

Assessment of Competence in Oral Communication ILO

Direct Assessment

In 2012-2013, the Office of Educational Effectiveness collected video recordings of oral presentations from different courses with the intention to assess student learning in relation to the Competence in Oral Communication ILO that reads as follows:

Graduates of Westmont College will effectively communicate orally in various contexts.

Methods and tools

In summer 2013, the Task Force on Assessing Oral Communication comprised of four faculty members from all three divisions codified 16 presentations out of 27 recorded individual presentations. These presentations came from biology, chemistry, communication studies, English, history, internships, and music. The presentations were assessed using the locally developed rubric based largely on the National Communication Association Competent Speaker Evaluation Form. Each speech was scored in seven categories using a scale of 1 (C- and lower), 2 (C-B range), or 3 (B+ to A+ range). Five speeches were scored by more than one coder for norming/inter-rater reliability; where scores differed, they were not included in statistical calculations.

Results

Table I. Competence in Oral Communication assessment results, 2013-2014:

Presentation Competencies	Mean	Mode
Topic Selection	2.93	3
Communicating Thesis	2.00	2
Supporting Material	2.40	2
Organization	2.08	2
Language	2.60	3
Vocal Delivery	2.25	2
Physical Presence	2.07	2

The 2013-2014 Competence in Oral Communication assessment results suggest that Westmont's graduating students appear to be competent in the areas of finding good supporting material for their speeches and in choosing and using appropriate language – appropriate for the audience, occasion, topic, and purpose of the presentation. They appear to be less able to clearly state a compelling thesis and eloquently speak extemporaneously, and appear somewhat uncomfortable in establishing a physical presence and using their bodies to gesture purposefully and meaningfully. Students appear to write very good research papers and spend very little time and thought planning an oral presentation based on their written work. Either presentations are too casual, or consist of reading a paper. Good presentations across disciplines involve persuasive

story telling which is not usually accomplished simply by reading a research paper, talking to a projected slide, or casually chatting about lessons learned in a research or internship process.

Indirect Assessment

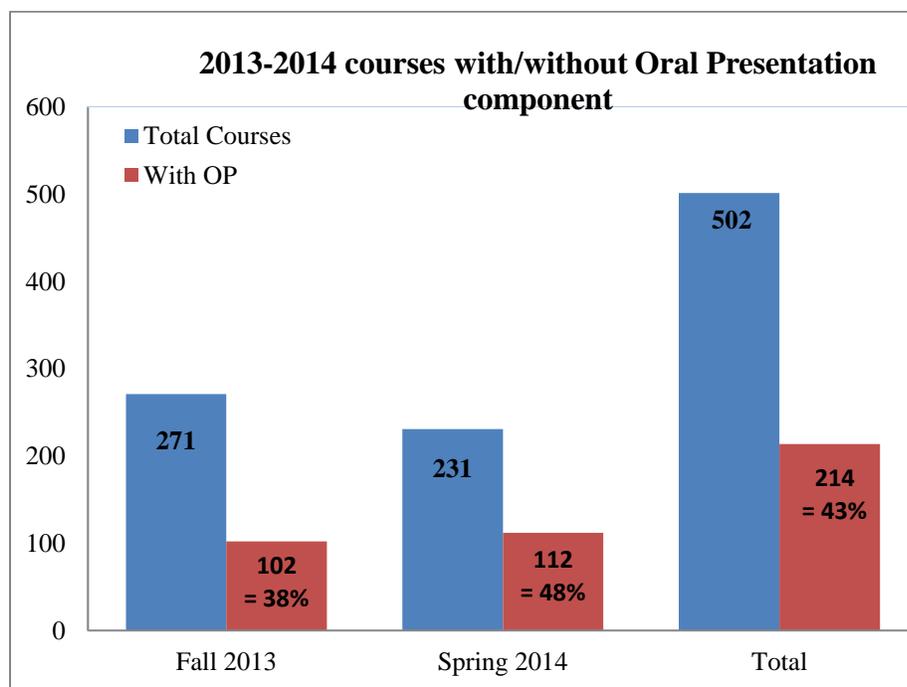
Methods and tools

In 2013-2014, the G.E. committee conducted a comprehensive syllabi review. All posted syllabi for courses offered in fall 2013 and spring 2014 (n=502) with accompanying prompts, discussion tips, and presentation guides were evaluated for possible oral presentation components by utilizing the code sheet for oral presentations developed by the Department of Communication Studies faculty.

Results

It appears that Westmont teaching on oral communication is broader than initially thought. Out of the 502 evaluated syllabi, 43% (n=214) list at least one element of oral presentation. However, much of oral communication work is embedded within courses that are not certified as speech-intensive for the General Education (GE) program. At the time of assessment, only three courses were certified as speech-intensive and only one of them was offered every semester.

Table II. Oral Communication Syllabi Review, 2013-2014.



Recommendations for improvement

Guided by the results of the direct and indirect assessment of the Competence in Oral Communication, the Academic Senate made the following recommendation:

1. Replace the G.E. Speech-Intensive course category with a more inclusive Competence in Oral Communication requirement (ILO).
2. Mandate the G.E. Committee to articulate the Competence in Oral Communication ILO and certification criteria for this requirement.

3. Ensure that all academic departments have a course or courses fulfilling the Competence in Oral Communication requirement within their major. Allow departments to align their Oral Communication requirements with their guild standards. The designated major courses with the focus on oral communication will be used for assessing student competence in oral communication skills across the curriculum.

Closing-the-loop activities

1. The G.E. Committee in collaboration with the Department of Communication Studies developed the Oral Communication Competencies document to be used for assessing the ILO across the curriculum. The document was revised by the Program Review Committee and presented to the Academic Senate in Spring 2015.
2. The Academic Senate mandated the G.E. Committee and the Registrar Office to develop the plan for replacing the G.E. Speech-Intensive course category with the institutional Competence in Oral Communication requirement.
3. The presentation on effective teaching and learning oral communication skills by the Department of Communication Studies faculty is scheduled for Fall 2015. (???)