

Report on Outcomes Assessment
QU Communication Program
May 2015

University Mission

Quincy University stands as a Catholic, independent, liberal arts institution of higher learning in the Franciscan tradition. Inspired by the spirit of Francis and Clare of Assisi, we respect each person as a sister or brother with dignity, value, and worth. We work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We prepare men and women for leadership and for the transformation of the world by educating them to seek knowledge that leads to wisdom. We welcome and invite all to share our spirit and our life.

Mission of the Communication Program

The Quincy University Communication program provides students with knowledge, practical opportunities, and grounding in ethical principles to prepare them to meet the challenges and opportunities of professional and personal communication. Students are guided to synthesize learning in the varied fields of communication and to apply their abilities with respect for each individual and within a context of service to the profession, to their communities, and to our global society.

Learning Outcomes: Communication Program

Graduates of the Quincy University Communication Program will exhibit competence in the following areas. Detailed rubrics for each area of competence are supplied in the *Assessment Handbook* of the Communication Program.

Media Writing

Students will be able to produce written work reflecting the conventions and standards of the media.

Speaking

Students will be able to compose and present speeches reflecting audience awareness and the conventions and standards of spoken rhetoric.

Legal and Ethical Contexts

Students will exhibit a working knowledge of laws and ethical principles relevant to professional and personal communication.

Social and Political Contexts

Students will exhibit a functional understanding of a variety of social and political contexts in which professional and communication take place.

Areas of Professional Specialization

Students will present written evidence of a high level of competence in the area or areas of major field concentration.

Professional Leadership

In keeping with the Quincy University mission of transformative action, students will demonstrate the characteristics of a leader within the professions of journalism, public relations, broadcasting, or another field of communication.

Media Literacy

In keeping with the liberal arts emphasis upon critical reflection and analysis, students will present evidence of sophisticated understanding of the specialized tools of mediated communication and the problems and responsibilities with which such communication may be associated.

Citizenship and Service

In keeping with the Franciscan character of their education, students will demonstrate an understanding of the potential for service specific to their skills and occupational roles and a commitment to seeking opportunities to serve.

Relationship of missions and outcomes to assessment

The mission of the QU Communication program draws inspiration from the QU mission in the following specific ways:

1. Faculty members provide opportunities to gain knowledge, and they guide students in the synthesis of knowledge and experience that leads to wisdom. The program focuses on internship and campus opportunities to gain practical experience, and faculty members support students in the effort to integrate theory with practice.

The major assessment of the knowledge and wisdom of Communication majors takes place at the conclusion of the senior year. The Senior (baccalaureate) assessment requires students to demonstrate both knowledge and wisdom through a process that includes

- An extemporaneous presentation on a topic that relates communication theory to practice;
 - Presentation of a scholarly paper that involves first-hand research on a topic related to communication theory;
 - Successful completion of a post-test demonstrating knowledge of the field;
 - Presentation of a portfolio of exhibits representing the eight areas of competence. Each exhibit includes a self-assessment, and the eight exhibits are assessed by members of the Communication Advisory Board.
2. The students are called to demonstrate respect for each individual through examples of Franciscan leadership and service.
- Respect for the individual (including sources, subjects, and audience) is a central criterion in evaluation of all work submitted by students in the Communication program.
 - Two exhibits—Leadership and Service—are required as part of senior assessment.

Overview

In 2015, the eleventh year of formal assessment for the program, senior assessment again yielded satisfying results. Most notably, overall results improved after consecutive years of declining scores. External evaluators praised the students' preparation in the extemporaneous theory speeches and the depth and originality of their research. An added emphasis was placed on the research process in 2015 with an average length of the research papers of 25 pages and an average of 20 academic sources.

Methods

A copy of the *Communication Assessment Handbook* and is available upon request. Per suggestion from the Academic Assessment Committee, the senior seminar rubric is included in this report.

Senior Assessment Procedures

Each student prepares a portfolio of exhibits representing accomplishments in the eight areas of key competency identified in the *Assessment Handbook*. Portfolios are compiled in print versions and electronically by means of the Moodle course management system. Print portfolios are presented to a panel consisting of outside evaluators, three full-time faculty members, and part-time faculty members. Each student is also required to deliver a spontaneous response to a prompt on communication theory, to present a five-minute summary of the seminar paper/project, and to respond to questions on the research paper/project.

This year's outside evaluators outside of the Communication faculty included Heidi Meyer, QU's director of university communications, Benjamin Braun, QU's coordinator of university and alumni communications, and Kristen Liesen, QU's director of career services.

This year, the work of thirteen students was reviewed over a period of three days; an evaluation form was used to record comments on presentations and portfolios. The portfolios were retained for additional scrutiny over several weeks. At the conclusion of the assessment period, the faculty member conferred with the independent evaluators and later met to analyze written data on the senior assessment processes. The portfolios are permanently retained by the Communication department for assessment purposes and are available upon request.

The Baccalaureate Assessment Process

In 2005, the Communication faculty introduced a research methods course and began to place additional emphasis on the use of first-hand sources in all communication research. This course was revised in the light of the results of the 2006 baccalaureate assessment, and has been offered biennially. The focused relationship of this course to the research process of the seminar has enabled seniors to enter the seminar well prepared to begin the portfolio and major paper/project.

This year the seminar was held three days a week and was taught by Christine Tracy, assistant professor of communication. Changes to the course included moving the presentations from the evening to the final three class meetings of the semester and requiring students not presenting to attend in support of their classmates.

As in previous years, students received the list of topics for the extemporaneous speech to be delivered during assessment. As is the case in prior courses, the students in this year's seminar practiced timed speeches early in the semester, but care was taken not to turn the class into a preparation effort that might distort assessment results meant to be indicative of long-term learning. Charts summarizing student performance are included in this report.

Results

As expected given the faculty turnover in the previous years, overall scores increased from 2014 in nine of the ten categories. The overall average improved from 4.0 (on a 5 point scale) in 2014 to 4.32. The extemporaneous presentation also improved with eight of the thirteen students meeting the required time (Five minutes +/- 30 seconds) compared to just five in 2014, and the average time

increasing by thirty-four seconds to 4:37. The quality of extemporaneous presentations was also markedly improved. As is the case historically, portfolios were strong, and scores in the other areas of assessment are more commensurate with portfolio scores this year compared to prior years.

Revisiting Goals from the 2014 Assessment

1. *The faculty plan to sustain the levels of achievement experienced this year in the portfolio and research paper elements of assessment. (25% high pass; 100% pass).*

This goal was met. The pass rate was 100%. Four students achieved high pass (defined as 45 points, no scores below 4.5 and fulfillment of the time requirement on the extemporaneous speech), as noted on the chart below. One student received an incomplete pending the completion of his research paper, per an arrangement with the professor.

2. *The faculty will strive to maintain at 75% the percentage of students adhering to the time limits of the oral presentation and to experience higher quality presentations across the board.*

Statistically this goal was not met, though it was a tremendous improvement from 2014. Eight students adhered to the time limit for a success rate of 62%. The quality of presentations was higher across the board, with only one student notably unprepared.

3. *The faculty will continue to emphasize the stages of research and the ethical context surrounding it.*

This goal was met and surpassed. As previously mentioned the research component grew this year in emphasis, length of papers and number of sources.

Strengths and Benefits

1. Portfolios and self-assessments continue to be a strong suit of the senior cohort. Portfolios contained a wide variety of artifacts and each section included an astute self-assessment of not only the exhibits but a reflection on how it contributed to their learning experience within the program.

2. The added emphasis on the research component yielded satisfactory results. This year all students were required to submit to Quincy University's Institutional Review Board and numerous students noted to evaluators that the rigorous process was extremely valuable and rewarding.
3. Student work within the portfolios displayed a mastery of skills in a variety of mediums. Faculty members have taken great care to cross-train students in multiple disciplines and the student portfolios reflect this. Artifacts from the Falcon student newspaper, stories and scripts from the campus television station QUTV, writing samples and graphic design elements from public relations courses and articles from the communication magazine were included in student portfolios.
4. Service continues to be a strong suit of communication students. Communication students are dedicated to service to the University and community and it is highly evident in their service self-assessments. Opportunities for service will continue to be incorporated into the communication curriculum.
5. Oral presentations were improved from prior years. Greater emphasis was placed on public speaking habits within the course and a collaborative spirit was created by requiring students to attend all of the presentation days in support of the students assigned to present that class session.

Weaknesses of Student Performance

The communication field is rapidly changing and faculty will continue to adjust the curriculum and degree sequences to prepare students for life post-graduation. This includes plans for greater collaboration between all of the communication media outlets with the creation of a parent QU Media website that will serve as a clearinghouse for traditional on-campus print, television and radio mediums. Student portfolios included a diverse collection of multimedia but greater strides need to be made to prepare students in understanding how these mediums are utilized synergistically in their chosen professional field.

Due to the addition of two new faculty members in 2014-15 plans to integrate LiveText into the program were put on hold. This year faculty will resume those plans, aiding in the collection, organization and self-assessment of student work. This will also help expedite plans to move student portfolios from hard copy to digital for future assessment purposes.

Assessment Goals for 2015

The goals are appropriate and will remain largely the same. Faculty members will create a platform to integrate campus media under one umbrella, demonstrating the multi-faceted interactive model used in the professional communication setting, maintain the high levels of writing proficiency seen in senior research and continue incorporating service in the overall student experience. Additional LiveText training will be incorporated for both faculty and students to create online portfolios and self-assess their work all four (or applicable) years, something planned but not accomplished in 2014-15.

Planned Changes

The changes planned for the 2015-16 academic year include updating the program sequencing, particularly in broadcasting and journalism, to better reflect changes in the fields. The process began in the spring 2015 semester as a collaborative process among communication faculty and will continue into the fall 2015 semester.

1. “QU Media” is being created to serve as an umbrella for the media products offered by the communication department, including the TV Station (QUTV), student newspaper (The Falcon) and internet radio station (Hawk Radio). This model mimics the professional model that integrates multimedia on a variety of platforms including web, print, radio and television. This will include required weekly editorial meetings that will bring all students participating in student media together.
2. Radio will be added to the curriculum with the addition of an internet radio station. Students will create original news, music and variety programs and podcasts to be hosted on web-based platform. Live, taped, and remote productions will be emphasized in the first year.
3. Faculty will continue to incorporate social media into the curriculum across the board. The COM 365 course was redesigned as a primer social media course which prepares students in social media management, content delivery and understanding analytics. The course will be offered each semester and integrated into nearly all of the curriculum sequences.
4. Faculty will push to utilize LiveText online portfolio software for assessment purposes. This was a goal in 2014 but due to time constraints with new faculty it was not fully realized. Students will be encouraged to upload all of their work beginning freshman year.

Please see attached chart of senior assessment results.

| COM Senior Assessment | | 2015 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|----------|------------|-------------|------|------|-----------|
| | knowledge | evidence | organization | presentation | focus | logic | depth | response | portfolio1 | portfolio 2 | | time | |
| A | 5 | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4.88 | 4:48 | High Pass |
| B | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3:30 | |
| C | 4.5 | 4 | 4 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 5 | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 4.5 | 4:50 | High Pass |
| D | 3.5 | 4.5 | 4 | 3 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 2.5 | 3 | 4 | 3.75 | 4:04 | |
| E | 4.5 | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 4.8 | 4:46 | High Pass |
| F | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 4.95 | 4:22 | |
| G | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 5 | 5:00 | High Pass |
| H | 5 | 4.5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3.5 | 4.93 | 4:53 | |
| I | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4.5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3.38 | 4:04 | |
| J | 4.5 | 4 | 4.5 | 4 | 5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4 | 5 | 4.5 | 4.37 | 5:00 | |
| K | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2.13 | 5:00 | |
| L | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4 | 4 | 4.19 | 4:50 | |
| M | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4.88 | 4:15 | |
| Average | 4.23 | 4.19 | 4.27 | 4.19 | 4.65 | 4.54 | 4.46 | 4.30 | 4.23 | 4.15 | 4.32 | 4:37 | |

Evaluation Rubric
Baccalaureate Comprehensive Assessment: May 2015

Student presenter: _____

Date: _____

Please rate each element 1 (low) - 5 (high).

| Extemporaneous Presentation | Rating |
|--|---------------|
| The student demonstrates knowledge of communication theory. | |
| The student uses specific evidence to support a thesis about theory | |
| The presentation is organized for unity, coherence, and clarity. | |
| The student demonstrates the qualities of effective public speaking. | |
| COMMENTS: | |

| Major Paper Presentation | Rating |
|--|---------------|
| The presentation focuses on a significant area of theory and practice. | |
| The presentation shows evidence of careful thought on the topic. | |
| The student seems thoroughly versed on the topic. | |
| The student is able to answer questions or to engage in intelligent speculation regarding the topic. | |
| COMMENTS: | |

| Portfolio | Rating |
|--|---------------|
| The portfolio is neat, professional, and carefully prepared. | |
| Self-assessments of the exhibits are intelligent and thorough. | |
| These exhibits are particularly strong. | |
| These exhibits call for improvement. | |

Please use the reverse for additional comments.