



## General Education Assessment of Oral Communication (Fall 2017)

### History of the Assessment Program

Assessment of student learning outcomes is a national expectation in higher education, and the expectation calls for increased accountability. Section 2.7.3 of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' (SACS) accreditation standards requires in each undergraduate program the successful completion of a general education component that:

- 1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree,
- 2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and
- 3) is based on a coherent rationale.

Section 3.5.1 of the SACS accreditation standards also requires that “the institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.”

Based on these standards, in 2005, the Provost charged the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC) with developing and implementing an assessment program. To accomplish this directive, the committee developed and modified rubrics to measure student performance in the competencies stated in the preamble of the General Education Plan: “The General Education Program at the University of Louisville fosters active learning by asking students to:

- 1) think critically,
- 2) to communicate effectively, and
- 3) understand and appreciate cultural diversity.”

The GECC initiated the first General Education Assessment in fall of 2005. The university adopted LiveText© as the platform for electronic assessment of General Education artifacts in the fall of 2010. The process, results, and findings from each assessment iteration are presented to the GECC to drive continuous improvement of the university’s general education program.

### Assessment Administration

The General Education Program at the University of Louisville advances three over-arching competencies: critical thinking, effective communication, and cultural diversity. In addition, the university has defined additional learning outcomes for the following content areas: Arts and Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Oral Communication, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Written Communication, and the Cultural Diversity competency area. The University of Louisville Student Learning Outcomes are closely aligned with the Statewide General Education Student Learning Outcomes.

The Fall 2017 assessment was focused on courses in the Oral Communication content area. A crosswalk of the outcomes and assessment measures for Oral Communication is provided in

Appendix A to demonstrate alignment between the assessment measures, the UofL content area outcomes, and the statewide content area outcomes.

### **University of Louisville Oral Communication Learning Outcomes**

Oral Communication is the ability to convey ideas, emotions, and information through speech. Students who satisfy this requirement will demonstrate that they are able to do all of the following:

1. Speak publicly, in both formal and informal contexts, demonstrating skills such as appropriate selection of topic and materials, clear organization, effective presentation, and the ability to adapt to audience, setting, and occasion;
2. Participate effectively in discussion;
3. Analyze and critique the oral communication of oneself and others.

### **Statewide Written and Oral Communication Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Write clear and effective prose in several forms, using conventions appropriate to audience (including academic audiences), purpose, and genre.
2. Listen and speak competently in a variety of communication contexts, which may include public, interpersonal, and/or small-group settings.
3. Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare speeches and written texts.
4. Identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view; and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.
5. Plan, organize, revise, practice, edit, and proofread to improve the development and clarity of ideas.

### **Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) Oral Communication VALUE Rubric**

The measures for the Oral Communication VALUE Rubric are as follows (*the explanations provided for each measure are extracted from the rubric criteria*):

- (OC1) Organization – Organizational pattern (introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is observable within the presentation
- (OC2) Language – Language choices support the effectiveness of the presentation and are appropriate to the audience
- (OC3) Delivery – Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness)
- (OC4) Supporting Material – Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make reference to information or analysis that supports the presentation
- (OC5) Central Message – Central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported)

The AAC&U VALUE Rubrics use a four-point scale, with “*Capstone (4)*” indicating the highest level of performance, then “*Milestone (3)*”, “*Milestone (2)*”, and “*Benchmark (1)*” indicating the lowest level of performance. The university also included a “not applicable” rating for instances when the quality of the speech video may have inhibited the assessor's ability to adequately determine a rating.

### **Assessment Process**

The Oral Communication (OC) content area was first assessed in spring 2015. To remain consistent with other content area assessments, the Office of General Education collected written work from OC courses primarily in the form of student speech reflection papers. It was determined through this assessment that it would be more appropriate for the GECC to collect and analyze actual student speeches for the next OC assessment, in alignment with speech as the primary evidence of course content and the OC student learning outcomes. For the fall 2017 assessment of Oral Communication, the Office of General Education conducted a pilot assessment focused on developing a process for capturing and scoring student speeches.

The collection of student speeches presented new technical challenges in regards to recording, storing, collecting, and evaluating this type of media. For that reason, the Office of General Education, in coordination with the GECC's Assessment Subcommittee, determined it appropriate to coordinate directly with the Department of Communication and the Director of General Studies in the department to identify a small sample of student work and develop a streamlined approach to capturing and reviewing speeches. The Department of Communication offers the majority of OC courses; however, Political Science and Women's and Gender Studies departments do as well. Future assessments will include all courses in the OC content area.

Planning for this assessment began in fall 2016 to allow adequate time to identify and test technology tools, and to communicate with faculty. Through collaboration with the Director of General Studies and faculty teaching online OC courses in the Department of Communication, the university's Panopto system was identified as a mechanism for capturing student speeches. The university adopted the Panopto system in spring 2017, and it is accessible through the university's Blackboard course management system.

In contrast to other content area assessments, the Office of General Education requested that students upload their speeches directly to Panopto instead of asking faculty to collect speeches. Students taking Communication general education courses are instructed to record their final (individual) speech for reflection purposes. It was determined that obtaining these speeches would be the most efficient way to collect a sample of student speeches. The Office of General Education sent notifications with instructions for uploading their speeches to a small sample of students.

Prior to the start of the fall semester, the Director of General Education Assessment attended the Department of Communication General Education faculty retreat. During this meeting, the proposed assessment process and assessment instrument were shared. Faculty were asked to encourage their students to upload their speeches and faculty all signed a waiver granting permission for the Office of General Education to access their courses in Blackboard to retrieve

student speech videos. This pilot project was completely voluntary and no incentives were provided to students for uploading their speeches.

The sampling strategy for the OC assessment was a convenience sample. The instructors of OC courses in the Department of Communication each teach multiple sections. To minimize the potential burden on faculty in the event that technological issues arise, it was determined that the Office of General Education would only request the speeches be uploaded for one section from each course instructor. All students in each of the identified sections were requested to upload their speeches. It was voluntary for students to upload their speeches, with the exception of two identified distance education course sections in which students were already required to upload their speeches. All speeches that were submitted by students were used in the assessment.

Students were responsible for recording their own speeches with their preferred device (e.g., mobile phone, computer, etc.). After completion of their speech, they could then upload their speech to Panopto using the appropriate instructions provided by the Office of General Education. Panopto generates a link that allows users to access the video directly. Once students uploaded their speeches, the Office of General Education recorded the links and ensured that the appropriate access was granted to allow the assigned assessors to review the speeches. In preparation for the assessment day, the video links were entered into the LiveText assessment management system. A panel of 18 faculty (tenured and tenure-track, term faculty, and adjunct faculty) and graduate teaching assistants were able to access the links, view the speeches, and complete the assigned assessment rubric. Assessors applied the AAC&U Oral Communication VALUE Rubric to all student speeches and each speech was evaluated by three assessors.

Prior to the assessment reading, assessors were brought together for a four-hour training session coordinated by the Office of General Education. The assessors were first presented with the background and history of the General Education Assessment, the assessment rubric, and the general process for the pilot assessment. During the training, faculty engaged in dissection and discussion of rubric criteria, and assessors individually reviewed and scored benchmark sample assignments. Benchmarks were selected assignments that represented a wide range of content and skill development in order to give assessors a baseline for measuring learning expectations and evaluating student performance (Herman, Osmundson, & Dietel, 2010). Assessors then engaged in discussion about the benchmark assessment scores to share their rationales for why particular scores were selected. When discussing the scores that they selected, readers were asked to highlight the rubric language that helped them to determine the score to ensure that assessors were basing their ratings only on the rubric criteria. To highlight the reliability of the training scoring, the results from scoring benchmark samples for the AAC&U Oral Communication VALUE Rubric are provided in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1

*Results of Benchmark Sample 1 – Oral Communication VALUE Rubric*

<b>Rubric Measures</b>	<b><u>Capstone (4)</u></b>	<b><u>Milestone (3)</u></b>	<b><u>Milestone (2)</u></b>	<b><u>Benchmark (1)</u></b>
<b>Organization</b>	22.2%	44.4%	27.8%	5.6%
<b>Language</b>	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0
<b>Delivery</b>	5.9%	47.1%	35.3%	11.8%
<b>Supporting Material</b>	5.9%	70.6%	11.8%	11.8%
<b>Central Message</b>	0	22.2%	66.7%	11.1%

*Results of Benchmark Sample 2 – Oral Communication VALUE Rubric*

<b>Rubric Measures</b>	<b><u>Capstone (4)</u></b>	<b><u>Milestone (3)</u></b>	<b><u>Milestone (2)</u></b>	<b><u>Benchmark (1)</u></b>
<b>Organization</b>	12.5%	68.8%	18.8%	0
<b>Language</b>	6.3%	68.8%	25.0%	0
<b>Delivery</b>	17.6%	70.6%	11.8%	0
<b>Supporting Material</b>	35.3%	52.9%	5.9%	5.9%
<b>Central Message</b>	25.0%	52.9%	11.8%	5.9%

*Results of Benchmark Sample 3 – Oral Communication VALUE Rubric*

<b>Rubric Measures</b>	<b><u>Capstone (4)</u></b>	<b><u>Milestone (3)</u></b>	<b><u>Milestone (2)</u></b>	<b><u>Benchmark (1)</u></b>
<b>Organization</b>	35.3%	58.8%	5.9%	0
<b>Language</b>	11.8%	58.8%	29.4%	0
<b>Delivery</b>	29.4%	58.8%	11.8%	0
<b>Supporting Material</b>	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%	0
<b>Central Message</b>	29.4%	52.9%	11.8%	5.9%

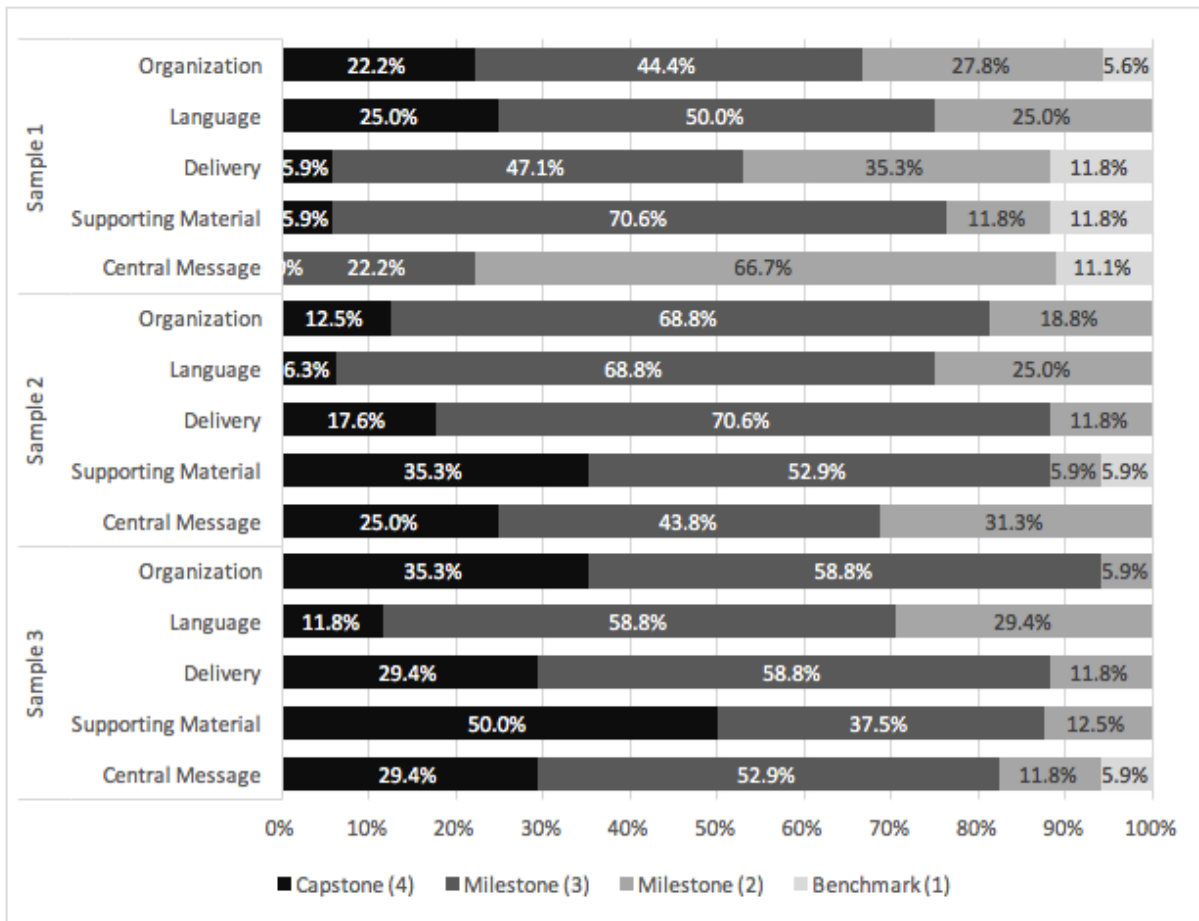


Figure 1. Results of Benchmark Sample Assessments for Oral Communication

At the start of the assessment reading day, each faculty assessor was assigned a username and password for one of three LiveText© accounts and a list of courses and sections to assess. Three faculty readers assessed each artifact so that scores could be compared across assessors for reliability purposes.

### Data Collection Overview

The enrollment for Oral Communication General Education courses in Fall 2017 was approximately 1315 students after the drop/add deadline. The Office of General Education Assessment requested artifacts from a small sample of the population and received 87 student speech videos that were eligible for review. One video was thrown out on assessment day due to volume quality that prevented assessors from being able to review the video resulting in a sample of 86 speeches for the pilot assessment.

In addition to collecting student speeches, the Office of General Education also collected the course syllabi for all OC general education courses to review the OC student learning outcomes and corresponding methods of assessment. Prior to the start of the semester, all faculty teaching General Education courses notified that their syllabi should explicitly list General Education Learning Outcomes and the manner in which the outcomes will be assessed.

## Summary of Assessment Data

For the assessment of Oral Communication outcomes, 86 student speech videos were assessed by faculty and graduate teaching assistants from the College of Arts & Sciences, College of Education and Human Development, Kent School of Social Work, and the Speed School of Engineering, using the AAC&U Oral Communication VALUE Rubric. A summary of results from the OC assessment is provided in Table 2 and Figure 2.

No targets were set for this pilot assessment; however, a calculation of the percentage of artifacts scored at a "Capstone (4)" or "Milestone (3)" was calculated. This is consistent with the current assessment practice of using the highest two performance levels as targets in the assessment of all other general education content areas and rubric measures. For the pilot assessment using the AAC&U Oral Communication VALUE Rubric, 58.2% of speeches were scored at "4" or "3" for *Organization*, 51.2% for *Language*, 42.9% for *Delivery*, 64.3% for *Supporting Material*, and 70.9% for *Central Message*.

Table 2

### *Summary Results for Oral Communication Assessment*

#### *Number of Artifacts Scored at Each Rubric Level*

	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Delivery</b>	<b>Supporting Material</b>	<b>Central Message</b>
Capstone (4)	26	10	14	45	47
Milestone (3)	123	122	94	121	136
Milestone (2)	92	118	111	73	62
Benchmark (1)	15	8	33	19	13
Not Applicable	2	0	6	0	0

#### *Percentage of Artifacts Scored at Each Rubric Level*

	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Delivery</b>	<b>Supporting Material</b>	<b>Central Message</b>
Capstone (4)	10.2%	3.9%	5.6%	17.4%	18.2%
Milestone (3)	48.0%	47.3%	37.3%	46.9%	52.7%
Milestone (2)	35.9%	45.7%	44.0%	28.3%	24.0%
Benchmark (1)	5.9%	3.1%	13.1%	7.4%	5.0%
<b>% Scored at 4 &amp; 3</b>	<b>58.2%</b>	<b>51.2%</b>	<b>42.9%</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	<b>70.9%</b>

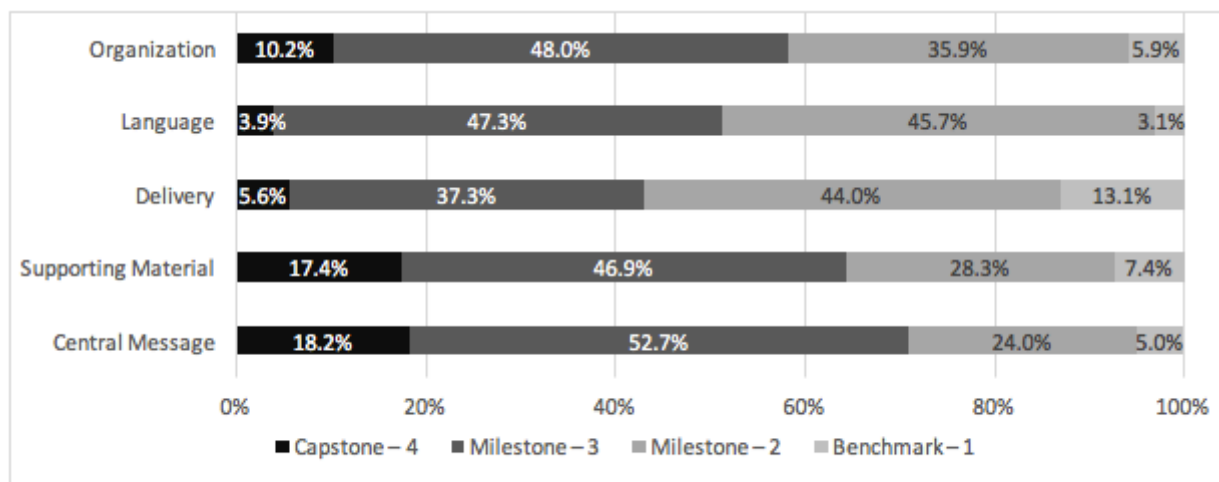


Figure 2. Summary Results for Oral Communication Assessment

The mean, median, and mode for each rubric measure is provided in Table 3. The mode was at “Milestone (3)” for *Organization*, *Language*, *Supporting Material*, and *Central Message*. The Mode was at “Milestone (2)” for *Delivery*.

Table 3

Mean and Mode by Rubric for Oral Communication Assessment

	Organization	Language	Delivery	Supporting Material	Central Message
Mean	2.63	2.52	2.35	2.74	2.84
Median	3	3	2	3	3
<b>Mode</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

### Inter-rater Reliability

Three separate readers assessed each student artifact. Table 4 displays the mean score for the three separate readings of all artifacts.

Table 4

Inter-rater Summary for Oral Communication Assessment

	Assessor 1	Assessor 2	Assessor 3	Standard Deviation
Organization	2.73	2.62	2.53	.10
Language	2.47	2.62	2.48	.08
Delivery	2.43	2.46	2.17	.16
Supporting Material	2.84	2.65	2.74	.09
Central Message	3.03	2.66	2.83	.19



In addition to the descriptive statistics, Table 5 provides multiple measures of inter-rater reliability. The percentage agreement value was calculated to determine the percentage of artifacts for which all three assessors scored at the either the same or within one performance level. Values for *Total Agreement* provided in Table 5 represent the percentage of artifacts for which all three assessors selected the same score (e.g., Assessors 1, 2, and 3 all selected 3). *Agreement (within 1 level)* represents the percentage of artifacts for which all three assessors scored the artifact at the same performance level or within one level (e.g., Assessor 1 selected a score of 3, Assessor 2 selected a score of 2, and Assessor 3 also selected a score of 2).

In addition to percentage agreement, a one-way, average-measures intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated to assess inter-rater reliability. ICC coefficients between .75 and 1.00 are considered excellent, .60 to .74 considered good, .40 to .59 fair, and below .4 is considered poor (Cicchetti, 1994). Based upon these criteria, inter-rater reliability was acceptable for all rubric measures, except for *Central Message*.

Table 5

*Inter-rater Reliability for Oral Communication Assessment*

<b>Competency Measure</b>	<b>Total Agreement</b>	<b>Agreement (within 1 level)</b>	<b>ICC</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>
Organization	19.8%	77.9%	.48	(.26-.65)
Language	27.9%	94.2%	.50	(.28-.66)
Delivery	18.6%	83.7%	.65	(.50-.77)
Supporting Material	10.5%	74.4%	.44	(.20-.62)
Central Message	18.6%	75.6%	.37	(.10-.57)

**Summary and Plan for Improvement**

The pilot assessment successfully established a new process for the assessment of student speeches. The Panopto and LiveText systems worked smoothly to provide a platform for uploading, storing, and accessing speeches and then scoring the speeches. There were some concerns among reviewers about the quality of the video recordings, such as volume quality, position of the speaker in the camera frame, and ability to view both the viewer and supporting materials. The assessors suggested providing faculty with tripods for students to use when recording their speeches going forward and the Department of Communication confirmed they already have access to tripods and can make those available to students for future assessments.

In addition, this pilot assessment gathered a small convenience sample. For future assessments, a true random sample will be collected. The Department of Communication plans to ask all students to upload their final individual speech as part of the assignment requirement and then the Office of General Education will be able to select a random sample from across all sections. The Office of General Education will need to coordinate with Political Science and Women’s and Gender Studies to include speeches from these courses in the random sample.

## **Assessment Instrumentation**

The assessors were asked to provide feedback on the Oral Communication VALUE Rubric after completion of the assessment and all felt it was an appropriate and well-constructed rubric for the purpose of evaluating speeches. During the assessment training day, a clarification was required for what constituted “appropriate reference to information or analysis” in the *Supporting Material* measure. Some assessors originally interpreted this to mean research-based evidence, while others did not. The Department of Communication clarified that research-based evidence may not have been an expectation for the speeches in all courses. Research-based evidence is also not currently part of the General Education Learning Outcomes. As a result, the assessors determined during the training not to score whether sources were appropriate based on the type of evidence used, but more on whether or not the source provided relevant information. The incorporation of research-based evidence will be revisited upon transition to the Cardinal Core Program and associated student learning outcomes. Inter-rater reliability was within a good range for the first assessment using this new rubric and considering a small sample. Future assessments will better determine whether or not supplemental training on the rubrics is needed to ensure greater reliability.

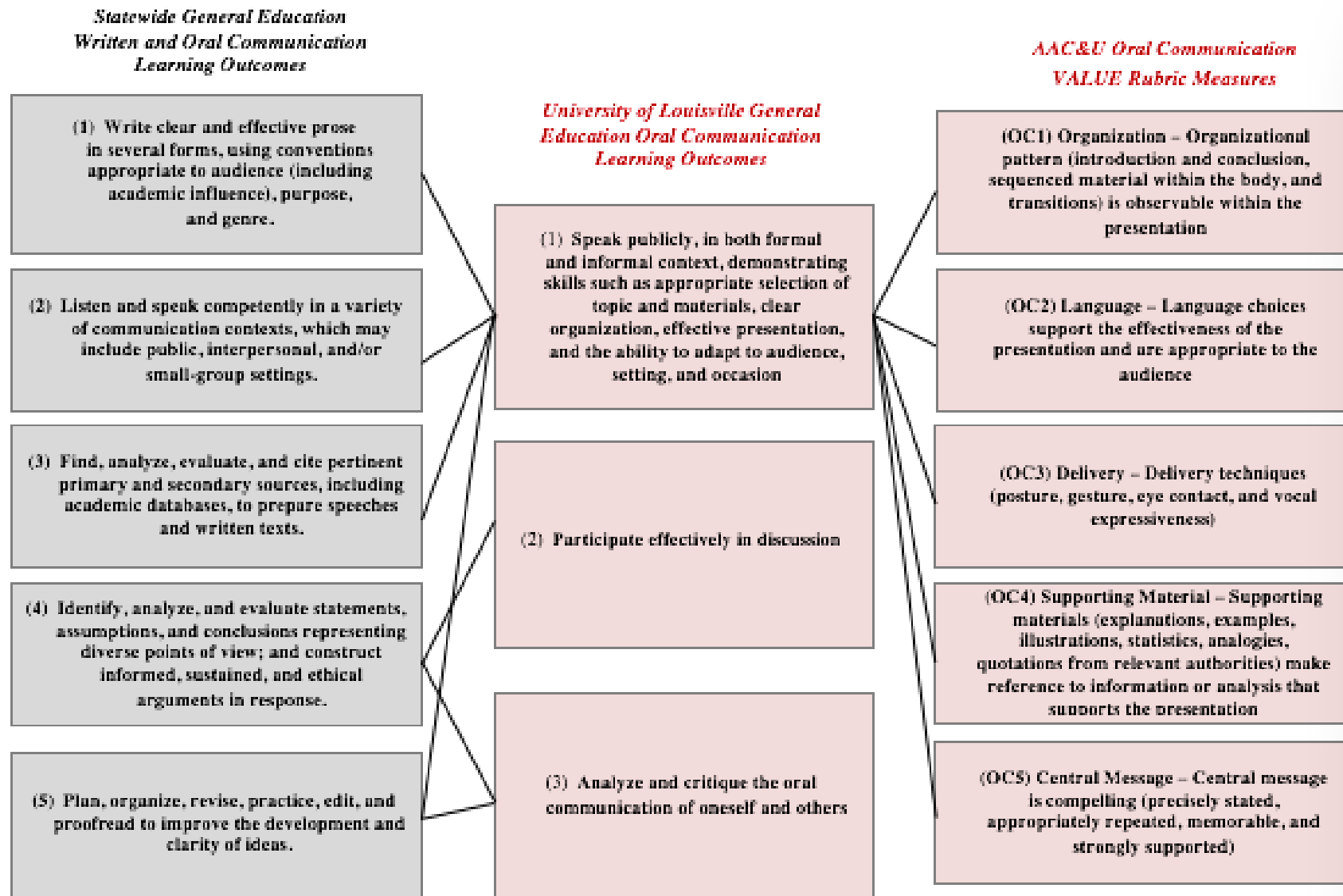
## **Measures and Targets**

There were no targets set for the pilot assessment of Oral Communication. The scores presented in Table 2 will serve as a baseline for future assessments. The Office of General Education will present the findings from the assessment to the faculty in Oral Communication to support continuous improvement of the curriculum.

## References

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## Appendix A: Outcomes and Assessment Measures Crosswalk



## **Appendix B**

### General Education Oral Communication Syllabus Review (Fall 2017)

#### **History of the Syllabus Review**

In 2012, the General Education Syllabus Review Project was initiated to evaluate the congruence of general education course syllabi with the approved content-specific general education student learning outcomes. Specifically, it was designed to determine: (a) if the student learning outcomes stated in each course syllabus are congruent with the approved content-specific general education learning outcomes, and (b) if corresponding assessment methods are stated that support the approved content-specific general education learning outcomes.

In the spring of 2015, the GECC Assessment Subcommittee proposed that the Syllabus Review Project be incorporated into the existing General Education Assessment Project. Therefore, the syllabi from each content area will be collected and reviewed by the Office of General Education Assessment in alignment with the corresponding assessment cycle.

This report summarizes the review process and the results of the syllabi review for the Oral Communication content area.

#### **Review Process**

The Provost requests that all faculty load their syllabi to Blackboard® each semester. These syllabi are then available through the university's course catalog system. For the purpose of this review, the Office of General Education Assessment collected all Oral Communication syllabi that were loaded to Blackboard in Fall 2017.

The review of syllabi sought to answer two questions:

- 1) Does the syllabus contain the content specific general education learning outcomes approved for the course?
- 2) Are assessment methods stated that support the content-specific general education learning outcomes approved for the course?

An evaluation of the congruence between the listed assessment methods with the content specific approved general education learning outcomes was not conducted when a reviewer determined that the syllabus does not contain a statement of the approved content specific general education learning outcomes.

#### ***Oral Communication***

The syllabus review included syllabi from 57 of the 58 Oral Communication General Education course sections offered in the Fall of 2017 resulting in a 98.3% sample. Appendix Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of General Education of syllabi available, the number of

syllabi with the outcomes stated, and the number of syllabi that also included the assessment methods.

Table 1.

*Oral Communication Sample*

	<u>Syllabi Available</u>	<u>Outcomes Listed in Syllabus</u>	<u>Assessment Method</u>
<b>OC Courses</b>	<b>57, (98.3%)</b>	<b>52, (91.2%)</b>	<b>40, (76.9%)</b>

The review of the 57 General Education Oral Communication syllabi identified 52 syllabi (91.2%) containing the content-specific general education learning outcomes approved for the course. Further review of the 52 syllabi containing the General Education Outcomes revealed that 40 syllabi (76.9%) also listed the assessment methods for the General Education Outcomes.