COMMUNICATION SKILLS TOOLBOX

This toolbox provides a brief but thorough collection of resources pertaining to Core Curriculum assessment. This toolbox does not replace conversations about Core Curriculum assessment; it is provided so that all instructors can quickly and easily access this information. This toolbox will be continuously updated to insert, remove, and otherwise revise information when necessary.

Communication Skills Assessment Overview

The way that various communication skills are taught and assessed tends to vary greatly overall across college campuses. Nonetheless, some commonalities do exist, including: (1) structural organization of arguments; (2) identification and skillful use of credible source material; (3) compliance with disciplinary conventions and guidelines; and (4) the overall appropriateness and effectiveness of the structure and use of sources to make compelling arguments.

The Communication Skills Core Objective is divided into three parts: Written Communication Skills, Oral Communication Skills, and Visual Communication Skills. When designing assignments, faculty may elect to focus on one communication skill set or my focus on multiple skill sets.

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On the following pages, you will find….
- **Communication Skills rubrics (pp. 2-4)**
  - The rubrics featured in this toolbox are the most up-to-date copy of the rubric that will be used to assess Core Curriculum artifacts on Communication Skills.
- **Communication Skills assignment strategies (pg. 5)**
  - This page contains examples of assignments that align well with the Communication Skills rubrics.
- **Communication Skills resources for faculty (pg. 6)**
  - This page features peer-reviewed journal articles, modules, handbooks, and other resources focused on teaching strategies faculty can use to help develop students' skills.
- **Communication Skills resources for students (pg. 7)**
  - This page contains handbooks and articles focused on personal strategies students can use to practice and develop effective skills.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS RUBRIC

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark	Below Benchmark	Section Score
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**	**0**	
Context of and Purpose for Writing *Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).*	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task(s).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task(s).	Failed to meet benchmark.	
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to demonstrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and structuring the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and to structure the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas throughout most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.	Failed to meet benchmark.	
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions *Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields.*	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices.	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices.	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation.	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.	Failed to meet benchmark.	
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of credible, relevant sources to develop ideas appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.	Failed to meet benchmark.	
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity. Writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.	Failed to meet benchmark.	
					Total Score	

ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS RUBRIC

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark	Below Benchmark	Section Score
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**	**0**	
Organization	Organizational pattern (title reflecting topic of presentation, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable and makes the content of the presentation cohesive.	Organizational pattern (title reflecting topic of presentation, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (title reflecting topic of presentation, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is intermittently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (title reflecting topic of presentation sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is not observable within the presentation.	Failed to meet benchmark.	
Language	Language choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate for audience.	Language choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate for audience.	Language choices are mundane and common place, and partially support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate for audience.	Language choices are unclearly and minimally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is not appropriate for audience.	Failed to meet benchmark.	
Delivery	Delivery techniques (vocal expressiveness, clear pronunciation, nonverbal behaviors) make the presentation compelling, and speaker appears polished and confident.	Delivery techniques (vocal expressiveness, clear pronunciation) make the presentation interesting, and speaker appears comfortable.	Delivery techniques (vocal expressiveness, clear pronunciation) make the presentation understandable, and speaker appears tentative.	Delivery techniques (vocal expressiveness, clear pronunciation) detract from understandability of the presentation, and speaker appears uncomfortable.	Failed to meet benchmark.	
Central Thesis	Central thesis is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)	Central thesis is clear and consistent with the supporting material.	Central thesis is basically understandable, but is not often repeated and is not memorable.	Central thesis can be inferred, but is not explicitly stated in the presentation.	Failed to meet benchmark.	
					Total Score	

VISUAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS RUBRIC CRITERION

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark	Below Benchmark	Section Score
	4	3	2	1	0	
Supporting Material	A variety of types of supporting materials (arguments, examples, audio-visual aids) make appropriate reference to information that significantly supports the thesis/central idea.	Supporting materials (arguments, examples, audio-visual aids) make appropriate reference to information that generally supports the thesis/central idea.	Supporting materials (arguments, examples, audio-visual aids) make appropriate reference to information that partially supports the thesis/central idea.	Insufficient supporting materials (arguments, examples, audio-visual aids) make reference to information that minimally supports the thesis/central idea.	Failed to meet benchmark.	
					Total Score	

EXAMPLES OF COMUNICATION SKILLS ASSIGNMENT STRATEGIES

Strategy	Description	Sample assignments, tools, and other resources
Collect and evaluate course papers.	Students could be asked to produce course papers (any focus) within the parameters of disciplinary conventions and formatting guidelines. These papers could be evaluated using the Written Communication Skills rubric.	• Please reference disciplinary traditions and other Assessment Toolboxes for assignment content ideas.
Record and evaluate student presentations.	Students could be asked to deliver a presentation to the class. An audio recording of this presentation could be collected and the presentation could be evaluated using the Oral Communication Skills rubric.	• Sample guidelines for oral presentation assignment[1]
Evaluate student presentations of research and other final projects.	In this broad category, any combination of the various Communication Skills would suffice. For example, students could submit a research paper and give a summary presentation based on that paper to the class. The paper and an audio recording of the presentation could be evaluated using the Written Communication Skills rubric and the Oral Communication Skills rubric. Conversely, students could give a poster presentation (or other visually creative presentation mediums) on a project. Any aspect of this event (a research paper, oral communication of information, and visual display of information featured on a presentation poster) could be evaluated on the Written Communication Skills rubric, the Oral Communication Skills rubric, and the Visual Communication Skills rubric criterion.	• Sample guidelines from poster presentation assignment[1]

NOTE: As with Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills is one of the most versatile competencies in terms of designing an assignment and aligning that assignment with one (or more) of the Communication Skills rubrics. The assignment strategies presented here represent only a few of all possible strategies. Furthermore, it is relatively easy to design an assignment that embodies both Communication Skills and other competencies as well. Future revisions of this toolbox will include information on assignment strategies that align with other competencies in addition to Communication Skills.

[1] Please contact the Academic Assessment Coordinator for these materials. All of these materials will soon be posted on a webpage that is in development.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS RESOURCES FOR FACULTY

Description	Link or instructions to obtain resources
The **"Teaching Activities Bank" Writing@CSU webpage** created by The Writing Studio at Colorado State University provides examples of numerous teaching activities that faculty can use to develop students' writing skills.	This collection of activities can be accessed here: http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/activities/index.cfm
Dallimore, E. J., Hertenstein, J. H., & Platt, M. B. (2008). Using discussion pedagogy to enhance oral and written communication skills. *College Teaching*, *56*, **163-172.** This article examines the effects of participation practices on student perceptions of in-class discussions and the development of various communication competencies.	This article can be accessed here: http://www.jstor.org/tc/accept?origin=/stable/pdf/20695202.pdf
George, D. (2002). From analysis to design: Visual communication in the teaching of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, *54*, **11-39.** This article provides numerous examples and ideas for using visual communication to develop students' writing skills, especially in composition courses.	This article can be accessed here: http://www.jstor.org/tc/accept?origin=/stable/pdf/1512100.pdf
Kennedy, R. (2007). In-class debates: Fertile ground for active learning and the cultivation of critical thinking and oral communication skills. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *19*, **183-190.** This article discusses the strengths, limitations, and effects of five in-class debate formats (meeting-house, four-corner, fishbowl, think-pair-share, and role-play debates) on students' critical thinking skills and oral communication skills.	This article can be accessed here: http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/pdf/IJTLHE200.pdf
The **"Teaching Aids" webpage** from The Visual Communication Guy website provides teaching materials and guides related to several visual communication topics (e.g., visual aids, presentations in scientific/business/other settings, etc.).	This webpage can be accessed here: http://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/resources/teaching-aids/

COMMUNICATION SKILLS RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Description	Link or instructions to obtain resources
The **"Information Design: Resources for Designing Better Documents" webpage** from The Visual Communication Guy website provides students with information on ten basic information design principles (using the "Color CRAYON TIP" acronym) and provides more resources on additional concepts.	This webpage can be accessed here: http://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/information-design/
The **"Writing Resources" Writing@CSU webpage** provides a wide variety of resources, writing activities, writing collections, and other resources that writers can reference to improve their writing.	This webpage can be accessed here: http://writing.colostate.edu/learn.cfm
The **"Communication Skills: Writing" webpage** created by the University of Kent's Careers and Employability Services division provides an overview of the employability of writing skills and provides checklists and other resources for students to reference for self-evaluation purposes.	This webpage can be accessed here: https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/written-communication.htm
The **"Communication Skills: Speaking and Listening" webpage** created by the University of Kent's Career and Employability Services division provides an overview on the employability of speaking (and listening) skills and provides several tips for how students can evaluate and improve their own speaking (and listening) skills.	This webpage can be accessed here: https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/communicating.htm