

**SPD 108: Intro to Human Communication  
Course Outcomes Guide (COG)**

**Course Title: SPD 108: Intro to Human Communication**

**Date: 2/3/15**

**Course Team: Kate Benchoff, Mike Harsh**

**Expected Learning Outcomes:** The student should be able to:

- Demonstrate competence in intrapersonal, interpersonal, and small group communications.
- Determine and demonstrate the most appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication styles for a variety of real life and simulated scenarios.

**Assessment:** *Group project and rubric attached*

**Validation:** Although couched in a problem-solving format, the group project is graded both on general education requirements and the course outcomes. The rubric is designed to measure both the presentation, which speaks to both the gen ed outcomes and the course outcomes, and the group's ability to communicate with one another throughout the preparation and planning process, which speaks specifically to the course outcomes. Additionally, the class participates in a peer review process, in which the class evaluates the quality of the group's presentation and information, which meets both the gen ed and course outcomes.

**Results:** The assessment tool (the rubric) was adopted consistently in FA 14, which means that previous data collected was the result of different assessment tools (and thus difficult to extract meaningful results from). However, the earlier course breakdown based on the data collection was as follows:

**Pre-standardized rubric (5 sections, 2013-14)**

Organization	90%
Coherence	90%
Development	82%
Standard Eng.	90%
Source	
Citation	90%
Average	88%

**Rubric Pilot (2 sections, 2014-15)**

Processes	98%
Conventions	98%
Rhetorical	
Knowledge	98%
Research	86%
Average	95%

Because of the nature of the course, the use of the new rubric (though with a small sample size) has illustrated the ongoing trend of very high grades, with the weakest area appearing to be in the

research portion of the grade (understandable, since research isn't a specific part of the course outcomes, but rather a small part of the gen ed requirements of the course).

**Follow-up:** Two important issues emerge when evaluating the data from SPD 108. The first is the fact that there isn't a large enough pool of data collected using the same tool to discern specific trends. However, the second (and perhaps more important) issue to consider is that, despite the varying assessment tools, the overall success rate seems to suggest a need to reevaluate the rigor of the course. Although instructors of the course recognize the course's obvious potential to provide a great deal of personal growth for participants, the academic elements of the course need to be developed and tested in a way that reflects mastery of course material on both a scholarly and personal level. Once the appropriate level of rigor is decided on through discussion, norming sessions, such as those conducted in courses like ENG 101, might be helpful to direct instructors on what mastery of the content looks like. Additionally, providing exemplary sample work to students would help them to understand the expectations of the project.

**Budget Justification:** n/a

## Introduction to Human Communication

### Project II

This project allows you to practice communicating in a small group. In groups of 5 or 6, you will discuss some topic of mutual interest: A controversial issue, a specific area of communication the group wishes to learn more about, or a value about which the group feels strongly.

***Each group member is required to research the topic and contribute to the discussion.*** You will be evaluated on the efficiency, accuracy, depth, and clarity of the discussion. You may find it helpful to choose a discussion leader, although all members should help by performing appropriate group roles.

These steps and questions should guide your small group problem solving discussion. Record your group's progress as you meet as a group.

1. Problem description and analysis: "What is the nature of the problem facing us?"
2. Generation and elaboration of possible solutions: "What might be done to solve the problem we've described?"
3. Evaluation of possible solutions: "What are the probable benefits and possible negative consequences of each proposed solution?"
4. Consensus decision: "What seems to be the best possible solution we can all support?"
5. Implementation of the solution chosen: "How will we put our decision into effect?"

## **GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING**

### **1. DEFINE THE PROBLEM**

When problem solving, many groups observe a common practice. They "think in reverse." Before identifying the problem or knowing the facts about the problem, they propose solutions. If luck is with them, a satisfactory solution might result, but these short cuts usually do not work. The problem reappears and continues to plague the group. A more sensible approach to problem solving is to begin by determining what the problem is. Usually a group undertakes problem solving because of a felt difficulty. The members perceive a perplexing situation and realize it has to be dealt with. ***What group members ordinarily perceive are the effects of the situation, the signs or symptoms of a possible problem, not the problem itself.*** They have to ferret out the problem before they can treat it satisfactorily.

To identify a problem, answers to questions like the following are helpful:

- What is the situation in which the problem is occurring?
- What in general is the difficulty?
- How did the difficulty arise?
- What is its importance?
- What are the meanings of any terms that require clarification?

Once you have defined the problem, you need to frame the problem as a question.

Your problem questions should be:

1. Open to alternative answers - not yes/no (closed) questions
2. Clearly written
3. Unbiased - it cannot imply that a certain decision has to be reached
4. Concise
5. A question of policy - it asks what future action should be taken

***"What should be HCC's policy towards improved student parking?"***

***"How can we promote student success at HCC?"***

***"What can be done about the shortage of quality food service at HCC?"***

## 2. ANALYZE THE PROBLEM

*After the group has agreed on what the problem is, the next step is to analyze it, particularly its causes and effects.* In doing this, the group must try to avoid letting opinions take priority over facts. The question "What are the facts?" must be foremost in the members' minds. Answers to these questions are helpful in locating the facts:

- What effects indicate that a problem exists?
- How serious are the effects?
- What is causing the problem?
- Are the causes inherent in the problem situation?
- Have previous attempts been made to solve the problem?

Most problems have multiple causes that should be identified, so a workable solution can be uncovered.

## 3. ESTABLISH CRITERIA FOR SOLUTIONS

After your group has analyzed the problem, you must now establish criteria to guide you in your quest for solutions. These solutions, preferably, will solve the problem, and will not cause other problems to develop and make conditions worse than they are already. For example, in the case of a stomachache, the doctor discovers that the patient has a kidney infection. One solution is to take out the kidney, but that solution might cause more serious problems than the patient has at present. A less drastic solution may be more appropriate, like a program of medication.

To ensure that a group's solution does not cause more serious problems than already exist, *the proper procedure is to develop a set of criteria or conditions that an acceptable solution must meet.* One criterion obviously is that the solution must correct the cause of the problem.

Other general criteria worth considering are:

- Is the proposed solution workable?
- Is it economical?
- Is it the best possible way to solve the problem?
- Will it produce more benefits than disadvantages?
- Are the benefits significant?
- Is the proposed solution just?
- Is it moral?
- Will it get the job done efficiently?
- Is it clear?
- Will it be harmful in any way?

#### **4. GENERATING POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM**

*Having determined the criteria, the group can now propose solutions to the problem.*

*Rather than accepting the first one proposed, the members should try to think of many ways to solve the problem.* To create a list of possible solutions, the group might use brainstorming, a technique designed to bring forth many ideas.

Three rules govern its use: (1) ideas are to be expressed freely; as an idea comes to mind, it is to be expressed without evaluation by anyone; (2) all ideas, wild or otherwise, are welcome; (3) as many ideas as possible are voiced; quantity is the goal. When the group runs out of ideas, it evaluates those resulting from the brainstorming.

#### **5. SELECT THE BEST SOLUTION**

In this step the group chooses the solution that seems to meet the criteria better than any other. As a means of accomplishing this end, these questions are helpful:

- What is the exact nature of each solution?
- How would it correct the problem?
- How well would it remedy the problem?
- How well does it satisfy the criteria?
- Would a combination of solutions be best?

Determining which of the proposed solutions is best is a decision-making process. A decision implies that agreement to do something prevails among the group members, and the something that is agreed to is a choice among different alternatives.

Decisions can be made in many ways. Here six common methods:

- Group consensus - all members come to an agreement.
- Majority vote - decision of the majority is accepted.
- Minority process - committee, board of directors makes decision for all.
- Averaging individual opinions - members mail or phone in their opinions - majority wins.
- Expert decision - authority on subject makes decision and group accepts it.
- Decision by authority - after group discusses, leader decides.

#### **6. IMPLEMENT THE SOLUTION!**

The finale step involves deciding how to put the solution into effect. This step has much value. First, in deciding how to execute a solution, the group may uncover possible weaknesses. What often sounds like a good decision might prove to be inoperable. The members discover the viability of a solution when they try to institute a plan of action. If the solution is unworkable, it can be abandoned in favor of one that is more likely to work. You don't have to solve any problems as a group or actually implement your solutions; however, you may, to earn extra credit.

## SPD 108 -- Student Outcomes Assessment

Students:

Grade:

A = Excellent    B = Very good    C = Good    D = Fair    F = Poor

Processes	Points Possible = 10	Points Earned =
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses planning, drafting, revising, and editing to contribute to the clear communication of ideas</li> <li>• Demonstrates consideration of feedback from instructors or peers</li> <li>• <b>Demonstrates an understanding of appropriate methods of communication during the collaboration process</b></li> </ul>	Out of 10 A (9) B (8) C (7) D (6) F (___)	
Conventions	Points Possible = 70	Total Points Earned =
<u><b>Overall Organization and Coherence (5)</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displays effective organization and transitions smoothly between introduction, informative content, and conclusion</li> </ul>	Out of 5 A (5) B (4) C (3) D (2) F (___)	Points earned =
<u><b>Presentation Structure and Development (35)</b></u> <i>Introduction</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates information hunger</li> <li>• Provides background information that orients reader to presentation topic</li> <li>• Indicates how the presentation will meet the audience's needs</li> </ul> <i>Informative Content</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides concrete details and textual evidence, where appropriate, to explain, expand, and support the topic</li> <li>• Is well-organized, fully developed, and on topic</li> <li>• Provides examples and visual aids to clarify and inform</li> <li>• Avoids information overload</li> <li>• Indicates source information</li> </ul> <i>Conclusion</i> <p>Provides closure for entire presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is well-developed, transitioned, and satisfying</li> <li>• Does not introduce significant new information</li> <li>• Reminds audience of central ideas and main points</li> <li>• Specifies what the audience should think or do in response to the presentation</li> </ul>	Out of 35 A (33) B (30) C (26) D (23) F ( ___ )	Points earned =
<u><b>Grammar and Style / Use of Standard English (30)</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a variety of sophisticated (but clear and concise) sentence structures</li> <li>• Exhibits specific, advanced vocabulary and diction</li> <li>• Avoids fluff, wordiness, and vague, generic phrases</li> <li>• Contains few errors in grammar, punctuation, usage</li> <li>• Avoids fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences</li> </ul>	Out of 30 A (28) B (25) C (22) D (20) F (___)	Points earned =

<b>Rhetorical Knowledge</b>		<b>Points Possible = 20</b>	<b>Points Earned =</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates well-informed critical thinking and sound logical analysis</li> <li>• Demonstrates structure consistent with appropriate rhetorical mode(s)</li> <li>• <b>Addresses the proper audience</b></li> <li>• Displays a consistent and appropriate point of view</li> <li>• <b>Adopts college-level voice and tone</b></li> <li>• Provides information relevance</li> <li>• Invites audience response rather than depending on repetition</li> </ul>	Out of 20 A (19) B (17) C (15) D (13) F (___)		
<b>Research</b>		<b>Points Possible = 50</b>	<b>Points Earned =</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses appropriate MLA format</li> <li>• Utilizes various sources and the student's own ideas to present a cogent argument</li> <li>• Uses timely, academic, and reliable sources</li> <li>• Uses summary, paraphrase, and direct quotation to avoid plagiarism</li> <li>• Integrates short, appropriate, focused quotations into paragraphs driven by student-authored text</li> <li>• Uses parenthetical citations properly</li> <li>• Provides an accurate, properly formatted Works Cited page</li> </ul>	Out of 50 A (46) B (40) C (36) D (30) F (___)		
<p>Note: For the argument research essay, instructors must weight this section at 50 points. For earlier essays involving a research component, points may be awarded at the discretion of the instructor.</p>			
<b>Deductions</b>			
<b>Total:</b>			

Point scale for the research paper assignment:

Out of 150 points: A = 135-150 B = 120-134 C = 105-119 D = 90-104 F = 89 and below

Point scale for an assignment not involving any research:

Out of 100 points: A = 90-99 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = 59 and below

**GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES:** Students should be able to:

- Write or deliver an organized, coherent, fully developed essay or speech that uses standard English and cites outside sources appropriately.
- Evaluate a piece of writing from either literature, current events, non-fiction essays, or a college textbook for logical flaws, rhetorical purpose, organization, and evidence for claims.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** The student should be able to:

- Demonstrate competence in intrapersonal, interpersonal, and small group communications.
- Determine and demonstrate the most appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication styles for a variety of real life and simulated scenarios.