

2021 Assessment Report
Department of Communication Studies
Degree Types: Major & Minor (Aggregate Report)
Prepared by Dr. Brandi Lawless

COMS Major and Minor Mission Statement: The Department of Communication Studies is a community of scholars whose mission is to empower students to achieve their personal and professional goals through becoming clear, effective, and ethical communicators. Communication Studies graduates will be educated in understanding, critiquing, and producing arguments and texts with the goal of fostering a sense of civic responsibility and a shared commitment to social justice.

**No changes since last report*

COMS Major Program Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will articulate and define major theories and concepts used in the study of communication.
2. Students will design a research project that engages scholarly literature to address significant and appropriate questions/issues.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to select and analyze text(s), collect and analyze data, and answer research questions and test hypotheses.
4. Students will identify and assess the social context for their messages and craft effective messages for specific audiences.
5. Students will be able to identify how communication produces, reinforces, and critiques social inequalities and power relations.

**Because there are only 7 declared COMS minors, our understanding is that we do not need to submit a full assessment report.*

***No changes since last report*

Curriculum Map (see attached)

Since the last report, COMS 253, 352, and 358 were removed from fulfilling POL4, at the request of the instructor who teaches them.

Assessment Schedule

AY 2019-2020: Assessment of PLO 3

AY 2020-2021: Report of PLO 3, collection of work products for PLO 4

Fall 2021: Development of PLO 4 rubric, inter-coder reliability testing, full department assessment of PLO 4

AY 2021-2022: Collection of work products for PLO 1

General Assessment Timeline for each AY:

Fall Semester:

- Department Assessment Report Due (usually October 1st)
- Develop rubric for current year's PLO
- Developing codebook for current year's PLO assessment (rules and examples)
- Pull student work products to assess current year's PLO

Spring Semester:

- Train all faculty on rubric
- Rating of work products
- Reliability check

Methodology used (Major):

We have a two-part process for assessment. The first involves work products identified by students that we use to develop and test our rubric. As part of our COMS 496: Communication Studies Internship course, students complete a "Learning Assessment and Skills Translation" assignment where they explain what each of our PLOs mean to them and upload a work product from a class that they think demonstrates how they meet each PLO. We find this is a great way to get students aware of the learning outcomes for our major and have them reflect on the coursework they have completed. They also then work on translating the material into skills they could talk about on a resume or in a job interview. For the first part of the assessment of each PLO, we use the materials that students have uploaded. These are used to help us practice with the rubric we have developed and do an initial test of our interrater reliability. For the second part of the assessment of each PLO, we randomly select 10% of students in each class that professors have identified as meeting a specific PLO (via our curriculum map). Professors then pull the work products of the randomly selected students that they think are the best ways to assess the PLO for that particular class. Our PA then redacts any identifying information. The COMS Assessment Committee then trains all of the other faculty on the use of the rubric.

Because of remote working, our schedule occurred a bit behind our traditional timeline. The PLO 4 rubric was developed and practice rating occurred in September 2021. Then training of all faculty and rating occurred in October.

We had 94 students enrolled in the Fall 2020 in courses that met PLO 4 (including COMS 202, 252, 320, and 344) and 74 students in Spring 2021 (COMS 202, 254, 326, and 496) for a total of 168 students. We rated work products from 12 randomly selected students, representing 16.2% of the students enrolled (as recommended we aim to rate at least 10%). Each work product was rated three times (by three different faculty members). Cronbach's alpha was .77, which indicates that an acceptable level of reliability was reached.

We would like to point out a few things about our assessment plan. All COMS faculty rotate on to the COMS Assessment Committee and serve for two years (with the Department Chair serving as Chair of the COMS Assessment Committee and serving for the duration of their term as Chair). This past year (2020-2021), the COMS Assessment Committee was made up of Marilyn DeLaure, Fay Chen, and Bryan Whaley, with Brandi Lawless chairing the committee. For this coming year (2021-2022), the COMS

Assessment Committee is made up of Fay Chen, Marilyn DeLaure, and Marco Jacquemet, with Brandi Lawless chairing the committee. Also, all of the faculty serve as faculty raters. We had 100% faculty involvement this past year, which we think is impressive.

Methodology used (Minor):

This is an aggregate report of the COMS major and the minor.

Results

The rubric we developed allows us to indicate what level of achievement was met and to map whether this is the appropriate level of achievement for that particular course (e.g., our foundation course, COMS 202 is supposed to meet PLO 4 at the Introductory level, while one of our methods courses, COMS 252 is supposed to meet PLO 4 at the Mastery level). The results for PLO 4 are below:

Introductory Level (COMS 202, COMS 320):

2 students = 4

1 student = 5

These results indicate that all of the students in COMS 202 and COMS 320 are surpassing expectations for PLO 4 by moving beyond the introductory level.

Developing Level (COMS 254, COMS 326):

3 students = 4

1 student = 5

These results indicate that all of the students in COMS 254 and COMS 326 are surpassing expectations for PLO 4 by moving beyond the developing level.

Mastery Level (COMS 252, COMS 344, COMS 496):

5 students = 4

These results indicate that all students in these three classes are achieving mastery. However, when rating, there was some concern about how to rate work products for COMS 496. Work products in this class clearly demonstrated “crafting effective messages” but less clearly dealt with examining context. Our department may consider splitting PLO 4 into 2 PLO’s, or reconsider how we assess COMS 496.

Closing the Loop: Faculty in Reflection

Results of the assessment were shared with the COMS faculty in October. Faculty reflected on whether or not we want to make PLO 4 into two, separate PLOs—one that assesses the ability to describe and interpret context and another that emphasizes students’ ability to craft effective messages. This was first brought up in the smaller assessment committee, but was echoed among the larger department faculty.

Additionally, assessment of PLO 4 made us consider revising our curriculum map. In the coming year, the faculty will review the curriculum map and suggest changes for PLO 4.

Beginning in Spring 2022, we will assess COMS PLO 1: “Students will articulate and define major theories and concepts used in the study of communication.” This will be a much larger project than all previous assessments because it includes every class in the department except for COMS 496. We will discuss how to make this manageable and how to make a rubric that can assess such a large range of classes. The assessment committee will draft a rubric in Spring 2022.

Suggestions from Previous Report(s):

Last year’s assessment report suggested that we revise our curriculum report for PLO 3. This Spring, we plan to revisit the Curriculum map for all PLOs and will pay particular attention to PLO 3 (perhaps moving COMS 253 and 302 to the Introductory level).