

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): Communication

Department: Communication

Degree or Certificate Level: B.A.

College/School: College of Arts and Sciences

Date (Month/Year): September 2023

Assessment Contact: Dan Kozlowski, Chair

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2022-2023 academic year and Spring 2023 exit survey

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2019

Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization or subject to state/licensure requirements? No

If yes, please share how this affects the program's assessment process (e.g., number of learning outcomes assessed, mandated exams or other assessment methods, schedule or timing of assessment, etc.):

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please provide the complete list of the program's learning outcome statements and **bold** the SLOs assessed in this cycle.)

1. Graduates will be able to create oral, written and digital messages relevant to the audience, purpose and context.
2. Graduates will be able to apply communication theory.
3. **Graduates will be able to engage in communication research.**
4. Graduates will be able to critically analyze messages.
5. Graduates will be able to demonstrate cultural communication competence.
6. Graduates will be able to apply ethical communication principles and practices.
7. Graduates will be able to recognize and address systemic injustice and inequity in pursuit of a just society.

In the 2022-23 academic year, we collected data for PLO3: Students will be able to engage in communication research. We also sent an exit survey to graduating students from the St. Louis program in Spring 2023 as an indirect assessment of all of our PLOS.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe the artifacts in detail, identify the course(s) in which they were collected, and if they are from program majors/graduates and/or other students. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

To assess PLO3, we collected data using assignments from seniors who were communication majors in upper-division courses in Spring 2023 on both the St. Louis and Madrid campuses. The courses included CMM 3090, CMM 3500, CMM 3710, CMM 4500, CMM 4600, CMM 4720, and CMM 4930 on the St. Louis campus and CMM 3300, CMM 3460, and CMM 4930 on the Madrid campus. Assignments were collected from 51 students across those courses.

The assignments that were collected varied from course to course. Instructors were asked if they had an assignment or artifact in their courses relevant to PLO3. I include an example assignment from one class (CMM 3090) in the appendix.

In Spring 2023, graduating students on the St. Louis campus were sent an exit survey measuring their perceptions of learning across all PLOs. Fifteen students completed the survey.

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

To assess PLO3, faculty teaching the aforementioned courses evaluated relevant assignments by senior communication majors. Faculty used our Communication Research Rubric, which is modified from a rubric created for the VALUES Rubrics for assessment. The rubric is attached at the end of this report.

As mentioned, perceptual assessment data were collected through an exit survey of graduating seniors to assess students' perceptions of learning across all PLOs.

4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

The greatest number of students (28) scored at the capstone level for the existing knowledge, research, and/or views dimension. For the topic selection dimension, 26 students scored at the capstone level. Overall, for five of the dimensions, more than 85% of the students scored at the advanced-intermediate or capstone level. The lowest reported scores were for the limitations and implications and ethical considerations dimensions. For both of those dimensions, instructors chose NA as the score for more than 25% of the student artifacts.

The report below shows the aggregate data on student performance for each dimension of the rubric.

The response rate for our exit survey was about 40%, with 15 of 37 students completing it. The report on the means and standard deviations for each item is appended below. Two questions on the exit survey asked students to rate their level of agreement that they had acquired knowledge specifically related to PLO3. For the statement "The program encouraged me to develop my research skills," the mean was 4.73 on a 5-point scale, with a standard deviation of .57. For the statement "I am able to gather information from multiple sources and make critical judgments about the value of that information," the mean was 4.80, with a standard deviation of .54.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you? Address both a) learning gaps and possible curricular or pedagogical remedies, and b) strengths of curriculum and pedagogy.

With more than half of the students scoring at the capstone level for two of the dimensions (topic selection and existing knowledge, research, and/or views), our graduating students seem to be particularly adept at identifying significant topics and synthesizing information from relevant sources. These are key elements of engaging in research.

Overall, as mentioned above, for five of the dimensions, more than 85% of the students scored at the advanced-intermediate or capstone level. The data suggest that, on balance, our program seems to be successfully preparing students for important dimensions of the research process.

For two of the dimensions (limitations and implications and ethical considerations), instructors chose NA as the score for more than 25% of the student artifacts. These results suggest we should evaluate both the content of the rubric as well as its applicability to certain assignments.

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss the results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

The assessment results were collected in summer 2023. They have been shared with members of the department's assessment committee and will be shared with the full faculty this academic year. We will discuss the results at a faculty meeting.

B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites
- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

The department's assessment committee plans to examine the Communication Research Rubric to evaluate its effectiveness. In addition to evaluating the rubric's appropriateness for certain assignments, this assessment cycle revealed deficiencies with the rubric – namely, that the rubric includes multiple measurable attributes within a single dimension. This feature diminishes the rubric's reliability.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of previous assessment data?

In response to previous assessment of our PLO related to writing, our department in 2018 held a workshop, led by Gina Merys, focused on understanding and responding to diverse student ability levels. The workshop and the subsequent conversations in our department focused on items such as best practices for providing feedback on writing and best practices for helping students who find writing particularly challenging.

B. How has the change/have these changes identified in 7A been assessed?

We assessed the writing PLO in the 2021-2022 year.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

The data collected that year suggested our program seems to be successfully preparing students to create messages relevant to the audience, purpose and context.

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

We continue to emphasize the importance of writing in our curriculum. This year, we're working on revising and submitting another course (CMM 2120) for the writing-intensive component of the university core.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., artifact prompts, rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted/appended into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document. Thank you.

ASSESSMENT DATA: COMMUNICATION B.A.

I. Direct Assessment of PLO3: Students will be able to engage in communication research.

We have one rubric to assess this PLO. The Communication Research Rubric has seven dimensions. The rubric is appended below.

Students in our major on the St. Louis campus choose from one of three concentrations: Integrated Strategic Communication (ISC), Communication Studies (COMM ST), and Journalism and Media Studies (JAMS). The data below shows the total numbers for each dimension and also breaks out the data by concentration and by campus.

For each dimension, 1 = Benchmark, 2 = Intermediate Level of Achievement, 3 = Advanced-Intermediate Level of Achievement, 4 = Capstone.

Communication Research Rubric

		Level of Achievement			
		4	3	2	1
Topic selection	Total:	26	22	3	
	ISC	13	12	2	
	COMM ST	1	4		
	JAMS	8	5		
	MADRID	4	1	1	

		Level of Achievement			
		4	3	2	1
Existing Knowledge, Research, and Views	Total:	28	15	7	1
	ISC	16	7	4	
	COMM ST		3	2	
	JAMS	9	4		
	MADRID	3	1	1	1

		Level of Achievement			
		4	3	2	1
Design Process	Total:	22	23	5	1
	ISC	9	14	4	
	COMM ST		4	1	
	JAMS	10	3		
	MADRID	3	2		1

		Level of Achievement			
		4	3	2	1
Analysis	Total:	22	22	7	
	ISC	10	13	4	
	COMM ST		4	1	
	JAMS	8	5		
	MADRID	4		2	

		Level of Achievement 4	3	2	1
Conclusions	Total:	15	29	7	
	ISC	6	17	4	
	COMM ST		4	1	
	JAMS	6	7		
	MADRID	3	1	2	

		Level of Achievement 4	3	2	1	NA
Limitations and Implications	Total:	9	21	7		14
	ISC	5	13	4		5
	COMM ST	1	1	3		
	JAMS		5			8
	MADRID	3	2			1

		Level of Achievement 4	3	2	1	NA
Ethical Considerations	Total:	14	13	6		18
	ISC	7	10	5		5
	COMM ST	1	3			1
	JAMS	3				10
	MADRID	3		1		2

II. Indirect Assessment of Student Learning: Exit Survey

The following data come from an exit survey of graduating seniors conducted each spring on the St. Louis campus. Students were asked to indicate their agreement (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) with a set of statements tailored to fit each of our PLOs. Fifteen students completed the survey this year.

Quantitative Perceptual Data

Outcome Dimensions and Items	M	SD
<i>Students will create oral, written and digital messages relevant to the audience, purpose and context.</i>		
The program encouraged me to develop my written communication skills.	5	0
I have writing skills that will allow me to communicate effectively and independently in a variety of situations.	4.87	.34
The program encouraged me to develop my oral communication and presentation skills.	4.80	.40
I have oral communication skills that will allow me to communicate effectively and independently in a variety of situations.	4.60	.71
The program encouraged me to develop my digital production skills.	4.67	.60
I am prepared to learn to use new and emerging communication technologies and software.	4.60	.61
<i>Students will engage in communication research.</i>		
The program encouraged me to develop my research skills.	4.73	.57
I am able to gather information from multiple sources and make critical judgments about the value of that information.	4.80	.54
<i>Students will critically analyze messages.</i>		
The program encouraged me to develop my critical thinking skills.	4.80	.40
I am prepared to analyze arguments and information in order to make critical judgments about important issues in my life and my community.	4.67	.60
<i>Students will demonstrate cultural communication competence.</i>		

The program consistently emphasized the importance of culture and diversity.	4.79	.41
I have an understanding of cultures other than my own.	4.67	.47
<i>Students will recognize and address systemic injustice and inequity in pursuit of a just society.</i>		
The program consistently emphasized the importance of social justice.	4.67	.60
I understand my civic responsibilities as a local and global citizen.	4.80	.40
<i>Students will apply ethical communication principles and practices.</i>		
The program consistently emphasized the importance of ethics.	4.80	.40
I am able to make ethical judgments and take action based on broad knowledge.	4.73	.44

Example Assignment from CMM 3090 Health Communication

Overview

Each student will complete an independent, semester-long project that offers students an opportunity to explore an issue in health communication from three different contexts/levels posited by an ecological model of health communication. During the first two weeks of class, the class will learn and discuss an ecological perspective to health communication which demonstrates how health behavior and health choices are situated in a complex ecology and conditioned on a variety of environmental factors. Although the ecological contexts or levels may vary depending on the behavior, most can be situated on the basis of cultural, interpersonal, organizational, societal, and media levels. The charge for the semester project is to examine a topic in health communication from three different ecological levels. In doing so, you will elicit knowledge and understanding from three different perspectives. You will then analyze your findings and provide a recommendation for next steps to address the issue. To give a broad example, if you chose the topic of provider-patient communication, the different levels of the ecological perspective may manifest in the following manner:

- **Interpersonal level** - communication between a patient and a physician is frequently dyadic and affected by verbal and nonverbal behavior and style
- **Organizational level** - provider-patient communication is situated within a health care organization
- **Societal level** - communication between a patient and provider is constrained by political and legal factors
- **Cultural level** – the cultural background (ethnicity, beliefs, socioeconomic status) of each person in the interaction may influence the interaction and outcomes of the interaction
- **Media level** – communication between patients and providers is sometimes mediated by technology or affected by media

Topic Proposal Paper

In this paper, you are asked to articulate the health communication topic of interest and propose four different perspectives/ecological levels from which to explore and examine your topic. (Although you will only write on three different levels throughout the semester, students are asked to consider four and rank order your preference for exploration. Your instructor will guide your final selection, given the state of research and practice on your particular topic.)

Thus, you should propose four perspectives and place them in order of preference. Provide a brief synopsis of your topic and rationale for examining the topic from four different levels of the ecological perspective. You are encouraged to provide a diagram (like one offered in class) that illustrates the ecology within which you see your topic situated. A successful paper will likely be 2-3 pages in length (double spaced). You should provide 3-4 references in your synopsis to demonstrate the prevalence of the issue in both popular press and research.

Exploration Papers

After your instructor has approved your topic and the three ecological levels for your exploration, you will write a paper addressing your topic from the standpoint of each ecological perspective that accomplishes the following goals:

1. Reviews scholarship relevant to your topic that examines your topic from the ecological perspective at hand
2. Summarizes interviews or field observations that you complete in order to gain first-hand knowledge of your topic
3. Synthesizes what can be learned based on your research, interviews, and observations
4. Demonstrates how the knowledge you uncovered can be applied to address the issue at hand (for example, how teachers, health care providers, patients, executives, activists, and/or researchers might use or benefit from this knowledge)

Each Exploration Paper should build on at least one of the following:

- Two brief (approximately 30-minute) interviews with informants who can provide distinctive insight into your topic

- One extended interview (about 60-minutes in length) with an informant to provide in-depth insight on your topic
- Two short field observations (about 30 minutes each) on two different occasions
- One extended field observation (about 60 minutes in length)

When soliciting persons to interview and permissions to observe, clearly explain that you are taking a class in health communication and explain the purpose of your project. Please explain (and ensure) that the names of those interviewed or observed will be kept confidential. No one except your instructor will know their identities (and only for confirmation purposes) and will not be shared otherwise. When presenting findings of your research to the class, you will use pseudonyms. Note that you will not share any of the information from interviewees or observations with anyone except your class. You will turn in the following information about your observations and interviews:

For observations:

- Name of place where you observed interactions
- Name of person and role of person who gave you permission to observe (unless the place of observation is public space)
- Date and time of observation
- Roles of individuals observed
- Copy of field notes from observations

For interviews:

- Name and background information of person interviewed
- Date and time of interview
- Copy of interview protocol and notes taken during interview
- If given permission to record the interview (recommended), the transcript from the interview (this can be downloaded from Zoom or Panopto); destroy recordings after you finish your analysis

Each Exploration Paper should include 4-5 scholarly references. Papers should incorporate knowledge gained from informants and observations using quotes from informants and/or summaries of observations to ground your claims. Findings should be synthesized clearly and applied concretely to the health communication context at hand. Each Exploration Paper should be about 4-5 pages in length in APA format (unless you use a different reference format in your field).

Final Manuscript

After completing each application paper and receiving feedback from the instructor, you will edit your papers accordingly and bring them together for a final manuscript. The format for your manuscript should include:

- An introduction that provides:
 - A synopsis of topic and rationale for exploration
 - An summary and preview of the relevant ecological levels of interest
- An exploration of the topic from each ecological angle (i.e., revised versions of each initial exploration papers arranged in short “chapters” in the full manuscript)
- A final recommendation “chapter” that provides:
 - A brief summary that reminds a reader of what was illuminated by exploring the topic from three different ecological levels
 - A synthesis of what can be learned by examining the topic from the three ecological perspectives together
 - When considered from various ecological contexts/angles/standpoints/levels together, what is learned?

- What knowledge emerges when considering the topic from three different levels/perspectives together?
- Put another way, without examining the issue from three different ecological levels, what are important gaps or blind spots?
- Given the knowledge that has been gained, recommendations for future action
 - What is the most important/imperative action and why? Explain and articulate intended consequences of said actions in light of theory and research.
 - Describe how recommended action(s) build upon research and theory in health communication. Describe how recommendations attend to needs uncovered in exploration of each ecological context.
 - Consider potential unanticipated consequences and what could be done to minimize unintended consequences.
 - Discuss what additional research, knowledge, and resources would be needed to accomplish the recommended actions.
 - Identify the intended outcomes of the proposed actions and how effectiveness of achieving those outcomes might be assessed.
 - Close your manuscript with a discussion of the value of your recommended actions.

Successful papers will be between 16 and 20 pages in length, integrate at least 10 scholarly references in APA format, incorporate interviews and observations accordingly given the criteria noted above for exploration papers, and include a reference page in APA style. (If your discipline uses a different citation style, please let your instructor know.)

Communication Research Rubric

	Capstone 4	Milestones		Benchmark 1
		3	2	
Topic selection	Identifies a creative, focused, and manageable topic that addresses potentially significant yet previously less-explored aspects of the topic.	Identifies a focused and manageable/ doable topic that appropriately addresses relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that, while manageable/ doable, is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that is far too general and wide-ranging as to be manageable and doable.
Existing Knowledge, Research, and/or Views	Synthesizes in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/ approaches.	Presents in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/ approaches.	Presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/ approaches.	Presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view/ approaches.
Design Process	All elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are skillfully developed. Appropriate methodology or theoretical frameworks may be synthesized from across disciplines or from relevant sub disciplines.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are appropriately developed; however, more subtle elements are ignored or unaccounted for.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are missing, incorrectly developed, or unfocused.	Inquiry design demonstrates a misunderstanding of the methodology or theoretical framework.
Analysis	Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities.	Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to focus.
Conclusions	States a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings.	States a conclusion focused solely on the inquiry findings. The conclusion arises specifically from and responds specifically to the inquiry findings.	States a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings.	States an ambiguous, illogical, or unsupported conclusion from inquiry findings.
Limitations and Implications	Insightfully discusses in detail relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Discusses relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Presents relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Presents limitations and implications, but they are possibly irrelevant and unsupported.
Ethical Considerations	Provides a comprehensive explanation of the basis for ethical behavior/ decision by showing evidence of gathering pertinent facts and information that support the behavior/ decision, including matters related to human subjects.	Can provide a logical explanation of the basis for the ethical behavior/ decision by showing some evidence of gathering pertinent facts and information that support the behavior/ decision, including matters related to human subjects.	Can provide a general explanation of the basis for the ethical behavior/ decision, but is unsure of what evidence must be gathered to help resolve the ethical issues.	Provides a superficial explanation of the basis for ethical behavior/ decision.