Cardinal Core Assessment of Oral Communication
(Academic Year 2024-25)

Cardinal Core Program

The Cardinal Core program at the University of Louisville prepares students to do the advanced work needed for their baccalaureate degrees and prepares them to contribute to society throughout their lives through their professional work and civic engagement. The program emphasizes the development of key intellectual skills relevant to any career path: critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, effective communication, and the understanding of historical, social, and cultural diversity. Students will develop these intellectual skills in the following content areas of Arts and Humanities, Historical Perspectives, Oral Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Natural Sciences, Written Communication, and the competency area of Diversity in the United States and Globally. Upon completion of the program, students will be prepared to analyze complex problems and evaluate possible courses of action in an environment characterized by diversity and the need for sustainable solutions.

Assessment Administration

The assessment of student learning outcomes is a national expectation in higher education. Section 8.2.b of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges' (SACSCOC) accreditation standards requires that the institution identify student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies in its undergraduate degree programs, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results. Further, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) states that "All Kentucky public universities and KCTCS colleges are expected to assess, in accordance with SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation and based upon nationally accepted standards, the student learning outcomes associated with their general education programs, indicate a relationship to the faculty-generated Statewide General Education Student Learning Outcomes, and provide evidence of ongoing assessment that ensures comparability for transfer purposes on a three-year cycle."

The Cardinal Core Curriculum Committee (CCCC) is charged with continued oversight of the assessment of student learning outcomes across the Cardinal Core curriculum to support the continuous improvement of the Cardinal Core program in alignment with SACSCOC and CPE requirements. The assessment operates on a three-year cycle, in which samples of student work are collected from at least two content areas each academic year and assessed by a panel of trained faculty. In 2024-25, the program's overarching competency for effective (oral) communication was assessed in the Oral Communication (OC) content area. The CCCC has designated the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) Oral Communication VALUE Rubric as the instrument to measure this competency.

The University of Louisville Outcomes, Kentucky Statewide Outcomes, and the rubric measures used to assess courses in the Oral Communication (OC) content area are provided below.

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. Demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills to understand the intricate link between audience, speaker, and occasion.
3. Evaluate and synthesize materials from diverse sources and integrate multiple perspectives into oral presentations.
4. Analyze and critique the oral communication of oneself and others.
5. Listen effectively, using critical and reflective thinking when responding to communication events.

Statewide Written & 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.

AAC&U VALUE Rubric Measures

Oral Communication VALUE Rubric

(OC1) – Organization
(OC2) – Language
(OC3) – Delivery
(OC4) – Supporting Material
(OC5) – Central Message

The AAC&U VALUE Rubrics use four scoring categories, with *4* indicating performance of the measure as "capstone" level, *3* indicating performance at "milestone," *2* indicating "milestone," and *1* indicating performance at "benchmark." In addition, a score of zero can be assigned to any work that does not meet the benchmark level performance. The University of Louisville further disaggregates the zero option into a "not applicable" rating that can be selected for assignments

that did not provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate the criterion within the rubric measure, as opposed to the student simply did not demonstrate the rubric criteria.

Assessment Process

For the Fall 2024 assessment of student work from the Oral Communication (OC) content area, the Cardinal Core Office collaborated with the Director of Oral Communication courses in the Communication department, as well as faculty from Political Sciences (POLS), Theatre Arts (TA), Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGST), and the Quality Leadership University (QLU) in Panama regarding the details of the upcoming assessment to ensure faculty participation and appropriate sampling. The Director of OC courses from the Communication department granted the Cardinal Core Office direct access to the electronic system the department uses for capturing and reviewing student speeches to pull persuasive speeches for students randomly selected for assessment. The Cardinal Core office worked directly with faculty from POLS, TA, WGST, and QLU to collect speech videos through their preferred method.

After the withdraw deadline for the semester passed, the Cardinal Core Office retrieved the class rosters for all OC Cardinal Core courses from the Office of the Registrar and selected a stratified random sample, to ensure that the sample included students from all departments and courses offering OC courses in Fall 2024. Speeches were collected for those students identified in the sample. Speech recordings were collected and stored on Microsoft Teams, so that the Cardinal Core Office could grant access for assessors to view the speech videos. A panel of faculty (tenured and tenure-track faculty, term faculty, and adjunct faculty) assessed student artifacts. The AAC&U Oral Communication VALUE Rubric was applied to all student artifacts through the LiveText© electronic assessment tool.

Prior to the assessment reading, assessors completed mandatory training/rubric norming. Training materials were developed in collaboration with the CCCC Assessment Subcommittee and based upon UofL's long-standing general education assessment training practices, as well as AAC&U VALUE Institute training procedures. All participants were required to complete an asynchronous training module, consisting of an overview of the assessment process and holistic assessment practices, a dissection of the rubric, and scoring of benchmark sample assignments. Benchmarks were assignments selected to represent a wide range of content and skill development in order to give the assessors a baseline for measuring expectations of learning and evaluating student performance (Herman, Osmundson, & Dietel, 2010). Assessors were given a week to complete the training module in Blackboard and submit their scores for all benchmark samples. The results of the benchmark scoring were compiled, presented, and discussed during a collaborative meeting. Competency areas (rubric rows) with disagreement among reviewers were discussed in the findings shared with reviewers to clarify intended applications of the rubrics. The results from scoring benchmark samples are provided in Appendix A.

After completion of the assessment training/rubric norming, each assessor was assigned a username and password for one of three LiveText© accounts and a list of courses and sections to assess. Three readers assessed each artifact so that scores could be compared across assessors for reliability purposes. Assessors were given a week to complete all assessments.

Data Collection Overview

The enrollment for Oral Communication (OC) Cardinal Core courses in Fall 2024 was approximately 1321 students at the time the sample for the assessment was selected. The Cardinal Core Office collected a stratified random sample of 252 student work samples.

Summary of Assessment Data

For the assessment of Oral Communication (OC) outcomes, 252 student artifacts were assessed by faculty using the AAC&U Oral Communication VALUE Rubric.

Table 1 provides the percentage of work samples scored at each rubric level for the Oral Communication VALUE Rubric. The percentage of work samples scored as "not applicable" in 2020-21 and 2024-25, as well as a calculation of the percentage of students who scored at a *3 or 4 (after any not applicable ratings were removed)* from both 2020-21 and 2024-25 assessments is also included to provide a comparison of student performance.

Table 1

Percentage of Artifacts Scored at Each Rubric Level for Oral Communication (Three Reviews)

	OC1	OC2	OC3	OC4	OC5
Capstone (4)	20.6%	11.8%	12.6%	16.1%	23.3%
Milestone (3)	43.4%	45.6%	34.0%	33.6%	51.1%
Milestone (2)	29.8%	39.6%	38.6%	34.5%	21.3%
Benchmark (1)	5.8%	2.6%	12.6%	14.2%	3.8%
(0)	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.8%	0.1%
Not Applicable (NA) (2024-25)	*0.4%*	*0.4%*	*1.6%*	*0.8%*	*0.4%*
Not Applicable (NA) (2021-22)	*6.6%*	*5.3%*	*2.9%*	*8.2%*	*6.4%*
*% Scored at 4 & 3 (2024-25)	**64.3%**	**57.6%**	**47.3%**	**50.1%**	**74.6%**
*% Scored at 4 & 3 (2021-22)	**51.1%**	**50.6%**	**41.3%**	**47.6%**	**68.5%**

*Not Applicable scores were removed for calculating the % of students scoring at 4 or 3.
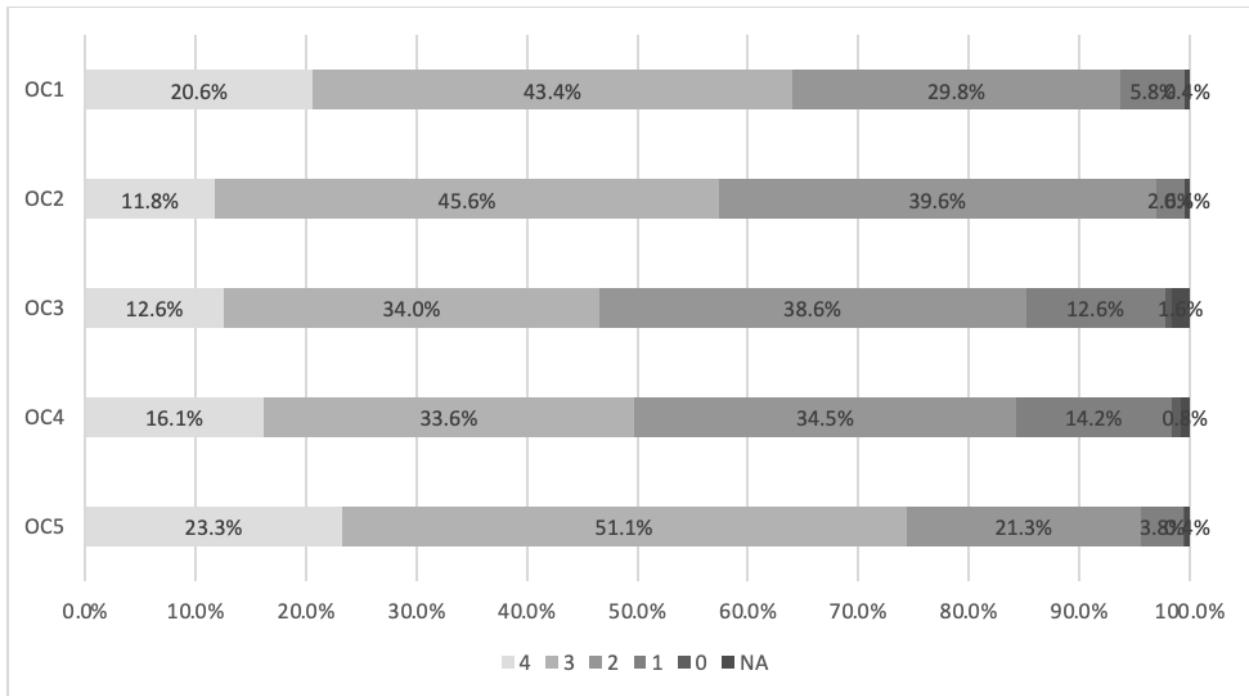
Figure 1. Percentage of Artifacts Scored at Each Rubric Level for Oral Communication

In alignment with AAC&U VALUE Institute practices, scores for each individual work sample were calculated based upon scores assigned by three separate reviewers. The scores from all three reviewers were averaged and rounded to determine individual work sample scores for each rubric row.

Table 2

Percentage of Artifacts Scored at Each Rubric Level for Oral Communication (Scores Averaged)

	OC1	OC2	OC3	OC4	OC5
Capstone (4)	12.7%	6.0%	5.6%	8.7%	17.9%
Milestone (3)	54.0%	52.8%	40.1%	43.3%	61.1%
Milestone (2)	32.1%	40.5%	46.4%	40.1%	19.0%
Benchmark (1)	1.2%	0.8%	7.1%	7.1%	1.6%
0	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.4%
% Scored at 4 or 3	66.7%	58.7%	45.6%	52.0%	79.0%

The mode for the individual work sample scores is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Mode of Individual Work Sample Scores

	Mode
OC1 – Organization	3
OC2 – Language	3
OC3 – Delivery	2
OC4 – Supporting Material	3
OC5 – Central Message	3

Inter-rater Reliability

Three separate faculty 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 VALUE Rubric Measures

	Assessor 1	Assessor 2	Assessor 3	Standard Deviation
OC1	2.70	2.88	2.76	0.10
OC2	2.63	2.83	2.52	0.16
OC3	2.21	2.69	2.36	0.25
OC4	2.38	2.65	2.43	0.14
OC5	2.90	3.03	2.85	0.09

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 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*). If the assessor assigned "not applicable" for the artifact that was treated as a 0 for the inter-rater reliability analysis since a *0* and "not requested" would both indicate the reviewer did not see the student demonstrate any component of the rubric measure.

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).

Table 5

Inter-rater Reliability for Oral Communication VALUE Rubric Measure

Competency Measure	Total Agreement	Agreement (within 1 level)	ICC	95% Confidence Interval
OC1	18.7%	72.6%	.54	.43-.63
OC2	23.8%	82.9%	.50	.39-.60
OC3	13.5%	68.3%	.55	.44-.64
OC4	12.7%	66.7%	.60	.51-.68
OC5	22.6%	82.1%	.58	.49-.67

Distance Education Courses

For further understanding of student performance we sought to determine if there were any significant differences between student performance between face-to-face, distance education, or dual-credit/Panama courses, using the average of student overall scores for each rubric measure.

A multivariate test (MANOVA) revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in performance on rubric measures based on mode of delivery, [$F(10, 486)= 3.66$, $p <.05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .865$]. To determine how the results for these measures differ by group the tests of between subjects revealed statistically significant differences for oral communication measures OC1, OC4, and OC5. Post-hoc analysis revealed samples from distance education courses scored significantly higher than both face-to-face and dual-credit/Panama courses on OC1 ($p<.05$) and OC4 ($p<.05$), distance education courses were significantly higher than face-to-face courses on OC2 ($p<.05$), and distance education courses were significantly higher than dual-credit/Panama courses on OC5 ($p<.05$).

Table 6

Mean for University of Louisville Cardinal Core Rubrics by Course Delivery Mode

	Face-to-Face Courses	Distance Education Courses	Dual-Credit/ Panama
OC1*	*2.69	*3.06	*2.64
OC2*	*2.55	*2.87	2.64
OC3	2.40	2.49	2.46
OC4*	*2.45	*2.84	*2.09
OC5*	2.88	*3.16	*2.82

Syllabus Review

The Cardinal Core Curriculum Committee (CCCC) requests that all Cardinal Core syllabi list the content area learning outcomes and corresponding methods of assessment in an effort to ensure intentionality and transparency of learning outcomes. The Cardinal Core Office retrieved the

syllabi posted to the university's Blackboard system for OC courses taught in Fall 2024 as part of the OC Assessment seeking to determine if (1) syllabi contain the specific Cardinal Core learning outcomes approved for the course and (2) if they corresponding methods of assessment for each outcome are also provided.

The syllabus review included syllabi from 71 OC Cardinal Core course sections offered in the Fall of 2024. The review of 71 Cardinal Core syllabi identified 64 syllabi (90.1%) containing the OC Cardinal Core learning outcomes approved for the course. Further review of the 71 syllabi revealed that 57 syllabi (80.3%) also listed the assessment methods for the Cardinal Core outcomes.

Beyond course syllabi posted to Blackboard, the Communication Department also included a general syllabus for COMM 111, 112, and 115 courses in the Macmillan Achieve system used for uploading and reviewing speech videos. The general syllabus included the content area learning outcomes and corresponding methods of assessment.

The Cardinal Core Curriculum Committee (CCCC) has continued to emphasize the importance of incorporating the Cardinal Core learning outcomes into course syllabi. Integration of the Cardinal Core outcomes into the syllabus is one indication to the committee that faculty are incorporating the learning outcomes into the course curriculum.

Summary and Plan for Improvement

A comparison of results from 2021-22 assessment to the 2024-25 assessment, showed improvements in student performance across all rubric measures based on the percentage of students scoring at a 3 or 4 on the rubrics. We also saw a reduction in the percentage of work samples scored as "not applicable" in 2024-25.

Of the five oral communication competencies, results were consistent with the last assessment, with students performing best on "organization", "language", and "central message" and not performing as well on "delivery" and "supporting material". It is recommended that OC courses continue to emphasize the key elements of successful delivery and effective use of sources in supporting their central message.

For courses that provided performances or presentations that received "not applicable" ratings in the 2021-22 assessment due to the assignment type, assignments were adjusted and original works presented by the students were provided for the 2024-25 assessment. As a result, there were fewer "not applicable" ratings and those courses demonstrated alignment with the Cardinal Core Oral Communication (OC) student learning outcomes.

Courses in the Oral Communication content area should continue to emphasize the incorporation of valid and reliable sources to support the central message and focus on effective delivery techniques. Face-to-face courses should ensure that students are in a well-lit environment and stay within their camera frame when presenting. Several reviewers noted that students in face-to-

face sections often were not front and center or were in dark settings that made it difficult to evaluate the delivery.

In conclusion, the results of this assessment are intended to help faculty in identifying potential strengths and areas for growth in the Cardinal Core curriculum. The data indicate students are performing better on some measures or outcomes than others. It is recommended that faculty take this into consideration in their own curriculum and assignments to ensure that students are developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions outlined in the Cardinal Core program.
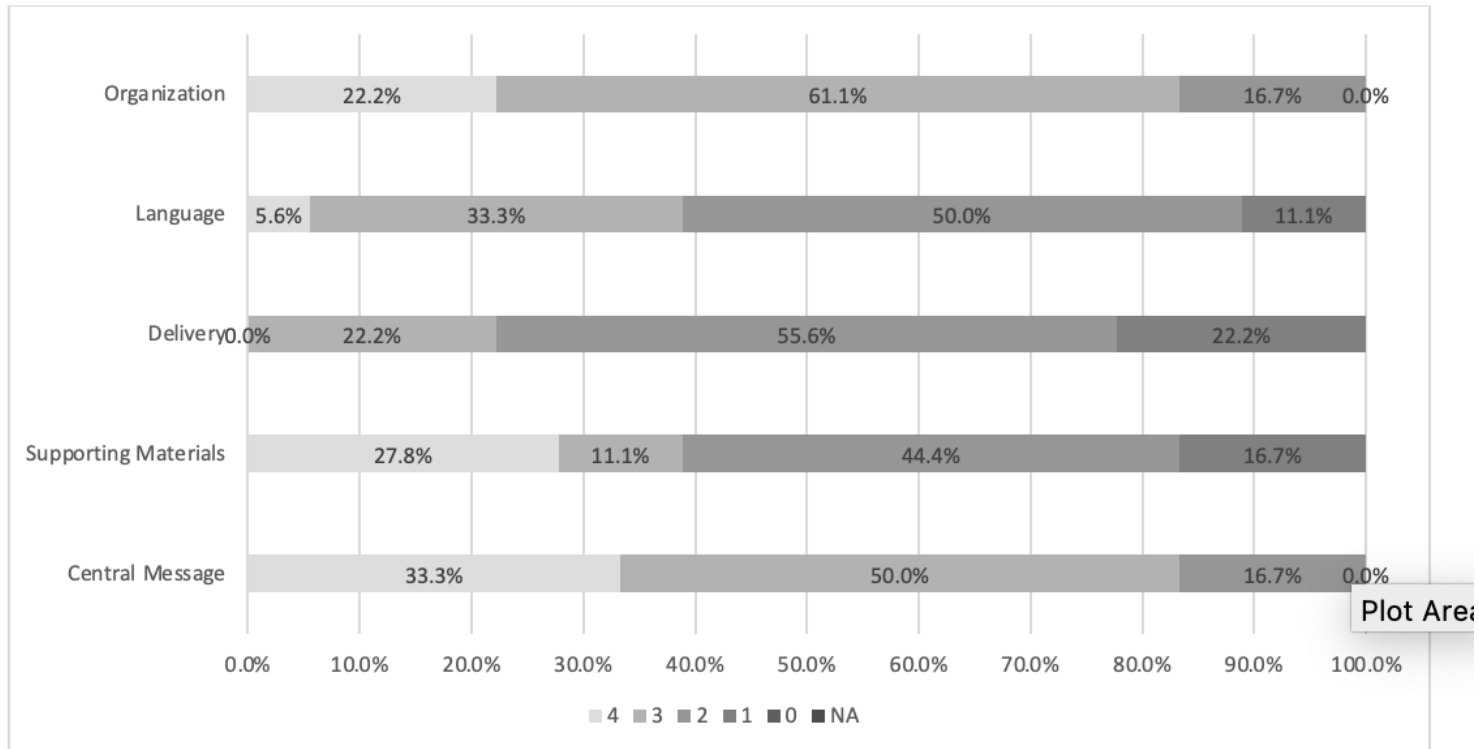
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Appendix A. Results from Assessment Training for the Oral Communication VALUE Rubric

Sample 1

	4	3	2	1	0	NA
Organization	22.2%	61.1%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Language	5.6%	33.3%	50.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Delivery	0.0%	22.2%	55.6%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Supporting Material	27.8%	11.1%	44.4%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Central Message	33.3%	50.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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Sample 2

	4	3	2	1	0	NA
Organization	27.8%	50.0%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Language	11.1%	66.7%	16.7%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Delivery	0.0%	5.6%	88.9%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Supporting Material	22.2%	38.9%	27.8%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Central Message	38.9%	50.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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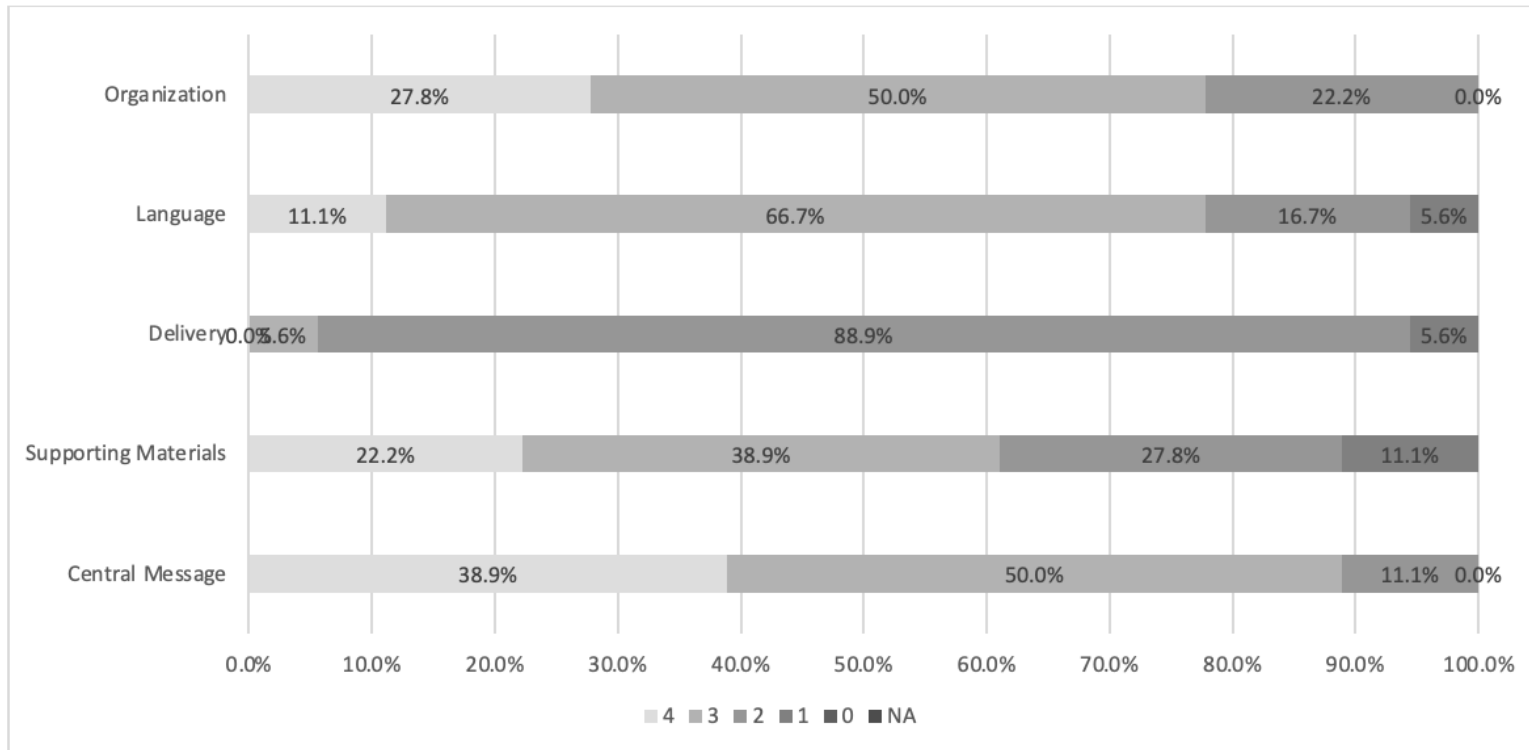
Sample 3

	4	3	2	1	0	NA
Organization	44.4%	55.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Language	16.7%	77.8%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Delivery	5.6%	33.3%	50.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Supporting Material	27.8%	55.6%	11.1%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Central Message	38.9%	61.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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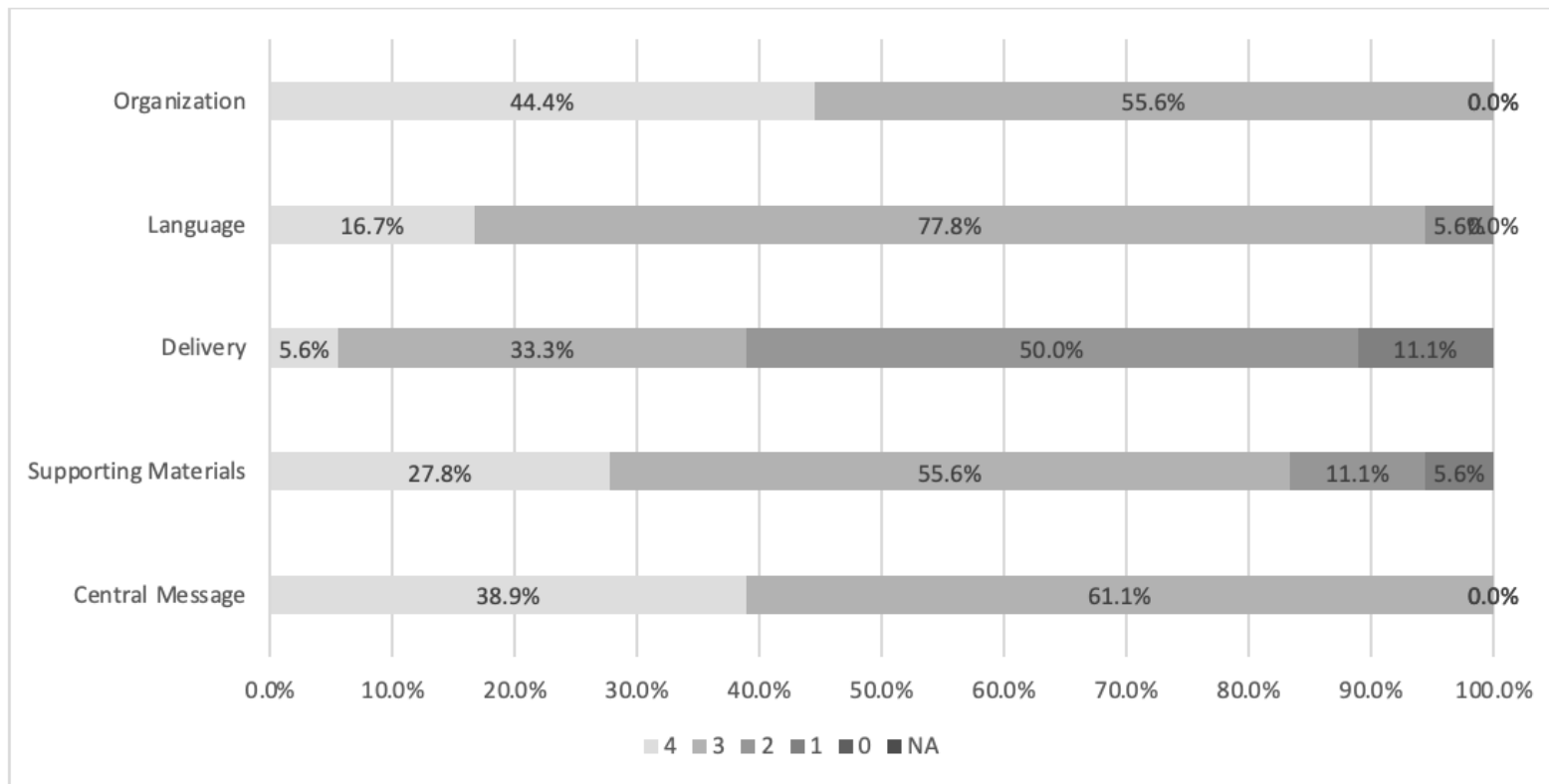
Sample 4

	4	3	2	1	0	NA
Organization	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Language	16.7%	61.1%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Delivery	0.0%	27.8%	38.9%	27.8%	5.6%	0.0%
Supporting Material	16.7%	55.6%	22.2%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Central Message	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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