

Written and Oral Communication

Learning Goal: A goal of the core curriculum is the development of strong written and oral communication skills. A mind is not truly liberated until it can effectively communicate what it knows. Students will develop communication skills that reflect an understanding of the power of language to shape thought and experience. They will learn to write and speak logically, with clarity, and with originality.

Learning Outcomes: With increasing proficiency, students will

1. Recognize and compose readable prose, as characterized by clear and careful organization, coherent paragraphs and well-constructed sentences that employ the conventions of Standard Written English and appropriate diction; and
2. Recognize and formulate effective written and oral communication, giving appropriate consideration to audience, context and format; and
3. Analyze arguments so as to construct ones that are well supported, are well reasoned, and are controlled by a thesis or exploratory question; and
4. Use the process of writing to enhance intellectual discovery and unravel complexities of thought.

Rationale (i.e., the intention of the proposed outcomes): - In their emphasis on both analysis and formulation, outcomes #1-3 reflect the need for students to analyze and assess how others communicate in order to successfully communicate themselves. Outcome #1 (grammar) addresses the need for students to use appropriate grammar in writing and speaking. Outcome #2 (rhetoric) recognizes that students are part of a complex world and stipulates that students must be able to tailor their communication for different audiences and different situations. The communication must be in both written and oral form. Outcome #3 (logic) concerns the need for students to communicate ideas in a precise and organized fashion. Outcome #4 reflects a much deeper objective, i.e., that students are able to use the writing process as an occasion for creativity and discovery and to acquire and develop the liberal art of clear, coherent thinking. (Satisfying this learning outcome would likely require students to participate in a multi-stage process of developing ideas that included substantive writing, though not exclusively writing.) Finally, it must be noted that the outcomes treat communication as the controlling idea and envision written and oral communication as necessary species within the genus. Therefore, outcomes #2-3 are about communication skills, broadly speaking, and do not separate expectations for writing and speaking. Such habits are established by sustained practice and develop as students progress through the curriculum.