or third year) would also allow better understanding of how Cal State LA students improve over time. Comparisons of student performance across the three cohort groups (freshman, mid-level, senior) would allow us to make inferences about growth in oral communication skills as students
 - 5) Better communication about the purpose of the assessment project and dissemination of the adopted rubric to instructors in classes throughout the campus would help to stimulate conversations and actions relating to the core competencies. It would also aid in establishing shared expectations for oral communication across the institution.

Appendix A: Oral Communication VALUE Rubric

Definition: Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	3	2	1
Organization	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.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is intermittently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is not observable within the presentation.
Language	Language choices are imaginative, memorable and compelling and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are mundane and commonplace and partially support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are unclear and minimally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is not appropriate to audience.
Delivery	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation compelling, and speaker appears polished and confident.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation interesting, and speaker appears comfortable.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation understandable, and speaker appears tentative.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) detract from the understandability of the presentation, and speaker appears uncomfortable.

Supporting Material	A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis which significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis which generally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis which partially supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Insufficient supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make reference to information or analysis which minimally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.
Central Message	Central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)	Central message is clear and consistent with the supporting material.	Central message is basically understandable but is not often repeated and is not memorable.	Central message can be deduced, but is not explicitly stated in the presentation.

Appendix B: Student Consent Forms

Educational Effectiveness and Assessment Council
California State University, Los Angeles
Spring 2017
Oral Communication Project Student Consent Form

The Educational Effectiveness and Assessment Council is conducting a project to assess student oral communication skills at Cal State LA. The goals of this project is to examine whether the degrees offered by Cal State LA reflect the level of proficiency we anticipate for our graduates. Oral communication is communication by means of spoken language for informational, persuasive, and expressive purposes. Video recordings of presentations are commonly used by educators and employers as a means of documenting evidence of this skill for evaluation purposes.

For this project, we will videotape students giving oral presentations as part of an assignment within their classes. The purpose of this activity is not to review individual student or faculty performance! We are not judging assignments; nor are we judging the grade or assessment given by the instructor.

Videotapes will be scored by a small group of faculty using a rubric to assess the level of oral communication proficiency exhibited by students. The scores will be aggregated and used to provide evidence of Cal State LA students' level of achievement as a group.

Student and instructor names will not be reported in presentations or written products resulting from the project and the video recordings will not be shown in presentations.

By signing this form, I am allowing the researcher to video record me as part of this research.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

- Please select if you will allow us to keep and use your recording for training purposes after the study has been completed. (This is optional)

Table 1

Student Gender and Presentation Length by College

College	Gender		Presentation Length		
	Female	Male	Less than 1 minute	1-2 Minutes	More than 2 minutes
Arts & Letters (<i>n</i> = 44)	31 (70%)	13 (30%)	28 (64%)	14 (32%)	2 (4%)
Business & Economics (<i>n</i> = 65)	35 (54%)	30 (46%)	37 (54%)	24 (37%)	6 (9%)
Charter College of Education (<i>n</i> = 4)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Health and Human Services (<i>n</i> = 13)	10 (77%)	3 (23%)	13 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Natural and Social Sciences (<i>n</i> = 45)	30 (67%)	15 (33%)	35 (78%)	8 (18%)	2 (4%)
Total (<i>N</i> = 171)	109 (64%)	62 (36%)	115 (67%)	46 (27%)	10 (6%)

Table 2

Oral Communication Proficiency Scores (N = 171)

Proficiency Score	Organization	Language	Delivery	Supporting Material	Central Message
1.0-1.75	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	4 (2%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
2.0-2.75	45 (26%)	36 (21%)	67 (39%)	31 (18%)	24 (14%)
3.0-3.5	112 (66%)	121 (71%)	81 (47%)	115 (67%)	131 (77%)
3.75-4.0	12 (7%)	14 (8%)	19 (11%)	23 (14%)	14 (8%)

Note. Scoring was as follows: 1 = *Benchmark (Does not Meet Competency)*, 2 = *Milestone (Minimal Competency)*, 3 = *Milestone (Meets Competency)*, 4 = *Capstone (Exceeds Competency)*.

Table 3

Mean Oral Communication Proficiency Scores by College

College	Organization	Domain			
		Language	Delivery	Supporting Material	Central Message
Arts & Letters (<i>n</i> = 44)	3.07 (.38)	3.04 (.36)	3.07 (.49)	3.19 (.45)	3.20 (.35)
Business & Economics (<i>n</i> = 65)	3.17 (.35)	3.15 (.39)	2.94 (.60)	3.27 (.45)	3.18 (.37)
Charter College of Education (<i>n</i> = 4)	2.38 (.60)	2.56 (.52)	2.81 (.94)	2.56 (.94)	2.56 (.75)
Health and Human Services (<i>n</i> = 13)	3.08 (.59)	2.96 (.44)	3.04 (.52)	3.21 (.53)	3.13 (.51)
Natural and Social Sciences (<i>n</i> = 45)	3.01 (.40)	3.18 (.43)	2.77 (.61)	3.08 (.42)	3.13 (.34)
Total (<i>N</i> = 171)	3.08 (.42)	3.10 (.41)	2.93 (.58)	3.18 (.47)	3.15 (.38)

Note. Standard deviation is in parentheses. Scoring was as follows: 1 = *Benchmark (Does not Meet Competency)*, 2 = *Milestone (Minimal Competency)*, 3 = *Milestone (Meets Competency)*, 4 = *Capstone (Exceeds Competency)*.

Table 4

Oral Communication Proficiency Scores by Department

Proficiency Score	Organization	Language	Delivery	Supporting Material	Central Message
Anthropology (ANTH 4970, n = 11)					
1.0-1.75	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2.0-2.75	7 (64%)	0 (21%)	7 (64%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)
3.0-3.5	3 (27%)	9 (82%)	3 (27%)	8 (73%)	9 (82%)
3.75-4.0	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	2 (18%)
Business (BUS 4150, BUS 4970, n = 65)					
1.0-1.75	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (1%)	1 (2%)
2.0-2.75	8 (12%)	11 (17%)	26 (40%)	11 (17%)	7 (11%)
3.0-3.5	52 (80%)	49 (75%)	30 (46%)	43 (66%)	51 (79%)
3.75-4.0	4 (6%)	5 (8%)	8 (12%)	11 (17%)	6 (9%)
Chemistry (CHEM 4311 n = 11)					
1.0-1.75	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (1%)	0 (0%)
2.0-2.75	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	5 (45.5%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)
3.0-3.5	8 (73%)	9 (82%)	5 (45.5%)	8 (73%)	10 (91%)
3.75-4.0	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	0 (5%)
Communication Disorders (COMD 3190, n = 8)					
1.0-1.75	0 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (1%)	0 (0%)
2.0-2.75	3 (37.5%)	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)
3.0-3.5	4 (50%)	7 (87.5%)	6 (75%)	5 (62.5%)	6 (75%)
3.75-4.0	1 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)
Communication Studies (COMM 4300, COMM 4390 n = 44)					
1.0-1.75	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (1%)	0 (0%)
2.0-2.75	13 (30%)	12 (27%)	13 (30%)	8 (18%)	8 (18%)
3.0-3.5	28 (64%)	30 (68%)	26 (59%)	31 (71%)	34 (77%)
3.75-4.0	3 (7%)	2 (5%)	5 (11%)	5 (11%)	2 (5%)
Counseling (COUN 4940A, n = 4)					
1.0-1.75	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (50%)	1 (25%)
2.0-2.75	2 (50%)	3 (75%)	2 (50%)	0 (0%)	2 (50%)
3.0-3.5	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	1 (25%)
3.75-4.0	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Kinesiology (KIN 4250, n = 5)					
1.0-1.75	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2.0-2.75	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	0 (0%)	1 (20%)
3.0-3.5	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)
3.75-4.0	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)
Psychology (PSY 3040, n = 23)					
1.0-1.75	0 (1%)	0 (0%)	3 (13%)	0 (1%)	0 (0%)
2.0-2.75	8 (35%)	6 (26%)	9 (39%)	6 (26%)	4 (17%)

3.0-3.5	15 (65%)	14 (61%)	10 (44%)	15 (65%)	18 (78%)
3.75-4.0	0 (0%)	3 (13%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)	1 (4%)

Note. Scoring was as follows: 1 = *Benchmark (Does not Meet Competency)*, 2 = *Milestone (Minimal Competency)*, 3 = *Milestone (Meets Competency)*, 4 = *Capstone (Exceeds Competency)*.

Table 5
Mean Oral Communication Proficiency Scores by Department

Department	Domain				
	Organization	Language	Delivery	Supporting Material	Central Message
Anthropology (<i>n</i> = 11)	2.91 (.44)	3.27 (.28)	2.70 (.57)	2.95 (.22)	3.23 (.28)
Business (<i>n</i> = 65)	3.17 (.35)	3.15 (.39)	2.94 (.60)	3.27 (.45)	3.18 (.37)
Chemistry (<i>n</i> = 11)	3.11 (.36)	3.25 (.30)	2.93 (.51)	3.34 (.36)	3.16 (.23)
Communication Dis. (<i>n</i> = 8)	2.97 (.60)	2.90 (.38)	2.97 (.45)	3.06 (.55)	3.00 (.48)
Communication Studies (<i>n</i> = 44)	3.07 (.38)	3.04 (.36)	3.07 (.49)	3.19 (.45)	3.20 (.35)
Counseling (<i>n</i> = 4)	2.38 (.60)	2.56 (.52)	2.81 (.94)	2.56 (.94)	2.56 (.75)
Kinesiology (<i>n</i> = 5)	3.25 (.59)	3.05 (.57)	3.15 (.68)	3.45 (.45)	3.35 (.52)
Psychology (<i>n</i> = 23)	3.00 (.44)	3.11 (.53)	2.71 (.68)	3.02 (.48)	3.07 (.40)
Total (<i>N</i> = 171)	3.08 (.42)	3.10 (.41)	2.93 (.58)	3.18 (.47)	3.15 (.38)

Note. Standard deviation is in parentheses. Scoring was as follows: 1 = *Benchmark (Does not Meet Competency)*, 2 = *Milestone (Minimal Competency)*, 3 = *Milestone (Meets Competency)*, 4 = *Capstone (Exceeds Competency)*.