HPU Oral Communication Assessment Report

Overview of the Assessment Project

In Fall 2017, HPU launched its second, campus-wide initiative designed to assess oral communication in general education and undergraduate capstone courses. This assessment project is the second in a series of annual assessments of institutional learning outcomes: written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and quantitative reasoning.

Method

During the academic year 2017 – 2018, a total of five General Education course sections and eight undergraduate capstone course sections participated in this oral communication assessment project.

The Academic Assessment and Program Review Shared Governance Committee selected a random sample of general education and capstone courses to participate in this project from the total population of all such courses offered in Spring 2018.

The committee then sent out instructions to participating instructors to identify an assessment within their course that fulfilled all requirements of the Oral Communication common rubric. The committee asked volunteer faculty members to go into each instructor's class to videotape 6 – 8 minute oral presentations of at least the upper half of the speaker's torso. These volunteer faculty members also conducted live scoring of the presentation, using the AAC&U rubric. For the most part, faculty members used Panopto, a lecture capture software to videotape the presentations. A total of 132 artifacts of authentic student work were collected: general education (37) and undergraduate capstone (95). These files were saved to the cloud and were later compressed for uploading to the Oral Communication Assessment Project in Aqua.

In Fall 2018, each college convened an assessment committee to score these artifacts. These college-level committees normed their evaluations to a common rubric adapted from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Written Communication Rubric. The college-level evaluators successfully scored 100% of the artifacts submitted for this project.

In Summer 2019, HPU presented its assessment findings at the university assessment day in hopes of engaging deans, department and program chairs, and members of the academic assessment and program review shared governance committee in a thoughtful discussion of the implication of these results for continuous, quality improvements to the curriculum. The committee presented these assessment results as the percentage of students who performed at a given performance level for each rubric criterion. Also, the committee focused its presentation on actionable data. Finally, the committee set targets for performance by which to reflect on these findings.

The committee provided participating program chairs with detailed instructions about how to filter the results by capstone course and student demographics, along with the template for creating a graphic display of their results. The committee will ask program chairs to interpret these findings and to create an action plan, as needed.

Assessment Findings

General Education Written Communication Assessment Findings

The committee set an acceptable target for the general education students enrolled in oral communication courses as follows: 85% of undergraduate students will achieve an emerging or developed score for each criterion.

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An analysis of these findings revealed the following:
• Central Message (76%)
• Organization (87%)
• Reasoning (81%)
• Supporting Material (63%)
• Presentation (65%)

These results exceeded the target in the area of organization, but approached the target in the areas of central message, reasoning, supporting material, and presentation, suggesting that general education instructors might increase their focus in these areas.

The general education oral communication assessment results depicted in Figure 1 below represent a very small sample size. To increase the sample size for future oral communication assessment projects, the committee recommends that instructors collect artifacts from all general education oral communication courses during both the Fall and Spring semesters.

Table 1. General Education Oral Communication Assessment Results by Criterion

Criteria	Score									
	4		3		2		1		0	
N = 37	Highly Developed		Developed		Emerging		Initial		Not Present	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Central Message	4	11%	13	35%	15	41%	5	14%	0	0%
Organization	3	8%	11	30%	21	57%	2	5%	0	0%
Reasoning	4	11%	13	35%	17	46%	3	8%	0	0%
Supporting Material	5	14%	8	22%	15	41%	9	24%	0	0%
Presentation	4	11%	7	19%	17	46%	9	24%	0	0%

Undergraduate Capstone Oral Communication Assessment Findings

The committee set the acceptable target for the undergraduate capstone oral communication assessment results as follows: 85% of students enrolled in undergraduate capstone courses will achieve an emerging or developed score for each criterion.

An analysis of these findings revealed that undergraduate capstone students performed for each criterion as follows:
  - central message (84%)
  - organization (72%)
  - reasoning (73%)
  - supporting material (71%)
  - presentation (75%).

These results approached the target in the areas of central message, organization, reasoning, supporting material, and presentation, suggesting that capstone instructors might increase their focus in these areas.

The capstone oral communication assessment results depicted in Figure 2 below represent a relatively small sample size. To increase the sample size for future oral communication assessment projects, the committee recommends that instructors collect artifacts from all capstone courses during both the Fall and Spring semesters.

Table 2. Undergraduate Capstone Oral Communication Results by Criterion

Criteria	Score									
	4		3		2		1		0	
N = 95	Highly Developed		Developed		Emerging		Initial		Not Present	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Central Message	15	16%	45	47%	35	37%	0	0%	0	0%
Organization	37	39%	34	36%	34	36%	0	0%	0	0%
Reasoning	24	25%	39	41%	30	32%	2	2%	0	0%
Supporting Material	25	26%	30	32%	37	39%	3	3%	0	0%
Presentation	19	20%	49	52%	22	23%	5	5%	0	0%

Discussion

In closing the loop on this assessment project, as depicted in Figure 1 below, the committee posed several questions:

- How accurately do we think these findings reflect the actual level of competence of our students?

- Were there certain artifacts that were not appropriate for the kind of assessment conducted?

- Were there other problems with the process?

- How shall we use these findings?

- Are we satisfied with the results?

- If not, what are we going to do about it?

In response to these questions, the committee formulated several recommendations.

1. General education oral communication course instructors may wish to increase their focus in the areas of central message, reasoning, supporting material, and presentation.
2. Capstone instructors may wish to increase their focus in the areas of central message, organization, reasoning, supporting material, and presentation.
3. To increase the sample size for the purposes of program review, the committee recommends that instructors collect artifacts from all general education oral communication courses and all capstone courses during both the Fall and Spring semesters.
4. To set the stage for a thoughtful reflection on the performance of students on this assessment across the university, the committee recommends that, in future oral communication assessment projects, each degree program should provide the committee with an analysis of the data from their own program. In future oral assessment projects, the program chairs may wish to respond to the following questions:

   - Does the program-level data accurately reflect the oral communication competency of students enrolled in the program over the long term?

   - If it does reflect the reality of the oral communication competency of the students enrolled in the program, are there changes that should be implemented in the degree program?

   - If it does not reflect the reality of the oral communication competency of the students enrolled in the program, can the program faculty explain why they came to this conclusion?

   - What changes should be implemented to achieve more accurate results in the future?

Future program-level analyses may yield yielded varying results:

- In some cases, the program will agree that the artifact used for this assessment project was suitable and the results met expectations for oral communication. Therefore, no further action would be needed.
- In other cases, the program may find that the artifact was not suitable for assessment with the established rubric, thus the results may not reflect an accurate representation of the students' oral communication abilities. In these cases, the programs may wish to repeat this assessment with a more suitable artifact to determine how well their students met expectations for oral communication.
- Finally, in a few cases, the program may feel that the artifact was suitable for this assessment project, but the results were unexpectedly low. In these cases, the programs would want to develop an action plan for improvement of oral communication within their program curriculum.

Conclusion

In sum, as members of a learning institution, the committee will endeavor to follow the six steps of the assessment process in its future inquiries into our students' performance on this and other institutional learning outcomes:

1. Identify in broad terms what mission and educational goals are valued.
2. Articulate measurable objectives for each goal.
3. Select appropriate approaches to assess how well students are meeting articulated objectives.
4. Select appropriate measures that can be administered, analyzed, and interpreted for evidence of student learning outcomes.
5. Communicate assessment findings to those involved in the process.
6. Use feedback to make changes and inform curricular decisions and reevaluate the assessment process with the intent to continuously improve the quality of student learning.

Figure 1. Six Steps to Continuous Improvement of Student Learning

"Six Steps to Continuous Improvement of Student Learning (Closing the Loop).." Accreditation, Assessment and Learning, Kent State University.
https://www.kent.edu/aal/six-steps-continuous-improvement-student-learning-closing-loop