

State Council for Higher Education for Virginia
Assessment of Competencies
ORAL COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON
September 2022

Definition. The ability to communicate effective oral messages in a variety of settings, including public speaking, group discussion, and interpersonal communication; the ability to plan, organize, support, and deliver ideas and arguments, and utilize a variety of research techniques to synthesize information and support their messages.

Learning Outcomes. Oral communication proficiency was evaluated by measuring students' abilities in five speaking categories as expressed in a speech delivered in a First-Year Seminar (FSEM).

Delivery: The speaker spoke clearly and expressively, using appropriate articulation, pronunciation, volume, rate, and intonation.

Word Choice: The speaker demonstrated careful word choice appropriate to the audience and showed sensitivity in the use of language regarding gender, age, ethnicity, or sexual/affectional orientation.

Organization: The speaker presented ideas using an appropriate organizational structure that included an introduction, main points, transitions, and a conclusion.

Purpose: The speaker distinguished between different purposes and goals in communication (persuading, informing, etc.), and included a clear, specific, appropriate purpose for the speech.

Support: The speaker provided appropriate support material and developed the content of the message to enlighten the audience.

Standard(s) for Proficiency. Of three rating categories (i.e., *not proficient*, *proficient*, *strong*), at least 70% of students will receive an overall rating of *proficient* or *strong*. The overall rating is determined in the oral communication assessment by receiving a rating of *proficient* or *strong* in each of the five categories. The assessment provides a point of comparison to gauge the proficiencies of our first-year students in oral communication.

Description of Methodology Used to Gather Evidence of Proficiency.

Speeches given by students in Education, Political Science, and Psychological Sciences, were video recorded and then viewed by faculty evaluators to assess proficiency in the categories listed above. Evaluated presentations were individual speeches. A total of 75 speeches were evaluated. Speeches were viewed online by 5 faculty evaluators. Each speech was evaluated by at least 2 faculty members using the rubric below. Individual faculty evaluations were compared with each other and, in cases where faculty team members did not agree on an overall rating, the speech was evaluated by additional faculty until agreement was reached on the overall rating. It is important to note that faculty evaluators were not apprised of the 70% proficiency target that had been set for our students, nor were they apprised of whether the speech being evaluated was part of the pre- or post-test; thus, their sole concern was to rate each speech on its individual merits.

Oral Communication Assessment Methodology. The evaluation categories are the same as those used in the University assessments of oral communication. They were derived from those suggested by the National Communication Association, and were adapted by communication faculty and the Director of the Speaking Intensive Program. A speech rated as *not proficient* in even one category was deemed *not proficient* overall. If a speech was rated as *strong* in four categories, and *proficient* in the remaining category, the speech was deemed *strong* overall. Any rating pattern between these two end points yielded a rating of *proficient*.

Oral Communication Summary. Results of this assessment are presented in the tables below. The success rate of 93% meeting the oral communication standard of *proficient* or *strong* is above the target of 70%.

Results of Oral Communication Assessment

	Speeches rated <i>not proficient</i>	Speeches rated <i>proficient</i>	Speeches rated <i>strong</i>	Speeches meeting standard of <i>proficient</i> or <i>strong</i>
Number of speeches	5	63	7	70
Percent of total (30 speeches)	7%	83%	10%	93%

The “results by category” table looks at the number of *not proficient*, *proficient*, and *strong* ratings given in each of the 180 individual evaluator ratings. Our students performed best in the “Organization,” “Purpose,” and “Support” categories, with 30% or more of the students in the strong categories. However, our students did not perform as well in the “Delivery” category, although not proficient ratings were still low.

Results of Oral Communication Assessment by Category

	Delivery	Word Choice	Organization	Purpose	Support
Strong	14%	27%	32%	37%	30%
Proficient	82%	73%	65%	63%	63%
Not proficient	3%	0%	3%	1%	7%

Recommended changes: None needed at this time.

Report prepared by:

Debra Schleef

Institutional Analysis and Effectiveness

Data from Dr. Anand Rao – Assessment Project Director

Director of the Speaking Intensive Program and Professor of Communication

Oral Communication Rubric

Oral Communication Categories	Not Proficient	Proficient	Strong
Delivery: The speaker spoke clearly and expressively, using appropriate articulation, pronunciation, volume, rate, and intonation.			
Word Choice: The speaker demonstrated careful word choice appropriate to the audience and showed sensitivity in the use of language regarding gender, age, ethnicity, or sexual/affectional orientation.			
Organization: The speaker presented ideas using an appropriate organizational structure that included an introduction, main points, transitions, and a conclusion.			
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Support: The speaker provided appropriate support material and developed the content of the message to enlighten the audience.			
Oral Communication Subtotal			