

## Dept. of Communication Studies Senior Portfolio Instructions

**Overview:** Graduating seniors in the Department of Communication Studies are required to submit an assessment portfolio to be eligible for graduation. This portfolio represents an academic history of students' performances in Communication Studies and provides a tool through which their achievements, knowledge, and skills can be assessed.

Your senior portfolio will be evaluated based on your ability to demonstrate your communication competence through your (1) self-assessment and (2) artifacts from your coursework. This handout provides you with instructions to guide you through the process of assessing your abilities and constructing your portfolio. There are four general steps to the process:

1. Uncovering and examining assignments and other artifacts from the courses required by your COMM program of study
2. Assessing your communication competencies
3. Constructing a self-assessment essay
4. Organizing and packaging your materials
5. Submit Your Portfolio

Your overall **goal** is to successfully argue that you are a **competent communicator** and to provide the documentation needed to support your claim.

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### Step 1: Finding and Reviewing Materials

Your portfolio will assess the work that resulted from courses you were required to take as a Communication Studies major. Most of these were COMM courses, however, some of you also were required to take a few courses outside the department as well (e.g., Interpersonal Communication majors may have taken courses in CPSY, SOC, or FCS). Anything you created for any of these courses could be appropriate for inclusion in your portfolio. Such items might include, but are not limited to:

- Papers
- Speeches
- Speech Critiques
- Interview Critiques
- Exams
- PowerPoint Slide Shows
- Worksheets
- Debate Briefs
- Exercises
- Projects
- Performance Appraisals
- Training Certificates
- Ballots from Speech and Debate tournaments (for which you received course credit)

As you collect materials for your portfolio, remember that they should represent **your own, individual work**. Therefore, avoid using group work unless you can credibly document that your effort alone resulted in the outcome of a particular portion of the group assignment.

### Step 2: Assessing Your Competencies

After collecting potential items for inclusion in your portfolio, you need to decide which items are **best suited** to help you make your case that you are a competent communicator. This will require you to first identify which of the following departmental learning outcomes best reflect your skills (*a complete list of these outcomes, including descriptions and sub-objectives will be provided to you*):

- |                           |                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ■ Public Speaking         | ■ Written Communication              |
| ■ Listening               | ■ Mastery Of Theoretical Foundations |
| ■ Social Interaction      | ■ Critical Thinking                  |
| ■ Conflict Management     | ■ Social Responsibility              |
| ■ Nonverbal Communication | ■ Human Communication Research       |

Next, compare the outcomes to the artifacts from your coursework. Can you find 3 or 4 artifacts that demonstrate your competency in a particular outcome? Keep in mind that some artifacts may demonstrate multiple outcomes. For example, a research paper could demonstrate good writing, critical thinking, and research skills in addition to the application (i.e., mastery) of theory. Also, make sure that the artifacts directly relate to the learning outcome at hand. If a product really doesn't reflect the outcome, don't try to make it stretch. Just find another product that does clearly address that outcome. The portfolio also should display **your best work** to the extent that you are able to do so. In many cases, this will mean including products for which you earned good grades. However, you also could consider tracking your skill development through time (i.e., comparing early work upon which you received a mediocre grade to later work upon which you received a good grade).

Depending upon the number of artifacts available to you and the number of outcomes you perceive as your competencies, you have two choices in how you can proceed.

#### Option One:

1. Select 3 learning outcomes from the list of departmental learning outcomes above.
2. Use a minimum of 3 products (e.g., assignments, speeches, exams, papers) to demonstrate competency in each of the 3 learning outcomes you select.
3. Each product can only be used once in the portfolio to demonstrate competency.
4. A minimum of 9 products from communication coursework must be used in the portfolio (i.e., 3 for each outcome).

#### Option Two:

1. Select 4 learning outcomes from the list of departmental learning outcomes.
2. Use a minimum of 3 products (e.g., assignments, speeches, exams, papers) to demonstrate competency in each of the 4 learning outcomes you select. This means that you must reference at least 3 products for each outcome.
3. You can use a product multiple times to demonstrate competency (i.e., one product can be used as evidence of competency for as many as 4 different learning outcomes and as few as 1 learning outcome).
4. You must use a minimum of 6 different products from communication coursework in the portfolio.

Elective Items: No matter which of the two options you choose, you may include more than the required number of products to demonstrate your competencies. These additional products will count

as “elective” items and can reflect activities that you have participated in outside of the Communication Studies curriculum. Examples include your resume; a work performance appraisal; a reference letter; a speech or workshop that you created and presented for a student or community group; and materials from other BSU coursework. If you incorporate any elective items, please remember that they must pertain to the learning outcomes you’ve chosen to discuss. Also, remember that elective products would be in addition to (not a substitute for) the required materials from your Communication Studies coursework.

### **Step #3: Constructing Your Self-Assessment Essay**

Your self-assessment essay should be a candid reflection on your abilities *as a communicator* with regard to your *chosen learning outcomes*. Therefore, you need to focus your assessment on learning outcomes that (1) reflect your strengths and (2) which can be demonstrated via materials drawn from your coursework. To start, first make sure that you have a solid understanding of the learning outcomes you are attempting to demonstrate. Review the list of learning outcomes and the sub-objectives associated with each outcome. Second, please realize that this self-assessment is *not* a statement of your personality or your likes and dislikes. Nor should it be an evaluation of your courses. Rather, it should reflect what you have learned and how you have grown *as a communicator through the assignments* that you’ve completed in your courses.

Your claims regarding your chosen learning outcomes should be presented as *solid, well constructed arguments*. This means that you should present clearly stated claims that are supported with evidence from the products that you have chosen to include in your portfolio. When doing so, please keep the following in mind:

- You will need to appropriately justify why you chose each learning outcome. Consider why the outcome is important in general and/or to you specifically.
- Make sure the products that you discuss in the essay, or some component of those products, speaks directly to the learning outcome (or a sub-objective of that outcome) at hand. This link needs to be explicitly apparent in your discussion.
- Reference specific examples or notations from your chosen artifacts so that reviewers can clearly understand how this “evidence” supports your arguments of competency. Avoid making generic references to the product or the class. Rather, indicate to reviewers exactly how the product demonstrates the outcome and provide concrete evidence toward that end. This might involve pointing to a specific passage in the paper (i.e., reference the page and paragraph number), a specific comment from an instructor on a critique sheet, the score received by a specific portion of the speech (e.g., the score for delivery or organization), and/or comments from a peer review. Consider using multiple pieces of evidence if possible. In addition to identifying the evidence, make sure that you explain why you believe the evidence reflects your competency regarding the outcome at hand. This will help you effectively conclude your argument.

To assist you in framing your thoughts, the following organizational pattern for your self-assessment paper is suggested:

- I. Introduction
- II. Outcome #1

- a. Describe the nature of the outcome and its relevance/importance
  - b. Artifact #1: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
  - c. Artifact #2: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
  - d. Artifact #3: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
- III. Outcome #2
- a. Describe the nature of the outcome and its relevance/importance
  - b. Artifact #1: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
  - c. Artifact #2: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
  - d. Artifact #3: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
- IV. Outcome #3
- a. Describe the nature of the outcome and its relevance/importance
  - b. Artifact #1: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
  - c. Artifact #2: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
  - d. Artifact #3: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
- V. Outcome #4 (for Option 2 Only)
- a. Describe the nature of the outcome and its relevance/importance
  - b. Artifact #1: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
  - c. Artifact #2: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
  - d. Artifact #3: Discuss specifically how the outcome is demonstrated in this artifact.
- VI. Conclusion

As you write your essay, please make sure that it demonstrates your best quality and style of writing. At the very least, this means that you should check spelling and punctuation, use correct paragraph form, and proofread for errors.

#### **Step #4: Organizing and Packaging Your Materials**

After you complete your essay, it's time to put the pieces of your portfolio together. Please make sure that you . . .

- Package your portfolio in a loose-leaf binder (i.e., this will enable reviewers to easily examine your materials).
- Place your name on the cover of your portfolio.
- Complete two Portfolio Cover Sheets and place them inside the binder
- Organize your materials carefully:
  - Include a complete Table of Contents (placed at the beginning of your portfolio).
  - Include **2** copies of your Self-Assessment paper
  - Organize the products in any order that you believe makes logical sense given the option that you've chosen, the materials you've included, and the portfolio's goals.
  - Neatly label each section so reviewers can easily find your materials.

#### **Step #5: Submit Your Portfolio**

Your portfolio is due to the Dept. of Communication Studies office (LB 351) by 5:00 pm on the deadline set for the semester in which you are to graduate. Typically, Fall graduates will submit their

portfolios in early November while Spring and Summer graduates will submit their portfolios in early April.

Your portfolio will be evaluated by three faculty members, the last of which will be your academic advisor. Your academic advisor should contact you immediately prior to final exam week to arrange an appointment to return your work and to conduct a brief exit interview with you.