



Executive Summary
Goal 4: Communication

GROUP MEMBERS

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CONTEXT

The SNAP Communication workgroup took a combined top- down and bottom-up approach to our charge of developing assessment tools and strategies for communication. For the top down approach, we began by agreeing on a definition of communication for the context of undergraduate psychology. Our definition is: Dissemination of information such that understanding is exchanged and achieved between participants.

Next, we created a taxonomy of dimensions and kinds of communication. Communication skills take multiple forms and develop over multiple experiences. What is appropriate in one context is not appropriate in others. Effective communication is always dependent on the purpose and audience. The taxonomy represents the various contexts in which communication occurs. It informs the teacher of the kinds of communication that occurs and how to target instruction and assessment based on context. The taxonomy is attached as Appendix 1.

We then developed principles to guide assessment in communication and a set of best practices of using assessments in communication.

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE ASSESSMENT IN COMMUNICATION

- Communication is a developmental progression, e.g. from Intro → Baccalaureate
 - Expectations may be appropriate at one point but not others
 - Multiple assessment points are necessary across both courses and curriculum
- Communication takes many forms
 - What is effective for one form may not be effective for another
 - Instruction in one form may not transfer to other forms
 - Assessment of multiple forms may be necessary
- Psychometric validity and reliability is ideal, but utilitarian is often good enough
- Assessments should be flexible and adaptable for specific uses
 - They should be changed to accommodate unexpected outcomes

BEST PRACTICES TO GUIDE ASSESSMENT IN COMMUNICATION

- Language should promote a growth mindset and avoid promoting fixed, deficit thinking
- Communication rubrics can be used formatively as well as summatively to develop communication skills
 - Ideally, students produce a product, receive constructive formative assessment feedback, revise using feedback, then receive summative assessment
 - Ideally, students learn to assess themselves
- Ideally, assessment feeds into larger institutional and accreditation goals
- Provides the most information for the largest number of skills and content areas with the least work
 - Ideally, the assessment is something the teacher can routinely do
- Can target multiple levels: a specific skill or assignment, or course goals, program goals, or institution goals

COMMON RUBRIC DEVELOPMENT

Using a bottom-up approach, we located existing rubrics for oral and written communication. We began with the APA Assessment Cyberguide and also used the AAC&U VALUE rubrics. Then we simply searched for other well developed and established rubrics. From those, we abstracted the elements all of them shared. Using these categories, we created a “common” rubric that can be adapted and used to assess communication across many different contexts. The rubric is listed in Appendix 2. The instructor can use this rubric as a starting point and adapt it to his or her needs. For more specific kinds of communication, such as oral presentations, poster presentations, or written research reports, the instructor will have to add elements. For example, for poster presentation, the use of images and figures and tables will be a concern, as well as the readability of the poster from a distance.

OTHER DIMENSIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Finally, we identified some factors that should be considered in assessing communication that are not included in the common rubric. These include: (1) accurate understanding and usage of psychological concepts, (2) effective use of images, figures, and tables, and (3) ethical practices (plagiarism, copyright, civility & respect).

Appendix 1. Taxonomy of Communication

<u>User</u>	<u>Mode</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Formality</u>	<u>Audience</u>
Student	Oral	Exposition	Conversational	Personal
Faculty	Written	Persuasion	Class Assignment	Class
Institution		Advocacy	Institutional	Instructor
Accreditation		Argumentative/ Analytical	Professional/ Non-Psychology	Professional/ Non-Psychology
			Professional/ Psychology	Professional/ Psychology
			Non-verbal	Group Size
			Professional Development	Biases & Assumptions
				Civility & Respect
				Anticipating Questions

Red items indicate possible overlap with other groups.

Appendix 2. Final Communication Rubric

	Below Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
Thesis Expresses clear intention	General concept of work is not easy to understand or not present	General concept of work is easy to understand	General concept of work is clear and engaging to the audience
Coherence Organizes in a logical, coherent, and easy to follow manner	Difficult to understand the logic and/or flow of the communication	Provides logic but there may be sections that are less coherent	Information is clearly presented. Logic flows and is easy to follow.
Mechanics Incorporates grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and sentence clarity	Serious flaws in mechanics that limit the effectiveness of the communication.	Mechanics meet a minimum standard. Errors do not detract from the communication.	Mechanics exceed the minimum standard. Few, if any, errors are present. Enhances the communication.
APA Style and Formatting Observes structure, sequence, and rules	APA format is used inconsistently, incorrectly, or not at all.	APA format is moderately used, consistently and correctly.	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of APA format.
Content & Source Supports argument or claim with high quality evidence and credible sources	Does not consistently use appropriate and relevant content to communicate information and ideas.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the author's understanding and shaping the whole work.