Stevens Institute of Technology

School of Business

**AACSB  
ASSURANCE OF LEARNING**

**Bachelor of Science in Quantitative Finance**

**(QF)**

**LEARNING GOAL #1**

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

**Responsibility:** George Calhoun

May 2023

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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 School of Business 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 foreign 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 School of Business and is assessed using the same learning objectives, traits and rubrics as described in Sections 2 and 3 of this report.

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This website is intended for use by:

1. Instructors wishing to help students improve their written and oral skills.
2. Students seeking information on Howe School communication skill requirements and the resources that are available at Stevens to help them meet these requirements.
3. Students seeking guidance on issues ranging from basic grammatical skills to the required format of master and PhD theses.

# 2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND TRAITS

The following table outlines the specific learning objectives and corresponding traits for the School of Business’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:** | | | | | | |  | |

# 4. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Where & when measured?** | **How measured?** | **Criterion** |
| Assessed in QF 101 in fall or QF102 in the spring.. | For writing: a formal assessments of written communication skills will take place in QF 101/102 by submitting to MGT898.  .  For Presentations: Oral presentation skills will be formally assessed by faculty in CAL. A CAL faculty member reviews presentations and complete rubrics for each student. | For both the oral and written test, 80% of students must receive a grade of “A” or “B”. Students receiving “C” or “D” grades are given remedial training.  For writing: A score of 20/40 must be achieved or else completion of Tech Writing Webinar is required.  For Presentations: A score of 20/50 must be achieved or else students are required to submit a reflective essay on the presentation and their plan for improving their skills. |

The QF program assesses the communication learning skills of all students in *QF 101 or QF 102*. The instructor in the selected class collects a written report from students as part of the normal coursework. These writing samples are holistically graded by faculty in the College 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 B). The instructor managing the learning goal receives a list of the students and their scores – which is used for AACSB reporting purposes. The faculty from CAL is then invited back to evaluate the presentations and provide feedback for objective 2, graded similarly.

# 5. RESULTS OF LEARNING GOAL ASSESSMENT - INTRODUCTION

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

**Explanation of Direct Measurements**

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.

**Explanation of Indirect Measurements**

Indirect measurements will be taken at periodic intervals. Depending on the measurement chosen a diagnostic tool will be selected for analysis. The indirect measurements being considered are:

* Internships
* job placement statistics
* starting salaries

mid-career salaries (5 years out)

# 6. Assessment Spring 2022:

NOTICE THAT THE DIRECT ASSESSMENT IS DONE FOR ON CAMPUS; WEBCAMUS AND COMBINED THIS IS NOW A REQUIREMENT FOR AOL

WE WILL START ASSESSMENTS IN Spring OF 2022

## The direct measurement is the written assignment

1. Indirect measurement is use periodically.

# 7. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: Spring 2022

**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:***May 2022*

**ASSESSOR:***Pelphrey, Minsloff*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***67 Students – QF 102*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Logical flow | **0** | **44** | **33** | **7.0** |
| 2: Grammar & Sentence Structure | **0** | **60** | **7** | **6.2** |
| 3: Spelling & word choice | **0** | **46** | **31** | **6.6** |
| 4: Development of ideas | **0** | **44** | **33** | **7.1** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **6.7** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **4** | **44** | **19** |

**COMMENTS:**

*The vast majority of students in this program who participated in the writing assessment in Spring 2022 met or exceeded expectations. This is on par with how these students scored in previous assessments. Scores were generally consistent across the four Learning Goals, but there were slight increases in Goals 1 and 4, which rate the writer’s overall ability to convey their ideas in an orderly, logical way. Goals 2 and 3, which assess more word- and sentence-level writing issues, was slightly weaker, and is likely attributable to this being a very international cohort.*

**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. Faculty are encouraged to allow students extra class time to submit their documents for peer review. 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:***May 2022*

**ASSESSOR:***Balog*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***66 Students – QF 102*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Organization & Logic | **0** | **0** | **66** | **9.8** |
| 2: Voice Quality | **0** | **2** | **64** | **9.2** |
| 3: Physical Presence | **0** | **19** | **47** | **8.1** |
| 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Comm | **0** | **17** | **49** | **8.3** |
| 5: Transitions, Time Mgt, Q&A | **0** | **0** | **66** | **9.9** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **9.0** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **0** | **66** |

**COMMENTS:**

*Students in this program easily met or exceeded expectations in the ability deliver effective presentations. Organization and logic were generally strong, and information was delivered in a way that was both clear and impactful. The use of smooth transitions and time management were also strong. Overall, areas relating to the speaker’s physical presence and voice quality were the weakest, but still effective. This is an element that can be taught, but is really only internalized by repeated exposure to public speaking. Slide creation was generally strong, but many presentations still suffered from cramped data and small text, which made it a bit hard on the audience.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*Faculty should give the students more opportunity to speak in front of the class, in order to gain experience and confidence. Faculty should also consider giving out style templates with minimum text size, recommended fonts, and examples of clear, uncluttered layouts. Students tend to copy what they see in class, so faculty should take more care in creating their own PowerPoint decks and be sure they are modeling best practices. Students can also be encouraged to visit the Writing & Communication Center for extra help developing slides and practicing their oral delivery.*

# 8. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: SPRING 2023

**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:***May 2023*

**ASSESSOR:***Minsloff*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***80 Students – QF 102*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Logical flow | **6** | **44** | **30** | **6.8** |
| 2: Grammar & Sentence Structure | **1** | **54** | **25** | **7.0** |
| 3: Spelling & word choice | **0** | **48** | **32** | **7.5** |
| 4: Development of ideas | **9** | **40** | **31** | **6.5** |
| **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** | **52** | **28** |

**COMMENTS:**

*All of the students in the undergraduate program met or exceeded expectations in their written communication. Organization of ideas and supporting arguments continue to be strong. Sentence-level mechanics varied, which more likely than not was a function of the complexity level of the prompt. Overall, grammar and word choice to help convey complex ideas was strong and slightly improved over the prior year.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*ChatGPT can be a powerful tool to help correct grammar and demonstrate proper syntax and style. However, instructors should be careful to assign prompts that require some personal or experiential component from the students to help limit the ways that AI can be utilized for written assignments. As always, we encourage all students to visit the Writing & Communications Center for personal feedback and assistance with outlining, writing and proofreading.*

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

**ASSESSMENT DATE:***May 2023*

**ASSESSOR:***Minsloff, Balog*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***XX Students – FIN 629A, EMT 625A*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Organization & Logic | **0** | **0** | **66** | **9.5** |
| 2: Voice Quality | **0** | **0** | **66** | **9.1** |
| 3: Physical Presence | **0** | **3** | **63** | **8.7** |
| 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Comm | **0** | **3** | **63** | **8.3** |
| 5: Transitions, Time Mgt, Q&A | **0** | **0** | **66** | **9.6** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **9.1** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **0** | **0** | **66** |

**COMMENTS:**

*Students in this program did very well with the structural and organizational aspects of presenting. Delivery quality was of a very high quality. Quality of slides also varied from student to student, but was of a generally high quality and stronger than prior semesters.*

**REMEDIAL ACTIONS:**

*Public speaking should be encouraged at all stages of the academic journey. Online learning represents a particular challenge, and instructors should get the students speaking whenever possible. Presentations delivered online are useful (and represent the general direction of the business world) but students have to learn to speak to an audience in front of them and all of the (potential) anxiety and body-language challenges that go along with that. Faculty should continue to model good presentation practices and encourage students to present multiple times in class, not just as a final project. The Writing & Communications Center is also available to help students with developing and rehearsing their presentations.*

# 9. Outcomes from Previous Assessments:

The following table shows the average scores on each goal objective.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Objective 1  Written Communication | Objective 2  Oral Communication |
| Spring 2022 | 6.7 | 9.0 |
| Spring 2023 | 6.9 | 9.1 |

# 

# 10. 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:** Andrew Stein and George Calhoun

**Where Measured:** Students are assessed in the fall in the required course:

QF101

**How Measured:** Student presentations are reviewed in class, and student essays are assessed for writing skills by submitting to MGT898. Feedback is provided to each individual student.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective 1** | *Students will be able to write effectively.* |
| **When Assessed:** | *Spring 2021* |
| **Remedial**  **Action** |  |
| **Outcome from previous assessment** |  |
| **Objective 2** | *Students will be able to deliver presentations effectively.* |
| **When Assessed:** | *Spring 2022* |
| **Remedial**  **Action** |  |
| **Outcome from previous assessment** |  |