

Communicating Effectively
Appalachian State University, April 2021
Modified version of Written Communication* and Oral Communication* VALUE Rubrics (AAC&U)

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. This rubric has been adapted for assessing Appalachian's General Education learning goal of Communicating Effectively. For more information about the VALUE rubrics, see <https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics>.

Definition

Communication is the development and expression of ideas. Communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different technologies and mixing texts, data, and images. Communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum. Effective communication can increase knowledge, foster understanding, entertain, or promote changes in the audience's attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Rationale

The General Education Program prepares students to employ modes of communication that can help communities reach consensus or respectful disagreement. Effective communication leads to discovery and significant changes in the sender (who may be a writer, speaker, dancer, musician, visual artist, or actor) that produce sophisticated reading skills and a high level of quantitative, technological, and information literacy. The sender is successful in delivering the message to the receiver, who may be listening, reading, or watching. As both senders and receivers, successful communicators interact effectively with people of both similar and different experiences and values. They adapt their communication skills to suit increasingly complex situations.

Framing Language

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific work samples or collections of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is "How well does the work respond to the needs of its audience(s)?" In focusing on this question, the rubric does not attend to other aspects of communication that are equally important: issues of process and strategy, the communicator's fluency with different modes of production or publication, or the communicator's growing engagement with the discipline through the communication process.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for communication guiding the work. Reflective work samples or collections of work that address questions such as the following are also recommended: What decisions did the communicator make about audience, purpose, and genre as they compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the communication—in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems? This will enable evaluators to assess the work with a clearer sense of how the communicator understands and considers the assignment.

Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

Audience: the group the communicator intends to persuade, entertain, or inform with the message.

Compelling: as in convincing, inspiring, or captivating

Credible Source: coming from one who is reliable given the context and purpose of the work

Evidence: sourced material or relevant personal experience that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, the communicator's ideas in the message.

Source: place from which information is obtained. Sources could include but are not limited to oral and written forms, print and audio-visual media, research findings, internet sources, historic documents and correspondence, data repositories, and established scientific principles. Communicators draw on this information as they work for a variety of purposes – to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

Syntax and Mechanics: includes typical writing considerations such as verb tense, sentence structure, paragraph construction, and clarity as well as medium-specific conventions such as speaking clearly and highlighting key points in slide presentations, intuitive design in website development, and clearly labeled, appropriate charts or graphs in data visualizations.

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Student Learning Outcome	4 Capstone	3 Milestone (Higher)	2 Milestone (Lower)	1 Benchmark	0 No Evidence	N/A Not Applicable
<p>Context and Purpose. Students will demonstrate a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose.</p>	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose to shape response to the assigned task(s).	Demonstrates strong awareness of context, audience, and purpose to shape response to the assigned task(s).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, and purpose for the assigned task(s).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, and purpose in response to the assigned task(s).	No evidence	N/A
<p>Content Development. Students will use appropriate content to shape their message.</p>	Synthesizes ideas using appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to convey the communicator's understanding and shape the whole work.	Develops and explores ideas using appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to shape the whole work.	Develops and explores ideas using appropriate and relevant content through most of the work.	Presents simple ideas using appropriate and relevant content in some parts of the work.	No evidence	N/A
<p>Sources and Evidence. Students will integrate evidence drawn from credible, relevant sources to formulate their message.</p>	Demonstrates skillful use of evidence drawn from credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the context and purpose of the work.	Demonstrates consistent use of evidence drawn from credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the context and purpose of the work.	Demonstrates an attempt to use evidence drawn from credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the context and purpose of the work.	Demonstrates a minimal attempt to use evidence to support ideas in the work.	No evidence	N/A
<p>Control of Syntax and Mechanics. Students will communicate with clarity and fluency.</p>	Uses language that skillfully communicates meaning to the audience with clarity and fluency while remaining true to the genre and style of the work.	Uses language that clearly conveys meaning to the audience and is appropriate to the genre and style of the work.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to the audience, although may include some inconsistencies in syntax and mechanics, and is appropriate to the genre and style of the work.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of inconsistencies in syntax and mechanics.	No evidence	N/A

*Adapted from "Written Communication VALUE Rubric" and "Oral Communication VALUE Rubric" by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2009, <https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>. This derivative work is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.