

UF 100 Assessment Report

Spring 2015

UF 100 Faculty met on July 1st to review artifacts and to reflect on our evaluation of students' performance on ULO 2 – Oral Communication. While we used the Digication Assessment site, our efforts were stymied by (1) a system issue limiting our access to the data and (2) the inconsistency in the way each team identified and uploaded the artifacts. As a result, two of the 5 plenaries' assessment took place within the e-portfolio environment. The remaining 3 plenaries plus the two online sections reported assessment findings subsequent to our meeting. Those reports are compiled below along with faculty insights upon assessing the Oral Communication ULO.

ULO Criteria:

ULO	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5
	2.92	2.85	2.86	2.88	2.72

[2.1: focus on central message; 2.2: use of supporting material; 2.3 organizational pattern; 2.4: thoughtful language choices; 2.5: delivery techniques]

Because of the difficulty standardizing our assessment process, each team reported in a different manner. The discussion that follows includes comments made by faculty during our assessment review and those submitted by individual teams.

Methods used to support and assess ULO 2

History and Future of Education

Students practice giving no-stakes presentations each week in Discussion Groups. (Basically, after working in their team on the activity about the reading, someone has to give a brief oral report-out to the class.) At least one plenary activity focuses directly on oral communication and the importance and difficulty of listening. Rubrics for the midterm and final presentations are available weeks before the presentation due date. In the last couple of weeks, we show the Amy Cuddy TED talk in plenary and practice power poses. We also show oral communication tutorials.

Assessment: We have formal rubrics for both the midterm and final presentations. ULOs are synthesized rather than separated, but oral communication is a component.

Rifts and Shifts

We provided a couple short readings and in discussion group practice of informal presentations. They also turned in a two-minute Prezi video at mid-semester in which they were required to do a voice-over. Their average for oral communication on that assignment was 16.63. We used the same rubric for this assignment as we used for the final project and their scores were only slightly lower than the 16.97 (3) average on the final project.

Sci-Fi:

Preparing, implementing, reviewing and assessing the Panel Discussion assignment was the central means of support and assessment for oral communication. One preparatory activity was to view and analyze a video of a successful panel discussion. The Final Project was also relevant to Oral

Communication, as students had to use oral language effectively in their videos. Informal discussions, debates, activities such as write-pair-share, and other group activities were also used.

Working:

We emphasized the connection between developing oral communication skills in college and the demands of the working world during plenaries. Students worked in teams to create presentations four times during the semester covering several weeks of their research and discussion on a particular topic. Requirements for the oral presentation increased with each subsequent assignment. The rubric criteria for the team presentations was consistent with the requirements for the final individual presentation, which was a 5 minute Power Point Talk using supporting evidence recorded with a voice over.

East West Competition:

Presented course content that we feel helped the students understand that developing soft skills, such as good communication, is as important as (perhaps more than) learning material that they believe will be practical and applicable to their presumed post-graduation jobs.

We stressed using the Socratic method in class to the idea that interrogating a question requires clear definitions, logical analysis, and open discussion. We've encouraged DGLs to make students feel welcome to tactfully question statements made by fellow students and attempt to use their communication skills to come closer to an accurate understanding of the world around them. Some DGLs take the Socratic approach to the extent of randomly calling on students during discussions to see if they can reiterate and/or challenge claims that were made by other students.

A grading rubric for the final presentation is provided to the students well in advance of the presentation to provide a clear understanding of the expectations as students work on their projects.

Invention and Discovery:

The primary means of assessment of oral communication is through a 5 minute oral presentation completed by each student during the semester. This daily exercise in our discussion sessions encourages students to continually return to the rubric and hopefully ingrain the core elements of successful oral communication. The assessment of these presentations is done by students and discussion group leaders however the final grade is submitted by the DGL.

Human Situation:

To support oral communication, we had the students regularly engage in group and class activities that required conversation; we then asked people--sometimes volunteers and sometimes at random--to report on group findings with the support of prompts and questions from the discussion leader to help them articulate and share their insights.

In general, we strove to establish a friendly atmosphere that reduced the risks inherent in speaking out. We also openly discussed the difference between a good academic conversation in which the goal was not to win, but to follow the best lines of thought in order to learn together, contrasting it with the "cable TV" understanding of discussion as a yelling-match where acknowledging someone else's point is considered defeat or abdication.

We also required a single short formal oral presentation from each student. Assessment of the formal presentation was done on the attached rubric. Assessment of regular oral interactions was informal, formative, and ongoing.

Reflection on ULO Criteria

Sometimes students take early stance and are afraid to change. How can DGLs help students learn to be flexible in discussion and use public discussion to explore? Students need to articulate their ideas in public, revise their opinions in public, do oral meaning making, and deal with disagreement.

It is difficult to teach and assess listening. The faculty questioned whether the skill of “listening” is being intentionally taught? They suggested that we pay attention to the ways Discussion Group Leaders can bring listening skills into the foreground for students. In terms of more adequately assessing listening skills, teams are considering where they can “see” students listening (to teacher, students/peers) during the course.

Delivery techniques (2.5) are challenging. How do we help students become more skilled presenters? Many students do not practice or prepare for their speeches and presentations have a robotic, wooden, reading from script quality. How do we teach students to be more engaging and conversational? Suggestion that we should explicitly instruct students to prepare for performance and plan places in their speeches to change vocal inflection, introduce humor, etc. Additional suggestions – using critique of presentations (e.g. TED or Ignite talks) to draw attention to good/poor practices. Commentary that Lead Faculty and DGLs have no formal education/background in teaching and assessing oral communication (or teamwork). Can we suggest strategies for teaching specific oral communication skills? [See action steps below]

Several plenary teams design multiple opportunities for students to “pitch ideas” or practice on low risk assignments so that they can build skills in oral communication and become more comfortable. These practices are also used to support experience giving and responding to critical feedback and is a way to teach “listening.”

A suggestion was made to use rubrics during presentations that can then be shared with students as part of helping them develop oral communication skills. These rubric sheets can also be included as artifacts of learning in our assessment process.

Creating an atmosphere and an understanding of what we mean by “a good academic conversation” is a helpful foundation for oral communication. Additionally, providing frequent informal, formative, and ongoing assessment of students’ oral communication in class may not be captured in the assessment data, but supports the development of oral communication skills.

High grades on oral communication might suggest that the discussion group leaders need more experience norming to guide their expectations and their grading on the oral communication project.

Changes that the program and teams will be implementing to better support oral communication skill development:

- Oral Communication will be one of the featured topics in our faculty development series next fall.
- Building a practice of listening and reflecting into the discussion groups by adopting a practice of having students reflect back the name of the person who just spoke in class before them and re-articulating the student’s main point (listening and message).

- Continue to use opportunities to practice oral communication in class and collecting the assessments that they are already conducting (rubrics and notes).
- Lead faculty are gathering materials to support DGL's use of group activities to support learning.
- "Panel" discussions were cited by several teams as a strategy to either begin using or to continue using.
- Building in opportunities for students to self-evaluate their oral communication skills, with this reflection as a graded assignment. This could also include responding to recordings of individual or team presentations.
- More opportunities for norming expectations for oral communication amongst those teaching the course.
- Adding more oral communication assignments during the semester to increase students' performance on oral communication. One team will be using 1-2 minute videos, for example, asking students to reflect on their progress toward "becoming learners" – a reading many sections will be incorporating.
- Adopt a single student e-portfolio template to use across multiple courses in students undergraduate career.

Suggestion/Resources:

1. Faculty Development Sessions in the Fall, "Presentation Zen: What I Learned from Garr Reynolds" for DGs and Faculty about teaching oral communication in UF 100.
2. In Steph and Jen's class they show the Amy Cuddy TED talk (<https://youtu.be/Ks-Mh1QhMc>) in plenary and practice power poses. They also show oral communication tutorials from Rice University (<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~comcoach/>).
3. Vicki and Guy adopted *Presentation Zen* (<http://www.amazon.com/Presentation-Zen-Simple-Design-Delivery/dp/0321525655>) for their class and had them use it as a guide to create presentations (oral and visual).
4. Providing a rubric well in advance of a required presentation is a strategy used by most of our plenary teams. This strategy prepares students for the criteria by which they will be judged.
5. For assessment purposes, clearly separating out oral communication criteria will support our ability to better assess that criteria. The use of the Blackboard rubric tool may be helpful to many teams.
6. The First-Year Student template will be used next year in addition to a single assignment to submit e-portfolios at the end of the semester. Such consistency will support our efforts to collect artifacts that can be assessed across sections.