

Program: Communication

Intended Outcome: Students shall demonstrate the written communication skills one would expect of a professional in their field of communication or mass communication.

Means of Assessment: We have been working to develop assessment methodologies within the department. Ideally, we would like to employ outside experts to assess our students' writing abilities. Without the resources to do so, we rely upon direct internal and indirect external assessment methodologies. In this assessment, we employ a portfolio create as part of our capstone Senior Seminar course.

Type of Assessment: Portfolio

Criteria for Success: Student portfolios are evaluated by faculty within the department and outside experts in the field of mass communication. At least two individuals evaluate each portfolio. In order to be deemed a "success," the portfolio must receive a passing ("acceptable") grade from both evaluators.

Results or Progress: Of the 34 portfolios submitted for evaluation in Senior Seminar during the spring semester, only one was deemed unacceptable. In addition to the straight P/F approach to portfolios, we gather additional written feedback from our evaluators. With regard to written communication skills, we gathered the following responses: * "expresses self well" * "Good writing experience on campus" * "Good writing samples" * " Lots of one style of writing. Encouraged her to add in different writing examples and to highlight more of the internships." * "Nice cover letter" * "Good writer" In general, our evaluators found our students to be solid writers. However, we would like to see students given more opportunity to explore different writing activities on and off campus.

Use of Results for Improvement: Our portfolio program has been very successful at preparing students to enter the career field of their choice. It appears to indicate that the vast majority of our students achieve an acceptable level of written communication skills, as one would expect of a professional in the field. However, they appear to be imperfect instruments for fully assessing writing. In the future, we would do well to add a component where evaluators are encouraged to make a statement specifically related to the students' written communication ability.

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Means of Assessment: We conduct a grammar exam for students in our introductory core course, Writing for Communication. This year we conducted a similar grammar exam for students in our capstone Senior Seminar course.

Type of Assessment: Course-embedded measure

Criteria for Success: Students must achieve a grade of "70" to pass the grammar exam. First-year students are given two opportunities to take the grammar exam during COMM 115. Typically 10-25 percent fail on the first attempt.

Results or Progress: All of our Senior Seminar students passed the grammar exam with a minimum score of 70 on their first attempt. We compared the scores of these individual students to their scores during the first-year course. On average, students achieved a grade of 85.11 in their senior year, compared with 76.6 their first year. Comparing individual student scores, 33 student scores improved (average 9.74), while three declined (average -4).

Use of Results for Improvement: We appear to be doing well when it comes to teaching our students grammar through their four years in the department. For future assessment, we hope to offer a practice grammar exam to students in their first week of Writing for Communication. Currently it is offered near the end of the course. We believe this will give us a better baseline for future comparison.

Program: Communication

Intended Outcome: Students shall demonstrate the ability to apply moral values to judge ethical cases in the field of communication or mass communication.

Means of Assessment: Students are required to write ethical case studies as part of the Communication Ethics course in their junior year. Students employ as a rubric the Potter Box model of ethical reasoning. This consists of four categories-- Facts, Values, Principles and Loyalties -- which students use to generate an ethically defensible decision. Students complete six ethical case studies before the final exam. In the final they are presented with a seventh case study.

Type of Assessment: Course-embedded measure

Criteria for Success: Student final exams were examined in order to ensure that students properly used a moral value (ethical principle) to judge the ethical case in their final exam. Students who did so were judged acceptable, while those who did not were judged unacceptable. Further analysis was done on the types of ethical principles used. In past years, students had been tending to rely too much (and not well) on the principle of Egoism. This year they were introduced to the principle of Reciprocal Altruism as an alternative to Egoism. To assess the success of this strategy, final case studies were also examined to code the specific type(s) or moral value employed to judge ethical cases.

Results or Progress: All students in both sections of Communication Ethics successfully demonstrated the ability to apply moral values in judging ethical cases. On the secondary subject of assessment, four students employed ethical Egoism in analyzing their case studies. In addition, four students utilized Reciprocal Altruism in analyzing their cases. This would seem to indicate that the introduction of Reciprocal Altruism has been somewhat successful in drawing students away from strict Egoism in rendering ethical decisions.

Use of Results for Improvement: We would ideally like to expand our assessment of the students' ability to use moral values to analyze ethical cases. While the most obvious place to do so would be in our department's Senior Seminar capstone class, we have some concern that this course is becoming too "assessment heavy." The department needs to explore more standardized methodologies for assessing program learning outcomes in this area. Discussions with the Department of Philosophy could prove helpful in this.