

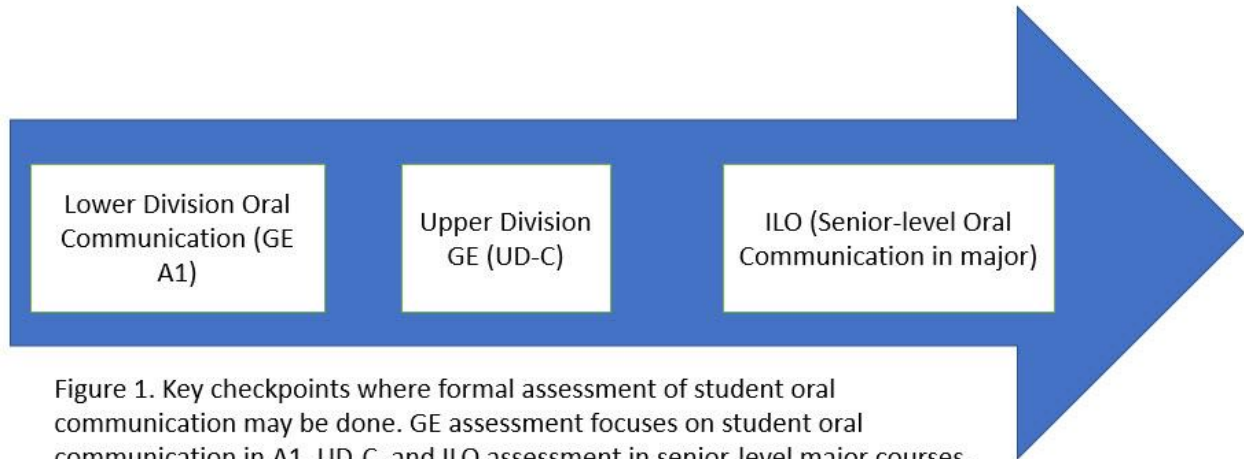
# General Education Assessment of Student Learning: GE Area A1 Oral Communication

## Purpose and Background

The overarching purpose of assessment in General Education (GE) is to enhance and improve undergraduate student learning experiences afforded by the GE program at Cal State East Bay. Looking beyond the CSU Chancellor's Office and WASC accreditation requirements which necessitate GE assessment ([EO 1100](#), Section 6.2.5), the true value of GE assessment extends from how we collaboratively make meaning of assessment results to inform improvements in GE.

GE learning outcomes are aligned to the [Institutional Learning Outcomes \(ILOs\)](#), [WASC Core Competencies](#), and [AAC&U's LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes](#), all of which express the knowledge, skills, and values CSUEB graduates are expected to attain. Collectively, CSUEB's GE learning outcomes and ILOs distinguish who we are, what we value, and how we expect students to demonstrate their learning. Thus, the assessment of GE outcomes enables our campus community to gauge how effective we are in helping our students attain these outcomes. The General Education Long-term Assessment Plan for 2018-2026 ([18-19 CAPR 2](#)) details a consistent, rigorous assessment process and necessitates the development of new assessment tools for each GE area.

GE Area A1 Oral Communication (which can be satisfied by American Sign Language), is part of the essential skills or core competencies (previously called the "Golden Four") that form the foundation for GE and major programs. Although assessment of core competencies at the foundational level is not explicitly required by WASC, robust and meaningful assessment of GE at key "checkpoints" (also known as guidepost assessment) is extremely valuable in informing improvements, which help move GE into a more coherent, intentional, and scaffolded program. Performing guidepost assessment of student writing allows us to gauge how well students develop autonomy and sophistication in their writing as they progress through their academic pathways. Such assessment checkpoints include lower division A1, UD-C (previously called C4), and Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO) assessment in senior-level major courses (see Fig. 1)



The A1 Oral Communication course must be passed with a C- (CR) or better to satisfy GE Area A1. Any approved A1 course with an In Progress Grade (i.e., I, RP, or RD) will not be counted in Area A1 until a passing final course grade is posted. As appropriate, American Sign Language may be substituted for oral communication. CSUEB courses currently certified for GE A1 include COMM 100 (Public Speaking), COMM 104 (Interpersonal Communication), and MLL 111 (Speaking of Love: Oral Communication in Multicultural Setting).

<b>A1 Learning Outcomes</b>	<p>GE Area A1 courses emphasize communication theory and provide several speaking and listening experiences in multiple modes, e.g., small-group discussion, interpersonal communication, and persuasive discourse presented extemporaneously.</p> <p>Upon completion of the GE Area A1 requirement, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. speak effectively when making oral presentations in English;</li> <li>2. explain the principles of effective oral communication, including form, content, context, and style;</li> <li>3. advocate for a cause or idea, presenting facts and arguments in an organized and accurate manner; and</li> <li>4. critically evaluate oral presentations.</li> </ol>
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## The Process

The A1 Oral Communication scoring rubric was developed in Spring 2020 by five faculty from the Communications Department. Calibration, collection and evaluation took place in Fall 2020. Closing the Loop took place in Fall 2021.

## The Rubric

**CSUEB GENERAL EDUCATION AREA A1 ORAL COMMUNICATION RUBRIC**

**Description:** Excellence in oral communication at the A1 level is demonstrated through use of an audience-centered message, comprehensive use of rhetorical elements, skillful presentation delivery, effective messaging, and consistent reflexivity.

**Framing Language:** This rubric is used to assess established signature oral presentation and interpersonal communication assignments aligned to the rubric. Each dimension must be covered in the assignment and assessed independently.

**Development:** This A1 rubric was developed in March 2020 by faculty members in the Department of Communication in collaboration with the Office of GE and will be used for a pilot assessment of A1 in Fall 2020.

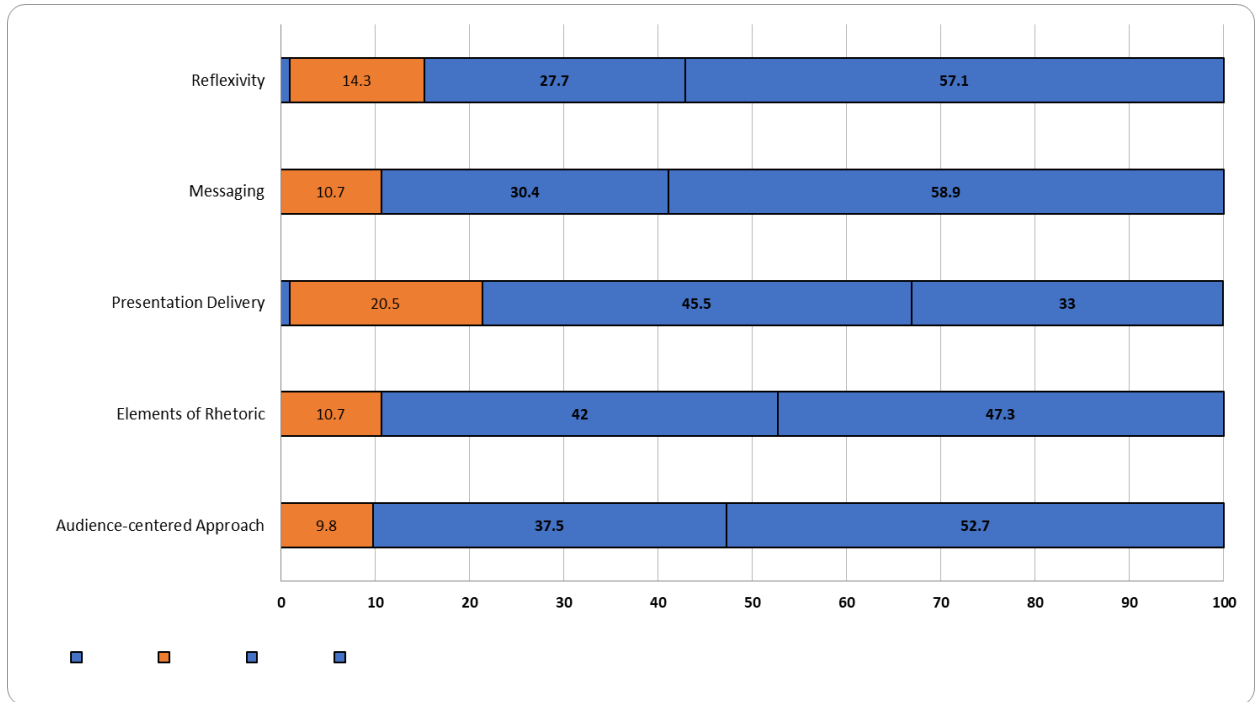
DIMENSION	PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS BY LEVEL			
	4	3	2	1
<b>Audience-centered Approach</b> Speaker builds rapport and uses language appropriate for the audience. Speaker demonstrates consideration of audience needs, concerns, difference, and diversity.	Appropriately applies an audience-centered approach.	Adequately applies an audience-centered approach.	Minimally applies an audience-centered approach.	Does not apply an audience-centered approach.
<b>Elements of Rhetoric</b> Speaker uses logos/pathos/ethos in rhetorical situations. Speech contains clear thesis and logical organization, reinforcing key ideas with supporting evidence.	Comprehensively integrates rhetorical elements using evidence-based ideas with logical organization.	Mostly integrates rhetorical elements using evidence-based ideas with logical organization.	Rarely integrates rhetorical elements using evidence-based ideas with logical organization.	Fails to integrate rhetorical elements using evidence-based ideas with logical organization.
<b>Presentation Delivery</b> Speaker shows confidence, enthusiasm, extemporaneous (practiced but not memorized), articulate delivery, and is able to answer questions. Speaker demonstrates best practices with presentation aids (if appropriate).	Skillfully delivers the presentation to an audience.	Adequately delivers the presentation to an audience	Rudimentarily delivers the presentation to an audience	Inappropriately delivers the presentation to an audience
<b>Messaging</b> Speaker's message is clear, promotes change, increases knowledge, and fosters understanding.	Effectively communicates a purposeful message.	Adequately communicates a purposeful message.	Minimally communicates a purposeful message.	Does not communicate a purposeful message.
<b>Reflexivity</b> Speaker demonstrates self-awareness, an open-minded approach, responsive listening, and ability to engage in difficult dialogues.	Consistently exhibits reflexive self-awareness.	Frequently exhibits reflexive self-awareness.	Occasionally exhibits reflexive self-awareness.	Does not exhibit reflexive self-awareness.

Here is a [direct link to the A1 Oral Communications Rubric](#).

## Assessment results

Data:

N = 56 students assessed in Fall 2020 = <b>10.7%</b> of total enrollment	<b>% Students by Performance Level</b>				<b>% Proficiency</b>	<b>Inter-rater reliability</b>
	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>		
Reflexivity	0.9	14.3	27.7	57.1	84.8	83.9
Messaging	0	10.7	30.4	58.9	89.3	82.1
Presentation Delivery	0.9	20.5	45.5	33	78.5	75.0
Elements of Rhetoric	0	10.7	42	47.3	89.3	82.1
Audience-centered Approach	0	9.8	37.5	52.7	90.2	83.9



## COMM 100 DFW Rates

### COMM 100

	TOT ENROLL	% PASS (A,B,C,CR)	% NOT PASS (D,F,W,WU,I, NC)	% Fresh	% Soph	% Jr	% Sr	% 1st Gen	% URM
Fall 2019	444	84	16	89.6	8.8	0.9	0.7	68	57.9
Spring 2020	544	83	17	76.1	18.4	2.9	2.6	69.5	58.3
Fall 2020	522	80.3	19.7	85.2	11.3	2	1.3	68.6	55.9
Spring 2021	207	85.5	14.5	71	22.2	5.3	1.5	69.6	62.3

Competency occurs when the scoring is a 3 or above. The majority of students were competent across most of the rubric criteria, including reflexivity (84.4%), messaging (89.3%), elements of rhetoric (89.3%), and audience-centered approach (90.2%). Presentation delivery was the area that students scored lowest in (78.5%), and was also the lowest criteria in terms of inter-rater reliability. Ideally, inter-rater reliability should be 90% or higher, but for the pilot the levels were between 75% and 83.9%. The calibration process involves individually scoring samples of student work and discussing different faculty perspectives and insights, and is a good way to find common ground among faculty evaluators. Additional calibration and discussion could improve inter-rater reliability during the next assessment (see Closing the Loop below).

## Assessment Comments by Faculty

### Faculty comments on rubric:

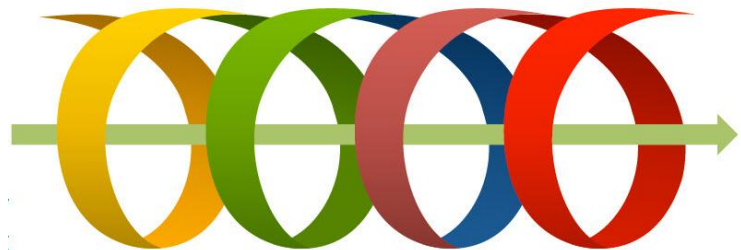
Faculty were invited to give comments throughout the process. One faculty member thought that the video assignments should be all in the same format (such as Go React). Another thought that the categories of Audience Centered Approach and Reflexivity seemed very close in terms of meaning. This faculty member also thought that Elements of Rhetoric and Messaging are very close and that the scoring was similar. There was also a comment that Delivery could be placed first in the Rubric and the other two sets are a natural fit.

### Faculty Comments on the Assessment Results

Communication department faculty felt that the results of the Spring 2021 pilot assessment align with the level of proficiency shown in the classroom, and with the high pass rate in the class (85.2%). They stated that the skills taught in COMM 100 can be mastered by most students who attend class regularly and apply themselves. Some of the primary reasons why some students do not develop a level of proficiency are related to life circumstances (missing class, not doing the work, being distracted, or mismanaging time). COMM 100 students have the distinct advantage of access to additional support provided by the Communication Department through the COMM Lab.

## Closing the Loop

After the assessment had finished, faculty were asked to give their feedback on the assessment results and to give comments about the process, the results, and thoughts on how these results can impact future work. The faculty agreed with the rubric criteria and felt that the rubric reflects a disciplinary approach to oral communication. They stated, however, that reviewing the rubric and assignment(s) prior to conducting another assessment would be beneficial to see if changes are needed. Involving other department faculty, especially a rhetorician, would enhance the discussion.



Faculty also discussed the need for students to demonstrate a stronger, more confident presence in terms of oral communication in General Education Upper Division courses (GE UD), as compared with GE A1 lower division courses. GE UD courses should give students opportunities to practice oral communication skills and build confidence in speaking. They believed there is a need to consider how to move students from A1 to a higher proficiency level. Approaches to oral communication are discipline specific, and students need to be able to communicate what they have learned. It would be helpful to explore the expectations that faculty from different disciplines have for their student's oral communication skills before graduation, and how those skills are developed.

Strengthening the language about oral communication requirements for GE Upper Division (UD) classes was also suggested as a necessary next step. They asked: "What is needed for students to improve oral communication skills as they move from GE A1 to GE UD?" To more clearly define the requirements for GE UD Oral Communication skills, one faculty member suggested starting with the existing GE A1 Rubric and adding more sophistication for each criteria and level of performance. Whether there should be an upper division requirement for GE UD was discussed. A good first step is to revise the current language about GE UD oral communication requirements at Cal State East Bay.

Since this assessment was completed, the Oral Communication criterion at the UD-C level was updated. It now reads: "Advanced oral communication (e.g., formal presentations, debates) with critical feedback provided by the instructor to the students. Students demonstrate mastery of all A1 requirements, including the ability to give a presentation with a confident presence, critical thinking, and professionalism that is appropriate for the audience, is clear and logical, and demonstrates mastery of the subject at hand."

## Next Steps

- Review of the A1 Oral Communication rubric and possible assignments for the next assessment.
- Additional calibration and discussion to improve inter-rater reliability during the next assessment.
- Explore pass rates and success of students in A1 courses in both COMM and MLL, in order to determine the impact of the lab.
- This assessment took place in Fall 2020 and since then there has been quite a bit of discussion on aligning (or more closely aligning) the GE rubrics with the ILO rubrics. Those discussions continue.
- The General Education office is also asking all departments and faculty who teach GE courses to really think about their DFW/Equity gap percentages and to actively work to



reduce these. The Graduation Initiative 2025 states that it would like to have a 0% equity gap in all courses.