Assessment Group* Core Competency Report

AY: 2021-2022

Core Competency: Oral Communication

Introduction

Woodbury University has implemented a model for collecting and reporting student achievement on the 5 Core Competencies (CC) for undergraduates. The model is meant to allow programs to assess each competency in a way most meaningful for their students.

The model calls for the Assessment Group (AG) to collect the results of program-level assessment and then synthesize the results for the university. In 2019-20, the AG began a process to provide programs feedback on their assessment activities and to highlight exemplary assessment activities. This is done via a brief summer meeting among the program chair, their assessment officer, and the Director of Assessment & Educational Effectiveness.

This report will first describe the process the AG engaged in to synthesize the results submitted by each program in their summary report in spring. Next, the report presents the results of program level assessment at the university level. Finally, the report presents action items that any program can take to improve student achievement on the core competency.

Outcome(s)

In this report, the CC we are reporting on is Oral Communication (OC). Examples of outcomes for this CC include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Organizes ideas and supporting material around a central message
- ✓ Chooses language that enhances the effectiveness of the presentation
- ✓ Uses delivery techniques like posture, gestures, eye contact, and intonation

Processes used to synthesize program level CC Assessment

In spring 2022, 14 programs submitted a summary of their Oral Communication assessment to their school's Assessment Officer or to the Director of Assessment & Educational Effectiveness (AEE). The AG compiled the CC Oral Communication summaries in Digication. Synthesizing findings across programs was challenging for some AG members because the findings were not all written in the same style or format. In addition, some programs presented more detailed information about results, rubrics, their assessment processes, etc., than others. Our goal as the AG is to consider the findings as part of the school results overall, leave the details behind, and focus on the big picture.

The Director of AEE compiled and summarized the AG's responses to the following 4 questions for each program:

1. What were the program's findings related to this Core Competency?

2. What was the program's need for additional resources?

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* The Assessment Group comprises the Assessment Officers of the three Schools, the College, the Library, Academic Affairs, and the Writing Program. It is convened by Assessment and Educational Effectiveness, in Office of Academic Affairs.

3. Did the program describe excellent practices in assessment we want to share with other programs?

4. Were there issues or challenges in assessment we want to address with the program?

This report will cover the AG's responses to question 1 in the Results section; then some attention is paid to the AG's responses to questions 2-4 in the Close the Loop section. Finally, recommendations for improving Oral Communication are offered.

Closing the Loop. The AG completed 2 steps to close the loop for Oral Communication assessment. First, each school's Assessment Officer and the Director of AEE met with programs individually to review the AG's feedback on questions 3-4: areas of strength and need for resources for improvement, as gathered from the summary descriptions.

At the aggregated level, areas of assessment strength and need for improvement are presented here:

Assessment process strengths included, but were not limited to:

- Having more than one faculty member involved in assessment activities
- Using an effective rubric
- Having a strong close-the-loop process
- Using more than one assessment method
- Focusing on more than one aspect of Oral Communication

Assessment process areas for improvement included, but were not limited to:

- Increasing the sample size of student evidence
- Involving more faculty in the assessment activities
- Including examples to illustrate the results

The second step of the close the loop process was this report, drafted by the Director of AEE and sent to the AG for their recommendations to the university. It is being disseminated to all faculty, chairs, and deans. In addition, this annual Close the Loop Report is available on the AEE SharePoint site.

Results

What conclusions might we draw from the assessment findings regarding our students' performance? Here we describe the strengths and areas for improvement that were common across programs. It is important to keep in mind that each program had their own student evidence and rubric for judging that evidence.

Student *strengths* in Oral Communication

- Some programs said students during the pandemic did better presenting online than in person
- Most programs thought presentations were well organized
- Some programs have deep and consistent faculty involvement in student oral presentations

Student *areas for improvement* in Oral Communication

- Many programs said students did worse on oral presentations during the pandemic and that the programs struggled to assess oral presentations in such an environment
- Some programs said students struggled with eye contact and appropriate gestures
- Some programs said students had limited or improper vocabulary when speaking
- Some programs said students lacked proper material during oral presentations
- Some programs said students lacked notes or outlines to help guide them through their presentations

It should be noted that assessing oral communication was largely seen as difficult during pandemic restrictions. As pandemic restrictions are lifted, many problems could be readily corrected.

Assessment to Action: Recommendations for the University

In this section, we report possible actions for improving student achievement in Oral Communication across programs. The first set of recommendations was gleaned from the programs' proposed and/or completed action steps reported in their summary report. The second set of recommendations comes from the AG.

Recommendations from the Programs
Set a time limit to both the length of student oral presentations and professional reviewer feedback.
Prepare written notes or an outline to accompany an oral presentation.
Offer oral presentation help in the Writing Center or via the Math, Science, and Subject Tutoring Services.
Scaffold oral presentation lessons through the course its being benchmarked in, and/or in other courses in the major.
Work with IT to make sure students are supported properly with technology and software for oral presentations.

Recommendations from the Assessment Group
Create a "best practices" document to help programs incorporate relevant pedagogical oral communication practices and techniques.
Work with IT to utilize proper technology and software for oral communication projects.
Enlist the Writing Center and the Math, Science, and Subject Tutoring Services to offer one-on-one consultation for students working on oral communication projects.
Hold a department meeting to address where oral communication is practiced throughout the curriculum.