Stevens Institute of Technology

School of Business

**AACSB  
ASSURANCE OF LEARNING**

**Master of Science in Management (MSM)**

**LEARNING GOAL # 1**

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

**Responsibility: Peter Dominick & Andrew Stein**

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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 Stevens 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.

The specific communication **competencies** that are related to this learning goal fall into two broad categories – those that apply to written communication and those that apply to oral communication.

Written communication competencies include: logic flow and organization, grammar & sentence structure, syntax, idea development

Verbal communication competencies include: clear articulation of ideas, presentation capability and confidence, appropriate use of visual aides, transitions, time management, and ability to engage the audience

# 2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND TRAITS

The following table outlines the specific learning objectives and corresponding traits for the School of Business 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** |
| **Direct Measure:**  Each student in *MGT 609 Project Management* will produce two copies of a 4-page essay that is specified by the instructor and used also as part of the normal course requirements.  **Indirect Measure**  A Student Feedback Exit Survey will be administered and imported into excel  Indirect measurements will be taken periodically. | The assessment will be performed on a sample of students by the College of Arts and Letters (CAL) Faculty using Rubrics 1 and 2 for this goal.  The indirect measure will include student feedback responses from recent or soon-to-be program graduates. | **Direct Measure:**  Students who score below (20) will be referred to Stevens tutoring and will be required to complete MGT 897 Technical Writing Webinar Series.  **Indirect Measure**  Student response/interview questions about skill development |

The MSM program assesses the communication learning skills of all students in *MGT 609 Project Management*. 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 from 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. An exit survey will also be administered to collect student feedback on new skill development.**5. RESULTS OF LEARNING GOAL ASSESSMENT – INTRO**

The results of the learning goal assessments when carried out will be 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.

**Explanation - Indirect Measure**

We will conduct a survey of recent graduates to obtain their perspective on the extent to which their studies helped them develop in relation to this Communication Learning Goal. The survey questions will focus on their communication efficacy/confidence and their perceptions on the professional relevance and application of the communication skills they learned in their graduate studies.

# 6. RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT: FALL 2021

**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 2021*

**ASSESSOR:***Pelphrey, Minsloff, Osborne*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***9 Students – BIA 650, MGT 609, MGT 610, FA 582, FE 620, MGT 635*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Logical flow | **1** | **8** | **0** | **4.1** |
| 2: Grammar & Sentence Structure | **3** | **6** | **0** | **4.1** |
| 3: Spelling & word choice | **1** | **8** | **0** | **4.8** |
| 4: Development of ideas | **2** | **7** | **0** | **3.8** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **4.2** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| **Total Students by Category**  *(Based on average score across all traits)* | **5** | **4** | **0** |

**COMMENTS:**

*About half of the students in this program who participated in the writing assessment in Fall 2021 met expectations. Scores were generally consistent across the four Learning Goals, with development of ideas being the weakest. It is not clear from this data if this represents a significant communication issue for this cohort, or if the document submitted was not suitable for this kind of assessment.*

**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:***Dec 2021*

**ASSESSOR:***Pelphrey, Minsloff, Middleton, Balog*

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS & COURSE:***XX Students – MGT 609, FA 582, FE 620*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Number of Students** | | |  |
| **Learning Goal Traits** | **Not Meet Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** | **Average Grade** |
| 1: Organization & Logic | **0** | **0** | **12** | **8.8** |
| 2: Voice Quality | **0** | **6** | **6** | **7.8** |
| 3: Physical Presence | **0** | **5** | **7** | **7.7** |
| 4: Use of Slides to Enhance Comm | **0** | **5** | **7** | **7.2** |
| 5: Transitions, Time Mgt, Q&A | **0** | **0** | **12** | **8.4** |
| **Average Grade (Out of 10) =** | | | | **8.0** |

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

**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.*















# 7. OUTCOMES: MSM LEARNING GOAL # 1 AFTER ROUNDS OF ASSESSMENT

**After First Round Review – Fall 2021**

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

We will add to this over time

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Objective 1  Written Communication | Objective 1  Oral Communication |
| Fall 2021 | 4.2 | 8.0 |

# 8. CLOSE LOOP PROCESS – CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT RECORD

**Assurance of Learning**

**Assessment/Outcome Analysis**

**Close Loop Process - Continuous Improvement Record**

Program: Master of Science in Management

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

Goal Owner: Peter Dominick & Andrew Stein

Where Measured: Each student in MGT 609 Project Management will produce two copies of a 4-page essay that is specified by the instructor and used also as part of the normal course requirements.

How Measured: The assessment will be performed on a sample of students by the College of Arts and Letters Faculty using Rubrics 1 and 2 for this goal.

Closing the Loop: Actions taken on specific objectives

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective 1** | *Students will be able to write effectively.* |
| **When Assessed:** | *Fall 2021* |
| **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. 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* |
| **Outcome from previous** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective 2** | *Students will be able to write effectively.* |
| **When Assessed:** | *Fall 2021* |
| **Remedial**  **Action** | *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.* |
| **Outcome from previous** |  |

# APPENDIX A: CURRENT PROCESS

The current assessment and review process 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 (Moodle 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 (Andrew Stein). 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 through Moodle, 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 Moodle.
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 Business 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:** | | | |  |