



College of Business & Technology

Program Assessment of Undergraduate Business Students' Oral Communication Skills



EKUBusiness Learning Objectives

- EKUBusiness students will communicate effectively in both oral and written communication.
- EKUBusiness students will work effectively in teams.

Key Performance Indicator for Oral Communication

- At least 80 percent of the business students' oral presentations meet expected business and professional standards.
- At least 80 percent of the business students can effectively present a team oral presentation.

Evaluation Method

External professional reviewers observe and evaluate the oral presentations of all students who take CCT 300 (Managerial Reports), a core class required of all business students, using the following summary sheet.

Summary Evaluation for Programmatic Assessment
EXECUTIVES' EVALUATIONS OF STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS
_____ Semester _____ Year

Evaluation of Students' Oral Presentation Skills

Reviewer	Very Effective	Good	Acceptable	Needs Considerable Work	Unacceptable	Total Students
1						
2						
3						
Percent of Students						

Evaluation of Students' Team Skills

Reviewer	Very Effective	Good	Acceptable	Needs Considerable Work	Unacceptable	Total Students
1						
2						
3						
Percent of Students						

Summary of Executives' Positive Comments:

Summary of Executives' Suggestions for Improvement:

Goals of the Evaluation

The external reviewers have assisted the EKUBusiness program in answering the following questions?

1. Are EKUBusiness students developing effective oral communication skills?
2. What techniques of an oral presentation do executives identify as being effective?
3. What suggestions do executives make for improving presentations?
4. What other implications can be identified from executives' observations that will benefit the teaching and learning process?

The Evaluation Process

Between 1995 and Summer 2004, external professional reviewers have evaluated the oral presentations of over 1,300 EKUBusiness students in more than 450 teams. The students' topics related to professional development include ethics, international communication, leadership skills, professional development, career advancement, preparation for job interviews, decision making, team skills and professional and personal credibility.

Who are the External Reviewers

The external reviewers, many of whom are ECU alumni, generally have achieved a high degree of professional success and work for companies or organizations that the university considers to be community partners. They hold positions such as Bank Presidents and Vice Presidents, Human Resource Managers, Plant Managers, Executive Directors, Attorneys, Certified Public Accountants and Regional Sales Managers.

The Outcome of the Assessment Method

The KPIs have been met or exceeded each semester. The reviewers' evaluations for the Spring 2004:

- ✓ 97 percent of the students in CCT 300 received "Very effective" or "Good" ratings
 - ✓ 90 percent of the teams received "Very effective" or "Good" ratings
 - ✓ 100 percent of the executives evaluated the topics oral reports as viable, real-world information applicable to the workplace.
- Specific observations and suggestions from each semester are incorporated in the next semesters' instruction with comments generally falling into categories such as content, audience rapport, appearance, voice, visual aids and nonverbal cues.
 - Interestingly, the executive' positive comments are somewhat general, e.g., "good lead-in" or "good poise". However, their suggestions for improvement are more specific, e.g., "pull hair from eyes" or "don't say 'stuff like that'."

Example of Executives' Comments Regarding Audience Rapport

Effective Techniques	Suggestions for Improvement
Good open face	Involve the audience
Pleasant	Smile
Good poise	Try not to read as much
Good sense of humor	Don't hold cards/paper
Very confident	Make it exciting
Enthusiastic	Let your personality come through
Good use of rhetorical questions (involved group early)	Don't get "giggly"

2004-2005 Goal for Continuous Improvement

Have a larger percentage of business students receiving the "very effective" rating.

Conclusions

- Executives' evaluation of students' oral presentations is an effective tool for systematically assessing and documenting EKUBusiness Program's learning objective to graduate business students who have developed oral communication and team skills.
- The executives' "likes" and "dislikes" provide real-world standards to incorporate into the next semester's course instruction.
- The executives' validate for the students that the techniques and topics being covered in the course are important for students' future careers.
- Executives' overwhelmingly positive reactions to the teams' presentations help to build students' confidence that they can perform successfully in real-world situations.
- Inviting business executives to visit the classroom builds important networking ties with employers and gives the University an opportunity to showcase our students and enhances the business program's overall reputation for producing high-quality graduates.