Stevens Institute of Technology

School of Business

**AACSB  
ASSURANCE OF LEARNING**

**Bachelor of Science in Quantitative Finance**

**LEARNING GOAL # 1**

**Students can communicate effectively in written and oral communications.**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION: LEARNING GOAL #1

**Goal: Students can communicate effectively in writing and oral presentations.**

*Objective 1: Students will be able to write effectively.*

*Objective 2: Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.*

A major educational objective of the Howe School education is to ensure that all of our graduates have effective written and oral communications skills.

While many of our students have strong communications skills, other students, especially international students, need special training in this area. In the past, all academic programs and individual instructors have made an effort to assess and improve the communications skills of their students. An advantage of the AACSB assessment process is that it helps us take a more organized and uniform approach to achieving this crucial educational objective.

The communications learning goal as described in this report is the same for all undergraduate and graduate programs in the Howe School and is assessed using the same learning objectives, traits and rubrics as described in Sections 2 and 3 of this report.

*Objective 1:* To support improved student written communications, Stevens has developed a Writing and Communications Center – see <http://www.stevens.edu/cal/wcc/index.php>. This website is intended for use by:

1. Instructors wishing to help students improve their written and oral skills.
2. Students seeking guidance on issues ranging from basic grammatical skills to the required format of master and Ph.D. theses.

*Objective 2:* To assess and improve oral communications skills, student presentations (in face-to-face classes) are video-taped and individual students are provided with instant feedback by communications experts from the College of Arts and Letters. A tutorial consisting of short video segments interspersed with multiple choice quiz questions is under development and will be required course assignment starting in spring 2013.

# 2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND TRAITS

The following table outlines the specific learning objectives and corresponding traits for the Howe School’s written and oral communications skill assessment:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective 1:** *Students will be able to write effectively.* | |
| **Traits** |  |
| Trait 1: | Logical Flow |
| Trait 2: | Grammar & Sentence Structure |
| Trait 3: | Spelling & Word Choice |
| Trait 4: | Development of Ideas |
| **Objective 2:** *Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.* | |
| **Traits** |  |
| Trait 1: | Organization & Logic |
| Trait 2: | Voice Quality |
| Trait 3: | Physical Presence |
| Trait 4: | Use of Slides to Enhance Communication |
| Trait 5: | Transitions/Time Management/Q&A |

# 3. RUBRICS

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Writing Rubric**  *Goal: Students will be able to communicate effectively in writing.* | | | | |
| **Trait** | **Poor (0)** | **Good (5)** | **Excellent (10)** | **Score** |
| **Trait 1:**  **Logical Flow** | Unclear introduction or conclusion. Does not use a sequence of material to lead reader through the paper. Draws illogical conclusions | Develops ideas through effective use of paragraphs, transitions, opening and concluding statements. Generally well structured to suggest connection between sub-topics. | Maintains clear focus, uses structure to build the paper's conclusions. Presents analysis using sequence of ideas, clarity of flow and continuous voice or point of view. |  |
| **Trait 2:**  **Grammar & Sentence Structure** | Frequently uses inappropriate grammar and incomplete or poorly structured sentences which interfere with comprehension. | Generally complies with standard English grammar and sentence usage. | Sophisticated use of English language, using varied sentence structured, phrasing and cadence. Grammar is error-free |  |
| **Trait 3:**  **Spelling & Word Choice** | Frequent misspellings. Poor or limited choice of words for expression of ideas. | Has proofread or checked spelling, and uses vocabulary correctly. Minor errors. | Demonstrates good use of words to support written expression of topic. Spelling is error-free. |  |
| **Trait 4:**  **Development of Ideas** | Many unsupported statements offered. Uses flawed or unclear reasoning. | Most statements supported, ideas explained with examples and written with sufficient explanation. | Shows thoughtful reasoning and explores alternatives. Uses existing, supported ideas to develop well-formed, readable output. |  |
| **Does not meet expectations: 0 – 19; Meets: 20-29; Exceeds: 30-40 Total Score:** | | | |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Presentation Rubric**  *Goal: Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.* | | | | |
| **Trait** | **Poor (0)** | **Good (5)** | **Excellent (10)** | **Score** |
| **Trait 1:  Organization & Logic** | Fails to introduce topic; no evidence of or poor logical flow of topic. | Prepares listeners for sequence and flow of topic. Loses place occasionally but flow and structure are still clear. | Engages listeners with overview, guides listeners through connections between sections, and alerts audience to key details and concepts. |  |
| **Trait 2: Voice Quality** | Cannot be heard or understood well due to volume, mumbling, speed, monotone delivery, and/or heavily accented English. | Clear delivery with well-modulated voice. Displays some confidence and enthusiasm, but may also contain flatter periods or sound overly rehearsed. | Exemplary delivery, with a voice that sounds fully engaged, conveys enthusiasm and confidence, and relates to the audience well. |  |
| **Trait 3: Physical Presence** | Turns away from audience or uses distracting gestures, such as pacing or tugging clothing. Speaker seems stiff, awkward or uncomfortable. Little eye contact. | Speaker is relaxed in front of the room and keeps distracting movements and gestures to a minimum. Generally faces audience and makes eye contact. | Speaker’s body language is superb and fully engages the room. Strong, consistent eye contact to the entire audience. Uses confident gestures to underscore key verbal points. |  |
| **Trait 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Communications** | Misspelled, too busy, too much text, too many slides for allotted time, and/or poor use of graphics like charts. | Slides are readable, containing a reasonable amount of material per slide. Good use of graphics or illustrations. | Slides are well written/designed, engaging to the audience, and used as support to verbal content presentation. |  |
| **Trait 5: Transitions Time Management Q&A** | Transitions are awkward or non-existent. Speakers go over time limits. Answers are disorganized or non-responsive. | Transitions are smooth. Speakers generally stay within time limits. Speakers respond to questions well and provide sufficient response. | Transitions are professional and very smooth. Speakers respond convincingly and address all aspects of question. |  |
| **Does not meet expectations: 0 – 19; Meets: 20-35; Exceeds: 36-50 Total Score:** | | | |  |

# Assessment Process

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Where & when measured?** | **How measured?** | **Criterion** |
| Students are assessed in the fall and spring semesters in the required courses: QF 101  Starting in the Spring 2018 the assessment will be done in QF 401 | Student presentations and student essays are assessed for writing skills. Feedback is provided to each individual student. | For both the written test students must achieve a grade of 20 out of a possible 40.  Students achieving 20 or less are required to take remedial training in the form of a required online tutorial and quiz. |

The QF program assesses the communication learning skills of all students in *QF 101*. Changed to QF 401 in Spring 2019. The instructor in the selected class collects written essays/case studies from students as part of the normal coursework. These writing samples are holistically graded by staff in the School of arts and letters. Feedback to students consists of a grade (*0 to 10; 0-3 = Does Not Meet Expectations; 4-7 = Meets Expectations; 8-10 = Exceeds Expectations*) plus a short description of the meaning of each score (see Appendix). The instructor managing the learning goal receives a list of the students and their scores – which is used for AACSB reporting purposes.

To assess and improve oral communications skills, student presentations (in face-to-face classes) and individual students are provided with instant feedback by communications experts from the College of Arts and Letters. A tutorial consisting of short video segments interspersed with multiple choice quiz questions is used.

# 5. RESULTS OF LEARNING GOAL ASSESSMENT – INTRO

The results of the initial learning goal assessments carried out to date are included below.

**Explanation**

Each learning goal has a number of learning objectives, and performance on each objective is measured using a rubric that, in turn, contains a number of desired “traits.” Students are scored individually on each trait.

The grading sheets for each student are used to develop a Summary Results Sheet for each learning goal objective. A selection of these summaries is included below.

The first table in the Summary Results Sheet for a learning objective/trait gives the counts of students falling in each of the three categories:

* Does Not Meet Expectations
* Meets Expectations
* Exceeds Expectations

The right-hand column in the table is used to record the average score of the students on each trait. This table provides an indication of the relative performance of students on each trait.

The second table on each sheet provides the counts of students who fall in each of the above three categories for the overall learning objective.

The person doing the assessment provides explanatory comments and recommendations on the bottom of the Results Summary Sheet. The recommendations improve content or pedagogy changes for the next time the course is given.

# 6. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: FALL 2013

**LEARNING GOAL #1:***Our students will communicate effectively in written and oral communications.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #1:***Students will be able to write effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***Dec 2013*

**ASSESSOR:***Pelphrey, Kephart*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***45 Students – QF101*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Logical flow | **0** | **18** | **27** | **7.6** |
| 2: Grammar & Sentence Structure | **0** | **29** | **16** | **6.8** |
| 3: Spelling & word choice | **0** | **25** | **20** | **7.0** |
| 4: Development of ideas | **0** | **22** | **23** | **7.0** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **7.1** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **3** | **24** | **18** |

**COMMENTS:**

*Once again, the large majority of students in the QF program met or exceeded expectations in terms of their overall writing ability. As we have seen in the past, these students tend to do better in the areas of logical flow and development of ideas, indicating that they understand what they want to say and the right way to organize their ideas. Their scores in the areas that rate sentence and paragraph structure, grammar and word choice are somewhat lower. This may be attributable to several factors, including the students having less experience with longer-form writing due to the rise of smartphones and social media, plus the fact that a significant portion of the students are English Language Learners.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*Instructors in the QF program should continue to provide specific, written feedback to student papers, indicating not just where mistakes have been made but also, in some cases, showing examples of how the writing can be fixed to read smoother or better get across the ideas. As always, the Writing and Communications Center (WCC) can be a great resource to all students, and instructors should encourage students who are in need of additional assistance to take advantage of it. There is also a growing collection of online webinars, seminars and videos (Ted Talks, Khan Academy) that are available to students to allow them to build their skills and understanding of the writing process outside of the classroom.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #2:***Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.*

This assessment was not conducted for fall 2013 in this program.

# 7. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: SPRING 2014

**LEARNING GOAL #1:***Our students will communicate effectively in written and oral communications.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #1:***Students will be able to write effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***Not assessed this semester.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #2:***Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***May 2014*

**ASSESSOR:***Andrew Stein*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***46 Students – QF 102*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Organization & Logic | **0** | **24** | **17** | **7.5** |
| 2: Voice Quality | **0** | **34** | **12** | **7.0** |
| 3: Physical Presence | **0** | **39** | **7** | **6.4** |
| 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Comm | **0** | **37** | **4** | **6.6** |
| 5: Transitions, Time Mgt, Q&A | **n/a** | **n/a** | **n/a** | **n/a** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **6.9** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **11** | **35** |

**NOTE:** Some of the criteria did not apply to some speakers, so the totals do not always add up to the total number of assessed students.

**COMMENTS:**

*Overall scores for presentation skills for students in the QF program continue to be set at or above expectations. In general, most of the students can accurately and confidently deliver a business level presentation. However, it should be noted that in most classes students are given an overall template to follow, so many of the structural questions and issues are taken out of their hands. Slide quality was perhaps the largest variable from group to group, and represented not so much a gap in talent as a difference in preparation; it was always fairly obvious which groups had put the requisite time and thought into their slides and which groups had not. Physically, many presenters still need to work on fully facing the audience (instead of the screen) while speaking, and maintaining eye contact.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*It is recommended that the instructors encourage their students to practice delivering their presentations while NOT sitting in front of their computers. When speakers become too comfortable with staring at the screen while practicing, it encourages them to disengage from the audience and speak to the screen during the real thing. Students should continue to practice speaking whenever possible, and faculty are encouraged to assign more short, impromptu speaking opportunities so that students understand that public speaking is not only something done for a midterm or a final exam.*

# 8. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: FALL 2014

**LEARNING GOAL #1:***Our students will communicate effectively in written and oral communications.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #1:***Students will be able to write effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***November-December 2014*

**ASSESSOR:***Bruce, Hardin, Pelphrey, Kephart, Minsloff, Ketchum*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***15 Students – QF 401*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Logical flow | **0** | **5** | **10** | **7.6** |
| 2: Grammar & Sentence Structure | **0** | **7** | **8** | **7.1** |
| 3: Spelling & word choice | **0** | **5** | **10** | **7.5** |
| 4: Development of ideas | **0** | **7** | **8** | **7.3** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **7.4** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **1** | **6** | **8** |

**COMMENTS:**

*A significantly majority of students in this program meets or exceeds expectations in their written communication. By and large, these documents are clearly organized and professionally structured, with enough specific detail and supported arguments. As has been the case for several semesters, the areas which lag behind are those dedicated to paragraph- and sentence-level issues such as grammar, punctuation, word choice and sentence length. The vast majority of these documents would benefit from more deliberate writing, and specifically from more careful and dedicated proofreading.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*Instructors should continue to encourage students to begin projects early to allow enough time for attention to the quality of their writing. Students should also be encouraged (or even mandated) to visit the Writing and Communications Center on a regular basis for feedback. It might also be beneficial for instructors to dedicate some portion of class time to peer feedback – where students get to read and evaluate the writing of other members of the class. This can serve as a useful way to highlight common issues and errors that can more easily be recognized when reading a paper that the student did not write.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #2:***Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***December 2014*

**ASSESSOR:***Billy Middleton, Mary Robin Whitney, Andrew Stein****, Zachary Balog***

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***17 Students – QF 401*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Organization & Logic | **0** | **14** | **3** | **7.3** |
| 2: Voice Quality | **0** | **8** | **9** | **7.2** |
| 3: Physical Presence | **0** | **10** | **7** | **6.9** |
| 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Comm | **0** | **17** | **0** | **5.7** |
| 5: Transitions, Time Mgt, Q&A | **0** | **17** | **0** | **6.9** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **6.8** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **12** | **5** |

**COMMENTS:**

*Students in this program continue to perform at or above expectations in the delivery of oral presentations. Although certain issues continue to plague the group overall (such as a lack of enthusiasm and not enough eye contact) the fundamentals of clear organization, stable and professional body language, and speaking loudly and slowly enough, were firmly in evidence. PowerPoint slides were generally strong, with clear labels, good use of color and professional layouts. The consistent negatives were use of small fonts and generally placing too much data/text on the slides.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*The most obvious means of improving presentation skills are obvious and unchanging: be familiar with the material and practice. Beyond that, the two elements that need the most work are eye contact and enthusiasm. For that, it is recommended that students are encouraged, and given opportunities, to practice their presentations in front of a group prior to the official presentation. A mandated peer review practice session, where other members of the group, and of other groups, can see the errors that are being made, and encourage their peers to improve their style, would be most beneficial. It would also be useful if the instructor could grade on their presentation style, which would encourage students to focus more of their attention on their delivery.*

# 9. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: FALL 2015

**LEARNING GOAL #1:***Our students will communicate effectively in written and oral communications.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #1:***Students will be able to write effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***Not assessed in Fall 2015*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #2:***Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***December 2015*

**ASSESSOR:***Billy Middleton, Mary Robin Whitney, Zachary Balog, Andrew Stein*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***22 Students – QF 401*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Organization & Logic | **0** | **0** | **22** | **8.0** |
| 2: Voice Quality | **0** | **2** | **20** | **7.3** |
| 3: Physical Presence | **0** | **8** | **14** | **6.7** |
| 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Comm | **0** | **2** | **20** | **7.1** |
| 5: Transitions, Time Mgt, Q&A | **0** | **0** | **22** | **8.1** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **7.4** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **5** | **17** |

**COMMENTS:**

*Students in this program continue to excel at some aspects of presenting, while other areas continue to need work. Overall organization remains very strong, with virtually all of the material presented logically and professionally. Students clearly know how to get their points across. Body language is generally strong. Certain aspects of voice quality, usually volume and clarity, remain relatively high, while enthusiasm and dynamics are much more hit and miss. Some speakers clearly make an attempt to engage the audience, while others have a much flatter delivery. Eye contact is also very inconsistent, with some speakers talking to the screen too much, seemingly because they need to pull data from the slides. The one area where almost all presenters need work is in slide quality. Slides contain too much information, are too cluttered, and text is too small. Despite these issues, when all of the scores are considered, the majority of students in this group perform at or above expectations.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*Students should be required to complete their PowerPoint decks at least three days prior to their presentation, so they have time for feedback and the opportunity to avoid some of the slide construction issues that consistently occur. Students should also be encouraged to project these slides onto a screen and view them from the back of a room. Very possibly, some of these problems would then be discovered and addressed. It would also give the speakers more opportunity to rehearse the oral component and get more comfortable with the material, reducing the need to look at the slides while they speak.*

# 10. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: FALL 2016

**LEARNING GOAL #1:***Our students will communicate effectively in written and oral communications.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #1:***Students will be able to write effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***December 2016*

**ASSESSOR:***Pelphrey, Kephart, Carlson*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***62 Students – QF101, BT401*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Logical flow | **0** | **33** | **29** | **7.3** |
| 2: Grammar & Sentence Structure | **0** | **37** | **25** | **6.9** |
| 3: Spelling & word choice | **0** | **38** | **24** | **7.0** |
| 4: Development of ideas | **0** | **35** | **27** | **7.1** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **7.1** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **35** | **27** |

**COMMENTS:**

*In Fall 2016 every BT student assessed (except one) received a passing score on the writing assessment, meeting or exceeding expectations in their writing. All areas of their writing were strong, but Logical Flow and Development of Ideas continue to be assessed higher. Word and sentence-level errors and issues continue to be a factor, but this may be attributable as much to rushing through the writing and poor proofreading rather than a lack of knowledge about how to put together a clear an well-written sentence.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*Poor proofreading continues to plague this group, and this is something that the faculty can and should address in a very direct way. Asking students to bring in drafts of their work for proofreading exchanges could help the students recognize the most common errors they are committing. Showing students “before” and “after” versions of professional documents, allowing them to see the amount of improvement that stronger proofreading can bring, may be an excellent motivator.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #2:***Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***December 2016*

**ASSESSOR:***Middleton, Balog, Pelphrey, Stein*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***67 Students – QF101, BT401*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Organization & Logic | **0** | **28** | **39** | **7.7** |
| 2: Voice Quality | **0** | **45** | **22** | **7.0** |
| 3: Physical Presence | **0** | **44** | **23** | **6.2** |
| 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Comm | **0** | **58** | **9** | **6.5** |
| 5: Transitions, Time Mgt, Q&A | **2** | **36** | **29** | **7.3** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **6.9** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **33** | **34** |

**COMMENTS:**

*All students in this group met or exceeded overall expectations for presenting this semester. Organization and Logic (Trait 1) continues to be strong. It is worth noting that scores for Physical Presence (Trait 3) and Use of Slides to Enhance Communication (Trait 4) edged higher compared to previous years. It is too early to tell is this is a normal fluctuation in scores, or if it is attributable to the attention and additional resources that the faculty and the Writing and Communication Center are providing. Regardless, it is a step in the right direction.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*No major change in remedial action is recommended. Starting work on the PowerPoint slides early is the key to a successful presentation, both in terms of slide quality and also because it allows additional time for practice and confidence building. Workshopping of presentations as they are being developed, and in-class practice and peer feedback, should continue to be fostered and encouraged.*

# 11. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: FALL 2017

**LEARNING GOAL #1:***Our students will communicate effectively in written and oral communications.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #1:***Students will be able to write effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***December 2017*

**ASSESSOR:***Pelphrey, Kephart, Hardin*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***66 Students – QF101, BT401*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Logical flow | **0** | **21** | **45** | **7.9** |
| 2: Grammar & Sentence Structure | **0** | **45** | **21** | **6.6** |
| 3: Spelling & word choice | **0** | **34** | **32** | **7.1** |
| 4: Development of ideas | **0** | **22** | **44** | **8.0** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **7.4** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **1** | **28** | **37** |

**COMMENTS:**

*The majority of students in this program continue to meet or exceed expectations in their writing. The documents are generally clearly developed and writers continue to use supporting evidence effectively in creating their arguments. As some of these students are non-native English speakers, word- and sentence-level issues continue to be the largest source of problems. Grammar errors and overall inconsistencies in writing style and are also present, and reflect a deficiency in the ability to proofread and recognize certain repeated writing issues.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*Writers are strongly encouraged to seek assistance from the Writing & Communication Center on campus to refine and improve their proofreading abilities. Recognizing common errors is the first (and most crucial) step to addressing them. Allowing students extra class time to submit their documents for peer review would also be helpful. Wherever possible, instructors should give out samples of documents (both academic and professional) to model professional-level writing for all students.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #2:***Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***December 2017*

**ASSESSOR:***Middleton, Balog, Pelphrey, Whitney, Stein*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***67 Students – QF101, BT401*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Organization & Logic | **0** | **12** | **55** | **7.7** |
| 2: Voice Quality | **0** | **38** | **29** | **7.1** |
| 3: Physical Presence | **0** | **56** | **11** | **6.0** |
| 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Comm | **0** | **45** | **22** | **6.8** |
| 5: Transitions, Time Mgt, Q&A | **0** | **32** | **35** | **7.4** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **7.0** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **3** | **64** |

**COMMENTS:**

*Most of the students met or exceeded expectations for presenting this semester. The strongest areas continue to be Organization and Logic. This is likely due to the fact that they are given examples of successful pitches in class and model their own pitches on them. Traits 2, 3 and 4 continue to vary (sometimes wildly) from group to group. Different levels of speaking comfort and experience led to wide variations in #2. All students should take every opportunity to speak publicly in order to get more comfortable with the process. Poor and inconsistent eye contact continues to be a problem. In slide creation, the biggest issues were small text size and slides cramped with tables and other data. These are due, at least in part, to students mimicking sample presentations, and so it is recommended that instructors be more aware of pointing out these problems when giving out samples in class.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*As mentioned above, faculty should be aware of the pros and cons of giving out presentation examples to students. They tend to copy what they see, both the good and the bad. Faculty can also make an explicit distinction between what they require in an academic presentation, and the different expectations that may come into play when preparing a presentation for external stakeholders.*

# 12. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: FALL 2018

**LEARNING GOAL #1:***Our students will communicate effectively in written and oral communications.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #1:***Students will be able to write effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***Dec 2018*

**ASSESSOR:***Hardin, Kephart, Minsloff, Mendez-Booth*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***17 Students – BT 401, QF 401*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Logical flow | **0** | **1** | **16** | **9.4** |
| 2: Grammar & Sentence Structure | **0** | **6** | **11** | **7.4** |
| 3: Spelling & word choice | **0** | **8** | **9** | **7.4** |
| 4: Development of ideas | **0** | **4** | **13** | **8.3** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **8.1** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **4** | **13** |

**COMMENTS:**

*Students overall continue to perform better in the technical/sentence-level aspects of writing. Sentences are generally clear and word choice is appropriate for the type of document. Scores tended to be slightly lower in the areas of developing cohesive arguments and supporting points with specific details and facts. Some of this is attributed to the types of documents we assess, which often rely more on recounting information than developing new ideas. However, some of this may be caused by the students not fully grasping the distinction between stating an opinion and supporting an argument.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*Given the comments above, it is recommended that faculty read student work with a specific eye toward developing arguments and providing support. Point out were students are presenting their interpretation of data as facts, or when they are making arguments without providing supporting data. This may require rethinking the writing assignments within class, or possibly creating new assignments which can highlight these issues and force students to develop these skills.*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE #2:***Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.*

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***December 2018*

**ASSESSOR:***Middleton, Whitney, Pelphrey, Balog, Stein*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***23 Students – BT 401, QF 401*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Organization & Logic | **0** | **0** | **23** | **9.1** |
| 2: Voice Quality | **0** | **9** | **14** | **8.7** |
| 3: Physical Presence | **0** | **13** | **10** | **7.1** |
| 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Comm | **0** | **7** | **16** | **7.6** |
| 5: Transitions, Time Mgt, Q&A | **0** | **1** | **22** | **8.5** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **8.1** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **2** | **21** |

**COMMENTS:**

*The large majority of students across all of these groups continue to perform at or above expectations in delivering oral presentations. While there is clear variation of style and comfort levels, as well as challenges presented by English Language Learners, almost everyone presents in a professional way. The biggest challenge to the students seems to be breaking out of the restrictive Powerpoint style and finding a way to present their information in a unique, interesting and compelling way. Judging by the general similarity of slide layouts across groups, it can be assumed that most groups are mirroring samples provided by the instructor. What is necessary to pass a course, may not work in all professional environments. Also, since some groups are now presenting remotely it is impossible to assess their physical presence. And there are so many groups presenting that Q&A (a critical component in a “real” presentation( is often abandoned due to time demands.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*It is recommended that faculty focus more attention on the visual representation of class data and include this as a component of the final project grade. Faculty can also provide additional opportunities for oral presentation during the semester (even if these are done in smaller groups) and to encourage peer feedback. Allowing time for a brief Q&A after each presentation would also be greatly beneficial.*

# 13. OUTCOMES: QF LEARNING GOAL # 1 AFTER ROUNDS OF ASSESSMENT

The following table shows the average scores on each goal objective for the last 5 years.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Objective 1  Written Communication | Objective 1  Oral Communication |
| Fall 2013 | 7.1 | n/a |
| Spring 2014 | n/a | 6.9 |
| Fall 2014 | 7.4 | 6.9 |
| Fall 2015 | n/a | 7.4 |
| Fall 2016 | 7.1 | 6.9 |
| Fall 2017 | 7.4 | 7.0 |
| Fall 2018 | 8.1 | 8.1 |

# 14. CLOSE LOOP PROCESS – CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT RECORD

**Assurance of Learning**

**Assessment/Outcome Analysis**

**Close Loop Process - Continuous Improvement Record**

Program: Bachelor of Science in Quantitative Finance

Goal 1: Students can communicate effectively in written and oral communications.

Goal Owner: Ghoddusi and Andrew Stein

Where Measured: Students are assessed in the fall and spring semesters in the required course: *QF 401* *Financial Systems Design 1*

How Measured: Student presentations are video-taped, and student essays are assessed for writing skills. Feedback is provided to each individual student.

Sampling: Rubrics are completed for all BI&A students in their first year of study.

**Closing the Loop: Actions taken on specific objectives**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Objective 1** | | *Students will be able to write effectively.* | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2018* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *Given the comments above, it is recommended that faculty read student work with a specific eye toward developing arguments and providing support. Point out were students are presenting their interpretation of data as facts, or when they are making arguments without providing supporting data. This may require rethinking the writing assignments within class, or possibly creating new assignments which can highlight these issues and force students to develop these skills.* | |
| **Outcome from previous**  **Assessment:** | | *Substantial improvements were noted in both objectives.* | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2017* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *Writers are strongly encouraged to seek assistance from the Writing & Communication Center on campus to refine and improve their proofreading abilities. Recognizing common errors is the first (and most crucial) step to addressing them. Allowing students extra class time to submit their documents for peer review would also be helpful. Wherever possible, instructors should give out samples of documents (both academic and professional) to model professional-level writing for all students.*  *We will move the assessment to a course later in the curriculum to see how the students have done after being in the program for a while.* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | | *Slight improvement noted in both objectives.* | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2016* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *Poor proofreading continues to plague this group, and this is something that the faculty can and should address in a very direct way. Asking students to bring in drafts of their work for proofreading exchanges could help the students recognize the most common errors they are committing. Showing students “before” and “after” versions of professional documents, allowing them to see the amount of improvement that stronger proofreading can bring, may be an excellent motivator.* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | |  | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2015* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *Not assessed in Fall 2015* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | |  | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2014* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *Instructors should continue to encourage students to begin projects early to allow enough time for attention to the quality of their writing. Students should also be encouraged (or even mandated) to visit the Writing and Communications Center on a regular basis for feedback. It might also be beneficial for instructors to dedicate some portion of class time to peer feedback – where students get to read and evaluate the writing of other members of the class. This can serve as a useful way to highlight common issues and errors that can more easily be recognized when reading a paper that the student did not write.* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | | *The written skills assessment was up, while the oral presentation remained the same.* | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2013* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *Instructors in the QF program should continue to provide specific, written feedback to student papers, indicating not just where mistakes have been made but also, in some cases, showing examples of how the writing can be fixed to read smoother or better get across the ideas. As always, the Writing and Communications Center (WCC) can be a great resource to all students, and instructors should encourage students who are in need of additional assistance to take advantage of it. There is also a growing collection of online webinars, seminars and videos (Ted Talks, Khan Academy) that are available to students to allow them to build their skills and understanding of the writing process outside of the classroom.* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | | *This is the first assessment in this curriculum.* | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Spring 2013* | |
| **Remedial Action** | | *None* | |
| **Objective 2** | | *Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.* | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2018* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *It is recommended that faculty focus more attention on the visual representation of class data and include this as a component of the final project grade. Faculty can also provide additional opportunities for oral presentation during the semester (even if these are done in smaller groups) and to encourage peer feedback. Allowing time for a brief Q&A after each presentation would also be greatly beneficial.* | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2017* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *Faculty should be aware of the pros and cons of giving out presentation examples to students. They tend to copy what they see, both the good and the bad. Faculty can also make an explicit distinction between what they require in an academic presentation, and the different expectations that may come into play when preparing a presentation for external stakeholders.* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | |  | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2016* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *No major change in remedial action is recommended. Starting work on the PowerPoint slides early is the key to a successful presentation, both in terms of slide quality and also because it allows additional time for practice and confidence building. Workshopping of presentations as they are being developed, and in-class practice and peer feedback, should continue to be fostered and encouraged.* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | |  | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2015* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *Students should be required to complete their PowerPoint decks at least three days prior to their presentation, so they have time for feedback and the opportunity to avoid some of the slide construction issues that consistently occur. Students should also be encouraged to project these slides onto a screen and view them from the back of a room. Very possibly, some of these problems would then be discovered and addressed. It would also give the speakers more opportunity to rehearse the oral component and get more comfortable with the material, reducing the need to look at the slides while they speak.* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | |  | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Fall 2014* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *The most obvious means of improving presentation skills are obvious and unchanging: be familiar with the material and practice. Beyond that, the two elements that need the most work are eye contact and enthusiasm. For that, it is recommended that students are encouraged, and given opportunities, to practice their presentations in front of a group prior to the official presentation. A mandated peer review practice session, where other members of the group, and of other groups, can see the errors that are being made, and encourage their peers to improve their style, would be most beneficial. It would also be useful if the instructor could grade on their presentation style, which would encourage students to focus more of their attention on their delivery.* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | | *The written skills assessment was up, while the oral presentation remained the same.* | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Spring 2014* | |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | | *It is recommended that the instructors encourage their students to practice delivering their presentations while NOT sitting in front of their computers. When speakers become too comfortable with staring at the screen while practicing, it encourages them to disengage from the audience and speak to the screen during the real thing. Students should continue to practice speaking whenever possible, and faculty are encouraged to assign more short, impromptu speaking opportunities so that students understand that public speaking is not only something done for a midterm or a final exam.* | |
| **Outcome from previous assessment:** | | *This is the first assessment in this curriculum.* | |
| **When Assessed:** | | *Spring 2013* | |
| **Remedial Action** | | *None* | |

# APPENDIX A: WRITTEN ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The current assessment and review process for the Howe School Support and Assessment Program (*MGT 898*) is as follows:

1. Essay submissions are requested from participating students. These requests are either sent via course instructors, or via an online submission form (eLearn Portal). Essays are designated as 3- or 4-page papers that utilize paragraph and sentence structure.
2. Essays are collected by the *MGT 898* Course Coordinator (David Silverstein). Essay collection can occur either through hard-copy format (i.e., course instructors collect a stack of essay and hand them to the Course Coordinator) or through soft-copy (i.e., students submit essays electronically to a Stevens’ portal called eLearn, and subsequently to TurnItIn.com – an originality verification service).
3. Essays are then delegated to designated assessors, who have undergone a standardizing and normative process in order to make sure that assessment scores and feedback is consistent across assessors.
4. Assessors review each essay, either in hard-copy or soft-copy, and (1) make grammatical corrections, (2) indicate successful strategies, (3) comment on areas to improve or focus on, and (4) offer suggestions for style, flow and organization. This process is designed to take roughly 20 minutes per essay.
   1. Note: This new assessment process, which provides each student written feedback on his/her essay, is intended to help the student during review. Since the comments and corrections included in each assessed essay are designed to be constructive and forward-looking, it is our hope that this feedback helps the student focus on (1) the successful areas of each essay, and (2) those areas which can be improved upon in future assignments.
5. After each essay is commented on and corrected, the assessor scores the essay on each of four key metrics, noted on the Writing Rubric (see Section 3).
6. After the assessment process is completed for all essays in a particular course, the scores are tallied and essays are either (a) returned to the course instructor as hard-copies, who then distributes the essays to each individual student, or (b) returned to the individual student as soft-copies via email.
7. As part of the returned materials, students also receive one of two letters indicating either a successful level of assessment or an unsuccessful level. Both of these letters, however, detail the writing and communication support services available to all Howe School students, which are as follows:
   1. **On Campus Support:** Free and professional writing and communication specialists are available as part of the Writing & Communications Center (WCC) at Stevens. The WCC is located on campus and appointments are available Monday to Friday.
   2. **Online Materials:** The following link provides online resources that explain and assist in the development of key writing considerations. While an attempt has been made to group the materials by subject matter, several sites offer robust resources that span multiple areas.

# APPENDIX B: PREVIOUS PRESENTATION RUBRIC

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Presentation Rubric**  *Goal: Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.* | | | | |
| **Trait** | **Poor (0)** | **Good (5)** | **Excellent (10)** | **Score** |
| **Trait 1:  Organization & Logic** | Fails to introduce topic; no evidence of or poor logical flow of topic; does not manage time. | Prepares listeners for sequence and flow of topic. Loses place occasionally. Maintains pace, without need to rush. | Engages listeners with overview, guides listeners through connections between sections, and uses time to good effect. |  |
| **Trait 2: Voice & Body Language** | Cannot be heard well due to volume, mumbling, speed, rote delivery, and/or heavily accented English. Turns away from audience or uses distracting gestures, such as scratching or tugging clothing. | Clear delivery with well-modulated voice and self-carriage. | Exemplary delivery, using voice and gestures as part of medium. Uses vocal and physical resources to aid in communicating topic. |  |
| **Trait 3: Use of Slides to Enhance Communications** | Misspelled, too busy, too many slides for allotted time, and/or poor use of graphics like charts. | Slides are readable, containing a reasonable amount of material per slide. Good use of graphics or illustrations. | Slides are well written/designed, and used as support to verbal content presentation. |  |
| **Trait 4: Ability to Answer Questions** | Student does not answer questions that are asked. | Student responds to questions well and provides sufficient response. | Student responds convincingly and addresses all aspects of question. Knows material thoroughly. |  |
| **Trait 5: Content** | Student does not satisfy assignment requirements. Misuses theory or selects poor examples. | Student provides good analysis of subject, satisfying intent of assignment and demonstrating knowledge. | Student shows evidence of strong research and highly competent use of analyses to reach conclusions and recommendations. |  |
| **Does not meet expectations: 0 – 19; Meets: 20-35; Exceeds: 36-50 Total Score:** | | | |  |