



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TEXAS**  
ARLINGTON

**INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND REPORTING**

**ORAL COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT AT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON**

**2015 REPORT**

## Oral Communication Assessment at UTA

### Introduction

In fall of 2011, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) made revisions to the Texas Core Curriculum rules (THECB, 2013). These revisions redefined the Core Curriculum through eight foundational component areas (FCA) and six core objectives that includes: Critical Thinking, Communication, Empirical and Quantitative skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. These objectives are to be implemented within core curriculum coursework and assessed to determine the extent of student achievement. Oral Communication is part of the Communication Core Objective identified by THECB. The University of Texas at Arlington (UT Arlington) is implementing the assessment of the core objectives on a three-year cycle as seen in Table 1.

*Table 1.* Communication Core Objective Assessment Schedule

Foundational Component Area	Fall 2014	Spring 2015	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017
Communication	X					
Mathematics	X					
Life and Physical Sciences			X			
Language, Philosophy & Culture			X			
Creative Arts			X			
American History					X	
Government/Political Science					X	
Social and Behavioral Sciences					X	

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the assessment of Oral Communication within Communication courses taken by students from different majors. This assessment was conducted in the fall of 2014 at UT Arlington.

### *Participants*

Two hundred two students taking Communication courses participated in the assessment. The gender composition of the participants was 49% Male (n=98) and 51% Female (n=104). The racial and ethnic composition of the participants was 11% African American (n=23), 16% Asian (n=32), 36% White (n=73), 28% Hispanic (n=57), and 9% other (n=17), a representative sample. Eight of UT Arlington's ten colleges and schools were represented by the student sample (Table 2).

*Table 2. College/School Breakdown of Students*

<b>College/School</b>	<b>Number of Students (Percent)</b>
Architecture	1 (0.5%)
Business	98 (49%)
Education	0 (0%)
Engineering	1 (0.5%)
Liberal Arts	39 (19%)
Nursing and Health Innovation	8 (4%)
Science	30 (15%)
Social Work	7 (4%)
Urban and Public Affairs	0 (0%)
University College	18 (9%)

### *Procedure*

Students enrolled in the COMS 1301 course in the fall of 2014 were given a signature assignment which was a six to eight minute persuasive speech. For the assignment, students were asked to develop a persuasive argument in a topic of their choice. During their in-class speech, the instructor used an evaluation rubric to grade each student.

### *Assessment Instrument*

Communication instructors used a departmental evaluation rubric to grade student signature assignments in COMS 1301 classes. Further, the departmental rubric was aligned with the dimensions of the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubric for Oral Communication. Sixteen of departmental rubric criteria were analyzed for this assessment (Table 3). Each criterion was evaluated with a 3-point scale.

*Table 3.* Dimensions and criteria used in assessment

<b>AAC&amp;U Dimensions for Oral Communication</b>	<b>Departmental Criteria</b>
Introduction	Opener grabbed audience attention Introduction transition clear with all parts
Body	Key ideas explained effectively Main points supported with evidence/citations Speaker establishes clear need (problem) Speaker establishes clear satisfaction (solution)
Conclusion	Reviewed thesis and main points Provided memorable, creative closer
Organization	Clear internal transitions between main points
Language	Clear, concise, vivid and audience sensitive Topic choice is relevant and useful to the audience
Delivery	Vocally expressive, conversational style Avoided vocal fillers (like, uh, um)

Avoided talking to visual aid

Adequate eye contact

Expressed genuine interest in topic through  
delivery

## Results

A detailed count of students' scores is presented in Table 4. In appendices A and B are the breakdown of students' scores by gender and ethnicity. Below is a highlight of students' scores across the 16 criteria.

Students' scores were highest in the following criteria:

- (1) Clear, concise, vivid and audience sensitive. (Language Dimension)
- (2) Topic choice is relevant and useful to the audience. (Language Dimension)
- (3) Expressed genuine interest in topic through delivery (Delivery Dimension)

Students' scores were lowest in the following criteria:

- (1) Key ideas explained effectively. (Body Dimension)
- (2) Speaker establishes clear satisfaction (solution). (Body Dimension)

*Table 4. Overall Results of Oral Communication Assessment*

AAC&U Dimensions for Oral Communication	Departmental Criteria	Score Frequency (Percent)		
		1	2	3
Introduction	Opener grabbed audience attention	2 (1%)	47 (23%)	153 (76%)
	Introduction transition clear with all parts	5 (3%)	39 (19%)	158 (78%)

Body	Key ideas explained effectively	1 (0%)	133 (66%)	68 (34%)
	Main points supported with evidence/citations	9 (4%)	89 (44%)	104 (42%)
	Speaker establishes clear need (problem)	16 (8%)	93 (46%)	93 (46%)
	Speaker establishes clear satisfaction (solution)	20 (10%)	108 (53%)	74 (37%)
Conclusion	Reviewed thesis and main points	3 (2%)	124 (61%)	75 (37%)
	Provided memorable, creative closer	2 (1%)	89 (44%)	111 (55%)
Organization	Clear internal transitions between main points	2 (1%)	28 (14%)	172 (85%)
Language	Clear, concise, vivid and audience sensitive	0 (0%)	6 (3%)	196 (97%)
	Topic choice is relevant and useful to the audience	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	201 (100%)
	Vocally expressive, conversational style	2 (1%)	26 (13%)	174 (86%)
Delivery	Avoided vocal fillers (like, uh, um)	2 (1%)	110 (54%)	90 (45%)
	Avoided talking to visual aid	2 (1%)	75 (37%)	125 (62%)
	Adequate eye contact	0 (0%)	27 (13%)	175 (87%)
	Expressed genuine interest in topic through delivery	0 (0%)	11 (5%)	191 (95%)

### *Summary*

The current assessment using a departmental AAC&U aligned rubric revealed students enrolled in COMS 1301 scored well in the areas of Introduction, Organization, Language, and delivery.

## References

Association of American Colleges and Universities (2015, June 18). *Oral Communication*