

Communication Across the Curriculum at Illinois Institute of Technology

At IIT, responsibility for helping students communicate within and beyond their specialties is distributed across the university. To graduate, all students must take 42 credit hours of communication-intensive courses (C-courses), of which 15 credits are to be in their major discipline, 15 are to be distributed across humanities and social science, and the remainder to be elected by the department or the student.

1. Communication-Intensive Courses (description)

C-Courses are courses that meet minimum requirements specified by the CAC Program, with the advice of the Faculty Advisory Committee. Guidelines for the C-Courses can be found at

<http://www.iit.edu/~writer>.

The requirements can be summarized by four crucial points:

- students must receive instruction in writing or speaking,
- they must have the opportunity to practice the skill
- they must get feedback on their efforts
- they must have the opportunity to try again

2. Goals for IIT’s Communication Across the Curriculum Program

What can students do when they come in to IIT?

IIT requires entering students to submit a portfolio of their writing for placement. Readers in the placement process, and a group of faculty who attended a brown bag luncheon for the purpose, observed the characteristics of entering students’ portfolios given in the chart below. This is simply an informal reading of five portfolios by the wider faculty, that corroborates the observations of writing faculty who place about 350 portfolios each year.

THEY DO KNOW	THEY DON’T KNOW
Most Know How To:	Most Don’t Know
Write a five-paragraph (literary, usually) essay	How to write in other genres: lab reports, technical reports, ec.
Expand sentences: use literary language	Write technical language
Summarize text	Analyze text
Some Know How To	Write exposition about things not in texts
Take notes, pick out support	They should offer their own thoughts or interpretations, especially when they are not talking about literature
Work with sources without plagiarizing	Sustain a question about what they have read.
Find things in the library or online	
Play with readers’ expectations	

2.B What do we expect them to be able to do when they leave IIT?

GOALS FOR COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AT ILLINOIS INSTITUTE of TECHNOLOGY (**WRITING**)

Knowledge Objective	Specific Measurable Sub-Goals
<p>I. Rhetorical Knowledge All graduates of IIT should understand and/or be able to produce the specific measurable sub-goals, in these genres: Proposal, Progress Report, Formal Report, Lab Report, Memo, Literature Survey or Review, Academic Article; Gen Ed: Essay, Review</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The features of technical/professional documents and articles. 2. The purposes of technical/professional documents and articles. 3. The expectations of readers who use the documents writing 4. More generally, the main features and uses of produced in other fields
<p>II. Language Graduates should be able to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Focus on a purpose *Recognize different audiences and their specific needs *Recognize differences in communicative situations and respond appropriately to those different situations *Use conventions of format, structure, and language appropriate to the purpose of the texts they write *Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality *Have a sense of what genres are and how they differ * To treat the same information in multiple formats
<p>III. Process Knowledge Graduates should know how to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Build final results in stages *Review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for purposes other than editing *Work in teams. *Observe and critique both individual and team processes.

GOALS FOR COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AT ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY(SPEAKING)

Knowledge Objective	Specific Measurable Sub-Goals
<p>I.Rhetorical Knowledge</p> <p>Graduates should know how to develop and present the following kinds of technical presentations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Presentations: Requirements, Preliminary Design, Critical Design, Final Design • Technical Briefing • Business Plan
<p>II. Language/Visual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on a purpose • Recognize different audiences and their specific needs • Recognize differences in communicative situations and respond appropriately to those different situations • Use conventions of format, structure, language and visuals appropriate to the purpose of the presentation. • Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality both in verbal and in technical aspects.
<p>III. Process Knowledge</p> <p>Graduates should know how to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and present in teams • Evaluate progress • Observe and critique processes • Translate Technical Knowledge • Use Power Point • Use Overheads

3. Support for Faculty in Communication-Intensive Courses

The Communication Program which supports the faculty of these courses is housed in the Academic Resource Center, which is also the site for the student center, where students can meet with peer tutors to get help or feedback on their writing.

The Program contacts C-Course instructors at the beginning of each term, either to renew or to begin arrangements to make in-class presentations on writing or speaking, to arrange for faculty to send students to the writing center for feedback, or for feedback in the classroom (several models are used). The Program also offers extensive teaching materials for use by faculty, and for distribution to students. This includes criteria sets that will be used to evaluate students' work. These are also available on the website.

4. Assessment of Communication Program

Each fall, 10% of the final written documents for each C-Course are collected as samples. The method is to randomly select one in ten of the students enrolled. These samples are then read by a committee of the Program faculty and advanced graduate students who specialize in writing. These external readers come from area universities that offer such programs, and they are paid. The Program tries to involve alumni, but so far has not succeeded. After standardizing consistent with current practice, readers evaluate the samples using criteria that are among the materials already distributed to faculty and students in the progress of the term.

A second source of information is the criteria sets kept by the writing tutors for all students they serve. These criteria sets are evaluated to determine students' strengths and weaknesses.

For oral communication, the process is basically the same, though faculty less consistently choose to use the services. The Program offers in-class instruction and feedback. The Program will attend final presentations, give feedback, and provide formal evaluation.

The Program also collects information about the final IPRO presentations. The IPRO presentations are judged by a mixture of faculty, staff, and

industry representatives. Their scoring sheets are kept and analyzed to profile the strengths and weaknesses of the presentations.

The Director of the Program then writes a report to each department, giving the results of the readings, and making recommendations. This information is used subsequently in designing communication instruction and feedback for students, and in working with departments to determine how the Communication Program can best serve their needs.

Every three years the Communication Program meets with the departments to review the process.

5. Implementation Schedule:

TERM	ACTIVITY
<p><i>WRITING</i></p> <p>Fall 2000</p>	<p>CAC met with departments to modify general goals for specific departmental needs.</p> <p>CAC analyzed available portfolios from entering students and from exiting students.</p> <p>CAC met with departments to evaluate results of portfolio analysis and discuss recommendations.</p> <p>CAC and departments developed method for collecting more reliable samples or other data. Process was put in place.</p>
<p>Fall 2001/ Spring 2002 (Repeat cycle each year)</p>	<p>CAC evaluates collected data. Report sent with recommendations to department.</p> <p>CAC meets with departments to evaluate results of data analysis and discuss recommendations.</p>
<p>Fall 2002 (Repeat cycle every three years)</p>	<p>CAC evaluates collected data. Report sent with recommendations to department.</p> <p>CAC meets with departments to evaluate results of data analysis and discuss recommendations.</p> <p>CAC evaluates data collection for 2001. Sends report with recommendations to department.</p> <p>CAC and department review the process and design criteria for longitudinal evaluation over five years.</p>
<p><i>SPEAKING</i></p> <p>Fall 2001 Fall 2002</p>	<p>CAC evaluated in-class presentations.</p> <p>CAC processed Fall IPRO presentation scoring rubrics.</p> <p>Meet with departments to review plan further implementation.</p>

Appendix A. Basic Rubrics used to Evaluate Samples Collected in Fall 2001.

The Essay

Students will demonstrate effective communication skills in writing Essays. Criteria

Objective	Needs Improvement	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Comments
Purpose & Audience •Successfully isolates a task or frames a question for a specific audience • Integrates evidence of mission/vision/larger purpose; effectively addresses the “so what” question	__Objective & recommendations not clearly stated. ___Audience not considered ___Little foregrounding of issues	_Objective/recommendations clearly stated ___Some attention to audience ___Adequate foregrounding of issues	___Objective or recommendations strongly stated. ___Careful attention to audience ___Strong foregrounding of issues	
Organization •Sustains exploration or response that productively addresses the task or question •Develops intellectually, showing progression and/or thoroughness appropriate for discipline or task •Shows strong ability to choose, arrange and evaluate resources appropriate for a specific audience and purpose •Structural organization fosters a sustained exploration of a question or thorough response to a task	Hard to follow: __structure unclear __Part/whole relationship unclear __Headings missing or misleading __Tables/figures don't support claims __components missing or inadequate	Followable: __structure is adequate __Part/whole relationship clear ___Headings adequate ___Tables/figures adequate ___All necessary components, adequate	Easy to Follow: __Structure is strong __Part/whole relationships very clear ___Headings strong ___Tables/figures linked ___All necessary components fully developed and effective	
Mechanics • Transitions serve a reader-friendly purpose • Language is fluent	___Errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation ___Non-technical style ___unprofessional appearance	___few mechanical errors ___mostly-technical style ___Acceptable appearance	___no mechanical problems ___Technical style ___Professional appearance	

Engineering Technical Report Rubric

Students will demonstrate effective communication skills in Engineering Technical Report

Objective	Needs Improvement	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Comments
Purpose & Audience •Focus (clearly states the objective & recommendations. • Recognition of multiple audiences •Significance (foregrounds salient issues)	___Objective & recommendations not clearly stated. ___Audience not considered ___Little foregrounding of issues	___Objective/ recommendations clearly stated ___Some attention to audience ___Adequate foregrounding of issues	___Objective or recommendations strongly stated. ___Careful attention to audience ___Strong foregrounding of issues	
Organization •Structure •Coherence •Headings •Tables/figures linked to text • All appropriate components included	Hard to follow: ___structure unclear ___Part/whole relationship unclear ___Headings missing or misleading ___Tables/figures don't support claims ___components missing or inadequate	Followable: ___structure is adequate ___Part/whole relationship clear ___Headings adequate ___Tables/figures adequate ___All necessary components, adequate	Easy to Follow: ___Structure is strong ___Part/whole relationships very clear ___Headings strong ___Tables/figures linked ___All necessary components fully developed and effective	
Evidence •Accuracy •Support •Documentation	___Inaccurate statements ___claims/opinions unsupported ___sources not identified properly	___most statements accurate ___most claims/opinions supported ___most sources identified properly	___Statements are accurate ___Claims/opinions supported ___sources identified properly	
Mechanics • Sentence structure • Technical Style • Appearance (Figures, tables etc.)	___Errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation ___Non-technical style ___unprofessional appearance	___few mechanical errors ___mostly-technical style ___Acceptable appearance	___no mechanical problems ___Technical style ___Professional appearance	

Executive Summary Rubric

Students will demonstrate effective communication skills in executive summary.

Objective		Needs Improvement	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Comments
Purpose & Audience Tells what its about (prjct #, task, etc.) Tells the purpose of the document (report, recommend)	 	__not identifies the project. __not identifies purpose of document (as distinct from purpose of task)	__identifies the project __Adequately states purpose of the document.	__identifies the project, may include personnel info __Strong statement of document purpose	
Organization Parts of the essay are organized logically Clearly indicates relationships among the parts	 	Hard to follow: __structure unclear __Part/whole relationship unclear	Followable: __structure is adequate __Part/whole relationship clear	Easy to Follow: __Structure is strong __Part/whole relationships very clear	
Evidence Method indicated “Bottom-line” is clear Results summary Conclusions summary Findings summary	 	__method is unclear __bottom-line unclear __results not pointedly summarized __conclusions not clearly indicated __findings unclear or missing	__method is clear __bottom-line clear __results pointedly summarized __conclusions clearly indicated __findings clear	__method is succinctly and clear laid out __bottom-line easy to find __results pointedly summarized __conclusions clearly indicated __findings clear	
Mechanics • Sentence structure • Technical Style • Appearance (Figures, tables etc.)	 	__Errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation __Non-technical style __unprofessional appearance	__few mechanical errors __mostly-technical style __Acceptable appearance	__no mechanical problems __Technical style __Professional appearance	

Lab Report Rubric

Students will demonstrate effective communication skills in writing the lab report

Objective		Needs Improvement	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Comments
Purpose •Focus (clearly states the objective, •Significance (foregrounds salient issues)	___ ___	___Objective not clearly stated. ___Little foregrounding of issues	___Objective clearly stated ___Adequate foregrounding of issues	___Objective strongly stated. ___Strong foregrounding of issues	
Organization •Structure •Coherence •Headings •Tables/figures linked to text	___ ___ ___ ___	Hard to follow: ___structure unclear ___Part/whole relationship unclear ___Headings missing or misleading ___Tables/figures don't support claims	Followable: ___structure is adequate ___Part/whole relationship clear ___Headings adequate ___Tables/figures adequate	Easy to Follow: ___Structure is strong ___Part/whole relationships very clear ___Headings strong ___Tables/figures linked and effective	
Evidence •Accuracy •Support •Documentation	___ ___ ___	___Inaccurate statements ___claims/opinions unsupported ___sources not identified properly	___most statements accurate ___most claims/opinions supported ___most sources identified properly	___Statements are accurate ___Claims/opinions supported ___sources identified properly	
Mechanics • Sentence structure • Technical Style • Appearance (Figures, tables etc.) • All appropriate components included	___ ___ ___	___Errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation ___Non-technical style ___unprofessional appearance ___components missing or inadequate	___few mechanical errors ___mostly-technical style ___Acceptable appearance ___All necessary components, adequate	___no mechanical problems ___Technical style ___Professional appearance ___All necessary components fully developed	

Math Technical Report

Students will demonstrate effective communication skills in mathematics.

Objective		Needs Improvement	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Comments
Purpose & Audience •Focus(clearly states the objective) •Significance (foregrounds salient issues)	___ ___	__Objective & recommendations not clearly stated. ___Little foregrounding of issues	_Objective/ recommendations clearly stated ___Adequate foregrounding of issues	___Objective or recommendations strongly stated. ___Strong foregrounding of issues	
Organization Parts of the essay are organized logically Clearly indicates relationships among the parts	_____ _____	Hard to follow: __structure unclear __Part/whole relationship unclear	Followable: __structure is adequate __Part/whole relationship clear	Easy to Follow: __Structure is strong __Part/whole relationships very clear	
Evidence Analysis is thorough, with sufficient details/data Justifies the steps in the process	_____ _____	__claims/opinions unsupported __steps not justified	___most claims/opinions supported ___most steps justified	___Claims/opinions supported ___steps well justified	
Mechanics • Sentence structure • Technical Style • Appearance (Figures, tables etc.)	_____ _____ _____	___Errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation ___Non-technical style ___unprofessional appearance	___few mechanical errors ___mostly-technical style ___Acceptable appearance	___no mechanical problems ___Technical style ___Professional appearance	

Technical Design Report

Objective		Needs Improvement	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Comments
Students will be able to	demonstrate	Effective communication skills	In: Technical Design Report		
Purpose & Audience •Clearly identifies problem or question. •Valid conclusions & recommendations •Attends to audiences	— —	___ Problem or question not clearly identified ___ Conclusions & recommendations unclear or inadequate ___ Ignores audience	___ Problem or question adequately identified ___ Adequate conclusions/recommendations ___ Considers audience	___ Problem or question clearly identified ___ Strong conclusions/recommendations ___ Engages audience	
Organization •Structure •Coherence •Headings •Tables/figures linked to text • All appropriate components included	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Hard to follow: ___ structure unclear ___ Part/whole relationship unclear ___ Headings missing or misleading ___ Tables/figures don't support claims ___ components missing or inadequate	Followable: ___ structure is adequate ___ Part/whole relationship clear ___ Headings adequate ___ Tables/figures adequate ___ All necessary components, adequate	Easy to Follow: ___ Structure is strong ___ Part/whole relationships very clear ___ Headings strong ___ Tables/figures linked ___ All necessary components fully developed and effective	
Evidence •Accuracy (subordination of personal bias) •Support (adequate data, fully interpreted) •Clear & careful reasoning •Appropriate Visuals	_____ _____ _____ _____	___ Inaccurate statements ___ inadequate data or uninterpreted ___ Reasoning unclear or careless ___ Inappropriate Visuals	___ most statements accurate ___ Adequate data, interpretation ___ Adequate reasoning, care ___ Adequate visuals	___ Statements are accurate ___ Excellent data, fully interpreted ___ Sound and careful reasoning ___ Excellent Visuals	
Mechanics • Sentence structure • Technical Style • Appearance (Figures, tables etc.)	_____ _____ _____	___ Errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation ___ Non-technical style ___ unprofessional appearance	___ few mechanical errors ___ mostly-technical style ___ Acceptable appearance	___ no mechanical problems ___ Technical style ___ Professional appearance	

Appendix B: Findings for Fall 2001

Appendix C: Recommendations