

Communication Beyond Carolina – Course Development Guide

The Communication Beyond Carolina requirement emphasizes the role of oral communication, with particular attention to tailoring communication to different audiences.

Five learning outcomes

1. Ascertain the expectations, opportunities, and barriers to oral communication in distinct situations.
2. Tailor communications to different kinds of settings, including individual, small group, and public communication.
3. Tailor communications to different levels of expertise (inexpert, informed, expert) and/or to varying levels of alignment (resistant, ambivalent, supportive).
4. Make informed situation- and audience-sensitive strategic choices in content and delivery.
5. Reflect on and use feedback to improve one’s practice and ability to move or inform an audience.

Overview of this Guide:

This guide is for instructors designing/adjusting a communication-based course within their discipline using a rhetoric framework, with which they may not be familiar. As such, students will have the opportunity to practice and demonstrate the outcomes authentically within their disciplines, as they are becoming experts within capstone courses, research courses, etc.

Communication Beyond Carolina (CommBeyond) requires the syllabus to dedicate at least 70% of the content or grade to communication activity. But rather than think about developing different “communication assignments,” consider how communication might enrich a variety of assignments and class engagements. The more opportunities students have to assess and respond to different rhetorical situations, the more competent communicators they will become.

Your assignments will be tailored to different audiences. If it is possible to have people outside the classroom participate in presentations, this would be a wonderful learning opportunity. However, it is not a requirement. Example assignments are included to spark your imagination about how you could adapt these types of assignments in your course.

As you carefully design assignments, also carefully design rubrics that help you assess the elements of effective communication. Example rubrics are provided at the end of the guide.

The Program for Public Discourse offers workshops and consultations for faculty and students. In addition, the Center for Faculty Excellence can assist with curriculum development and rubric design.

Learning Outcome 1

Ascertain the expectations, opportunities, and barriers to oral communication in distinct situations.

How should I begin to teach students how to assess distinct rhetorical situations?

1. Ask students to critique sample speeches and other presentations in your discipline using the situation analysis template below.
2. Create oral presentation assignments that are scaffolded using the analysis template. For example, have students submit the situation analysis template in the planning stages of a presentation. Return your feedback on their analysis so they can incorporate your feedback before they give the presentation. Try varying the type of situations across different assignments to help students experiment more widely.

Rhetorical Situation Analysis Template*:

What is the exigence (the urgent demand compelling me to speak)?
Who is my audience (what do they know, believe, value, etc.)?
What is the stasis (the specific point of conflict undergirding my presentation, e.g., a question of fact, definition, value, or policy)?
What are my constraints (barriers to persuading or informing my audience, e.g., time, motivation, age, experience, politics, personal interests, etc.)?
What are my available means of persuasion or education (the tools or rhetorical strategies I can employ to overcome my constraints)?

**(Add more specific questions to satisfy the demands of the particular assignment and situation)*

Learning Outcome 2

Tailor communications to different kinds of settings, including individual, small group, and public communication.

How should I begin to teach students about settings?

1. Use sample presentations within your discipline to ask students to compare communication in individual settings to public settings. (In individual settings, communication is typically more interpersonal and improvisational. By contrast, public settings typically are more formal and require speakers to construct messages for complex, diverse compositions of audiences. If a speaker assumes everyone shares the same experiences, they can alienate their audience.)
2. To help students learn how each setting demands different rhetorical choices, create oral presentation assignments that allow students to experiment with different types of settings, perhaps divided by individual, small group, and public. (For example, students negotiating a

peace treaty may first communicate in small groups with foreign leaders, before eventually communicating their proposed resolution to the public.

Learning Outcome 3

Tailor communications to different levels of expertise (inexpert, informed, expert), and/or to varying levels of alignment (resistant, ambivalent, supportive).

How should I begin to teach students about expertise?

1. Use sample presentations given to different levels of expertise within your discipline and ask students to identify specific rhetorical features that the speaker uses to tailor the communications to that audience (i.e. appropriate terminology, level of depth, formality, and background information.) Ask students if the speaker hit the mark with the audience or if they risked confusing, upsetting, and ultimately alienating their audience.
2. Create assignments that allow students to craft messages for specific actual (or hypothetical) audiences other than just the class. Different groups of students could be assigned to different levels of audiences.

How should I begin to teach students about levels of alignment?

1. Use sample presentations given to varying levels of alignment within your discipline and ask students to identify specific rhetorical features that the speaker uses. Some sample questions, include:
 - With resistant audiences, how did the speaker first build identification?
 - With supportive audiences, how did the speaker take greater risks and ask for greater levels of commitment?
 - With ambivalent audiences, how did the speaker first overcome ignorance and apathy?
 - With mixed audiences, how did the speaker connect to the audience via broad, unifying themes?
2. Create oral presentation assignments that allow students to craft messages for audiences with varying levels of alignment. Different groups of students could be assigned to different levels of audiences.

Learning Outcome 4

Make informed situation- and audience-sensitive strategic choices in content and delivery.

How should I begin to teach students about content choices?

1. Use sample presentations within your discipline and ask students to identify specific rhetorical choices the speaker uses around content such as:
 - statistics, analogies, definitions, and testimonies (differing informative strategies)
 - inductive, deductive or narrative reasoning (differing persuasive strategies)
 - differing logical, emotional, and ethical appeals
 - different levels of linguistic formality

2. As part of the planning process in a presentation, assign students to construct a full-sentence outline of their presentation, highlighting their rhetorical choices.
3. Create oral presentation assignments that require students to make strategic content choices around varying situations and audiences. Assign students to record and self-critique their presentations to assess how they can make better informed choices in the future.

How should I begin to teach students about delivery choices?

1. Use sample presentations within your discipline and ask students to identify specific rhetorical delivery features that make the presentation highly formal, semi-formal presentation with some extemporaneous delivery or improvisational.
2. As part of the planning process in a presentation, assign students to construct a full-sentence outline of their presentation, highlighting their rhetorical choices.
3. Create oral presentation assignments that require students to make choices around formal, semi-formal presentation, and improvisational delivery. Assign students to record and self-critique their presentations to assess how they can make better informed choices in the future.

Learning Outcome 5

Reflect on and use feedback to improve one's practice and ability to move or inform an audience.

How should I begin to teach students to reflect on their presentation and incorporate feedback?

1. Have students watch different presentations within your discipline (with a range of quality). Ask students to practice making observations and articulating constructive criticism to the presenter utilizing rubrics you will use with their future work. Have a Q&A about giving and receiving challenging feedback.
2. Create assignments that have scaffolding built into the project to give students repeated opportunities to receive feedback from varied audiences (such as peers, community, and instructor) and reflect on the feedback. For example, students may first record, view, and critique their own oral presentation. Next, they may present to peers and receive feedback to revise before presenting to an outside audience. Lastly, students may be asked to reflect on the audience's feedback (such as confusion, boredom, disagreement) and how they would revise their presentation based on the audience feedback.
3. Consider different kinds of instructor feedback to help students reach long-term goals. A combination of quantitative and qualitative feedback can be useful, allowing students to focus on specific aspects of their communication while also appreciating the bigger picture of their work. A few sample rubrics are available that can be adapted for specific assignments and disciplines. Consider scaffolding feedback too, such that a few global ideas are addressed first (such as structure, research, and argument) before working on smaller issues (word choice, types of examples, pacing, etc.)

Prepared by a faculty working group and the Office of Undergraduate Curricula, July 2021