

General Information

Core Category Discussed:	Public Speaking
Current Semester:	Spring 2016
Date of Assessment Meeting(s):	May 17, 2016

Participants in Assessment Meeting

[Brent Brossmann, Chair, Jackie Schmidt & Desmond Kwan (subcommittee members), Doug Bruce, Joe Miller, Dave McClellan, John Hannon, Jacqi Loewy, Paul Floriano, Dale Heinen and Leah Szalai]

Courses Offered in Fall 2015

CO 125 (28 regular sections + 1 honors section)

Courses Offered in Spring 2016

CO 125 (20 regular sections + 1 honors section + 1 Arrupe section + 1 leadership section)

Typical Assessment Process

Faculty members teaching a class in this category complete the committee-approved rubrics for three of the assignments and then provide the scores as well as a recording of the persuasive speech to the Director. Periodically, the CO departmental assessment committee assesses a sample of the persuasive speeches. **The focus for the 2016 meeting is Informative/Argumentative.** The assessment meeting, held at the end of the Spring semester each year, focuses on data from the previous spring semester and the most recent fall semester and the results of a survey of instructors. (Preliminary instructor-produced data for the current semester is also examined when available.)

Deviations from the Assessment Process

Because fall 2015 was the first semester of the new integrative core, there were no integrative core classes offered in spring 2015; therefore, this meeting will make use of assessment data from fall 2015 and preliminary data from spring 2016. This semester the committee did review speeches from fall 2015.

Attachments Containing Assessment Data and Instructor Feedback

Speaking Rubrics; Speaking Instructor Data 2016; Speaking Instructor Reflections 2016; Speaking Feedback 2016, Speaking Preliminary Data 2016

Findings

Prompt: Describe, in words, what your sub-committee has learned about student learning during this assessment cycle. What were the strengths? In what ways did students fail to meet the goals set for them?

The assessment process did not demonstrate any weaknesses in meeting student objectives. To the contrary, the results were too positive. Across all assessed elements, the lowest mean, adjusted to a 10 point scale, was 8.1 for delivery. The highest, also adjusted to a 10 point scale, was 9.3. The results are inconsistent with our expectations and with previous assessments. For example, as recently as last year's assessment team review of persuasive speeches revealed much lower scores. There is a clear distinction between the assessment team's assessment of randomly selected persuasive speeches and the use of instructor rubrics to assess informative and argumentative speeches. The clearest findings are less about the student learning and more about a significant difference in our assessment mechanisms.

The results suggest that there is a disconnect between the intended use of the rubrics and their actual use. 95% of the faculty who teach this course are adjunct, so the rubrics were designed to be used for

grading and assessment. Inflated grades undercut the value of assessment, and the committee will work on clearer wording. Used as a grading mechanism, the average grade for the informative was 87% and for the argumentative, it was 88%. There was discussion as to whether this inflation was due to the rubric or reflected by it. It was agreed that previous assessment of the prior course (CO 100), suggest that the rubric reflected inflated grades. The hope was that the rubrics would help instructors bring their grades down to a more reasonable level, but that does not seem to be the case.

Suggestions for Instructors

Prompt: Do any of your findings translate into helpful suggestions for all instructors teaching courses with this designation? Are there areas that need more emphasis? What would be the best mechanism for delivering this feedback? (Possible mechanisms might include an e-mail from the committee, a message delivered at a fall orientation session, a faculty development workshop.) If not obvious, please explain the connection between your findings and these suggestions.

The first recommendation for instructors is to check grade inflation. We need more rigorous grading and assessment. Second, there is a clear need to spend more time familiarizing the instructors with the rubrics. The entire process was new this year, and given the vast number of changes that were introduced at once, the committee was not surprised that some elements were not as clear. Nonetheless, discussion about the rubrics with those faculty present suggest more familiarization with the interrelationship of rubric elements would help. Some of the questions are specific to the weighing of rubric elements, which will be discussed in the next section. However, an effort to assess a couple of speeches as a full faculty should build a degree of consistency between the faculty and the assessment committee.

Additionally, the committee recommends more work on delivery, organization and support. These elements were the weakest in the final CO 100 assessment and while the scores were much higher in this assessment, delivery was still the lowest score. As noted, the committee is skeptical about the overly positive nature of the assessment.

Evaluation of Processes

Prompt: Describe, in words, your sub-committee's evaluation of application and assessment processes. What works well? What needs improvement? (All processes should useful provide data with a reasonable amount of effort.)

The process was quite good. Multiple participants indicated that the process was valuable and that the ability to discuss the entire process in an open, data driven dialogue was beneficial. Positive comments for the process were made by committee members, adjunct faculty members and two new members who will teach for us for the first time this fall. A glitch, which replicated the fall data for the spring, limited our ability to examine the second semester. The tight time frame limited our ability to correct that issue and also made it impossible for us to include the CO 125 faculty survey. These problems are likely to be resolved in subsequent semesters.

Recommendations for Internal Changes

Prompt: This section pertains to changes that can be made by the sub-committee and the assessment office. What changes, if any, do you need to make to your application or assessment processes or to other aspects of the core designation? If not obvious, please explain the connection between your findings/evaluation and these recommendations.

Assuming that the response time remains this tight, the committee will need to shift the required response time for the instructor survey. We've been asked to consider changing the rubrics in a couple of important ways. One would be to modify the number of responses faculty can provide from three to five in each subcategory. The assumption is that this change would allow them to use the rubric more effectively in its dual roles of grading and assessment. A minor change is to add the weight of each element to the paper version of the rubric. There is a possibility of adding a specific assessment element for each of the three required speeches. Although it will not impact assessment directly, a shift

in the weighing of delivery was discussed. This is also an opportunity to discuss ways to recognize the importance of delivery in other areas. For example, a well-written conclusion, while important, cannot demonstrate excellence without strong delivery.

There was also discussion of a potential change to the argumentative assignment which would impact the rubric. The current assignment involves delivering the speech over Skype. A host of technical issues have frustrated students and faculty. Multiple attempts were made to modify the system each semester, yet significant problems remain. Information Technology has already promised a new system for the fall, and we will need more data to see if that improves the process. Regardless, there is some support for using the Skype option for a more interactive assignment and not the one of the core speeches, or if it is to remain attached to a core speech, that we consider the informative.

Several other questions were raised about potential changes in assignment, including a more specific focus on the “universal audience” as opposed to the class audience in the argumentative to clarify the focus on logos (as opposed to ethos or pathos) and the desire to move the requirement that at least some research be within the last six months to within the last 12 months. It is likely that these modifications will be open to instructor choice since, although important, they are not essential to the assessment process.

Recommendations for the Core Committee

Prompt: This section pertains to changes that will require action by the entire core committee (and potentially the faculty). What changes, if any, do you need to make to application or assessment processes or to other aspects of the core designation, including learning goals, rubrics, and curricular requirements and/or structures. If not obvious, please explain the connection between your findings/evaluation and these recommendations.

This is not an area which impacts us tremendously since this assessment process involves a single course. Given that the course is approved, the only real concern we have concerns flexibility in modifying our rubrics to reflect our concerns. We don't expect that to be a problem.