

Assessment of Communication
Institutional Student Learning Outcome #1
Report to the Campus
2010-11

Prepared
By
The Executive Committee of the Assessment Commission

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Executive Summary

During the 2010-11 academic year, the OIT Assessment Commission conducted an institutional assessment of oral and written communication. The assessment was based on the following performance criteria:

1. Oral communication

- Supports thesis adequately with detail and/or research, and documents support correctly and responsibly (content).
- Organizes oral material effectively (organization).
- Presents appropriately for audience and purpose (style).
- Speaks clearly and correctly, using standard English (delivery).
- Uses visual communication effectively (visuals).

2. Written communication

- Clearly conveys purpose and main ideas (purpose and ideas).
- Organizes written material effectively (organization).
- Supports main ideas adequately with detail and/or research (support).
- Uses appropriate voice, word choice and sentence structure (style).
- Uses standard English (conventions).
- Documents support correctly and responsibly (documentation).

Oral Communication

The assessment of oral communication was based on faculty evaluations of upper division speech presentations by students in each program, using the OIT Public Speaking rubric developed by the Communication Department.

The Executive Committee found the results for all programs to be acceptable overall (Figure 1). They also felt that the results by clustered majors were generally acceptable overall. The committee did not identify any specific weaknesses requiring further action at the institutional level.

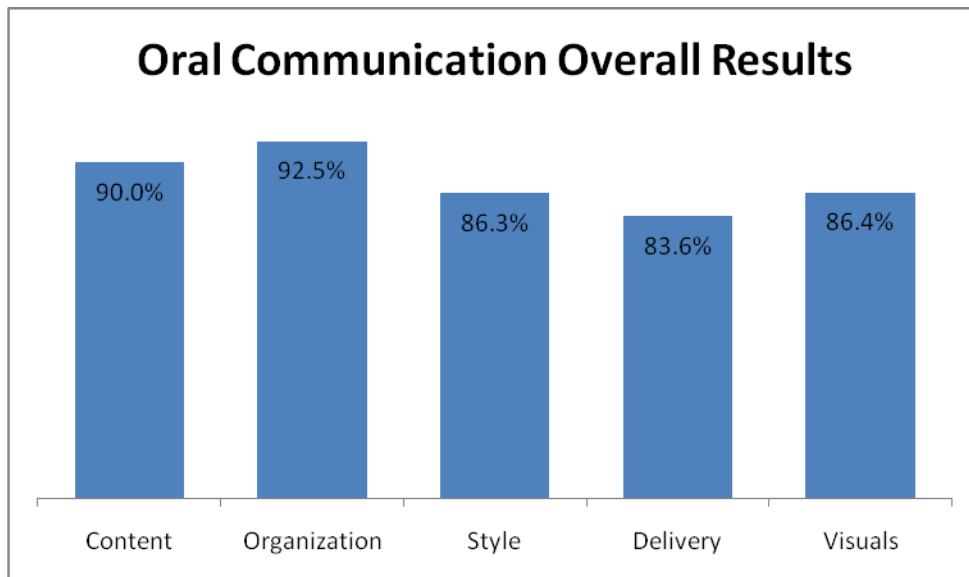


Figure 1. Percentage of students proficient in oral communication, all programs

Written Communication

The assessment of written communication was based on a rubric-scored essay in an upper division course in the major. Faculty gave students an assignment associated with the lifelong learning assessment which had been developed by the Assessment Commission and vetted broadly across the institution. The writing was scored using the OIT Essay Rubric developed by the Communication Department.

The Executive Committee found the results for all programs to be generally acceptable for purpose and ideas, organization, style, and conventions (Figure 2). Weaknesses were evident in support and documentation. The committee found similar trends with the results by clustered majors. To improve the results for support and documentation the committee has conducted a writing audit of all programs and in conjunction with the Communication Department and library faculty will provide focused training and support to help the campus community teach and assess source documentation in all majors.

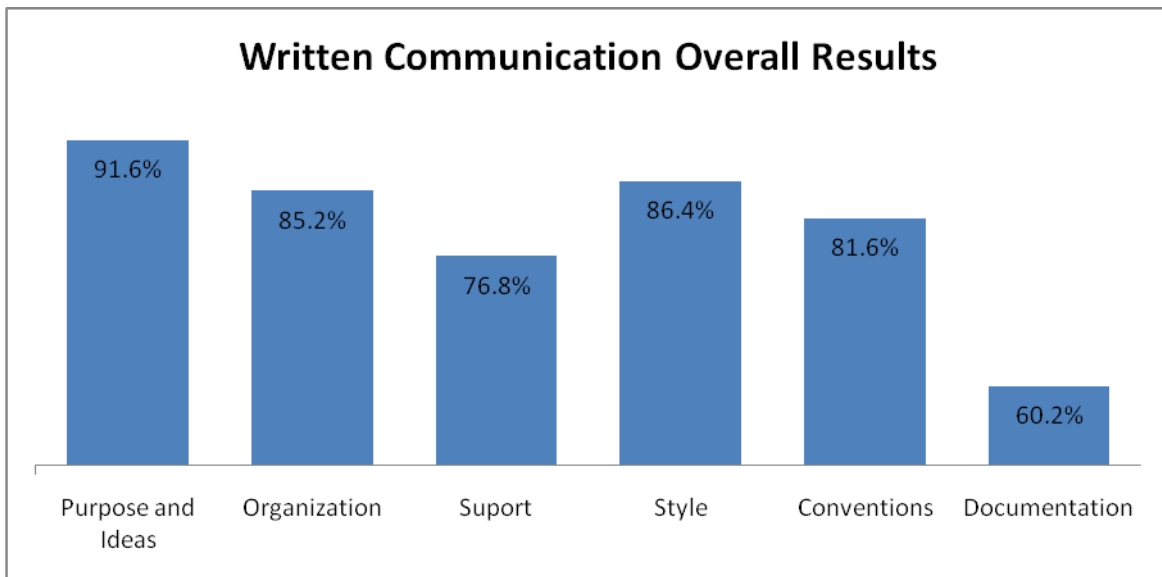


Figure 2. Percentage of students proficient in writing, all programs

Definition and performance criteria for communication

The Executive Committee of the Assessment Commission approved the following expectations and performance criteria for communication:

ISLO 1: OIT students will demonstrate effective oral, written and visual communication.

Effective communication is essential. Communication skills include writing, communicating orally, and making effective use of visual media.

Expectation: Graduates should be able to communicate effectively in a variety of communication contexts and for a variety of audiences. They should be able to produce written documents consistent with professional standards, use visual presentation software, and produce computer-generated illustrations.

These expectations may be demonstrated through specific coursework in writing and speech as well as through the requirements within majors for effective oral, written, and visual communication for formal and informal presentations. These outcomes might also be demonstrated through extracurricular activities related to the major (e.g., conference presentations, community service presentations, etc.).

Performance criteria:

1. Oral communication (with OIT Public Speaking Rubric)
 - Supports thesis adequately with detail and/or research, and documents support correctly and responsibly (content).
 - Organizes oral material effectively (organization)
 - Presents appropriately for audience and purpose (style).
 - Speaks clearly and correctly, using standard English (delivery).
 - Uses visual communication effectively (visuals).
2. Written communication (with OIT Essay Rubric)
 - Clearly conveys purpose and main ideas (purpose and ideas).
 - Organizes written material effectively (organization)
 - Supports main ideas adequately with detail and/or research (support).
 - Uses appropriate voice, word choice and sentence structure (style).
 - Uses standard English (conventions).
 - Documents support correctly and responsibly (documentation).

Focus of assessments

This report includes a summary of assessment done in communication general education to date, in addition to evaluation of student learning at the program level.

Oral Communication

Description of assessment

The assessment consists of upper division speech presentations delivered in program level courses, plus a summary of oral communication assessment done in communication general education to date.

The program level assessment required students to deliver individual presentations which included visuals and were at least five minutes in length. The presentations were assessed by program faculty who received training on the use of the OIT Public Speaking Rubric. This rubric was developed by the Communication Department.

Data scoring

To encourage motivation to perform well, the student presentations were graded and counted in the overall course grade. In addition to grading the presentations, each instructor scored the student presentations for assessment purposes using the OIT Public Speaking Rubric and a score sheet provided by the Assessment Commission. The instructors used a proficiency scale from “1” (limited or no proficiency) to “4” (high proficiency) for each of the performance criteria on the rubric.

Data collection

Score sheets from all participating programs were submitted to the Director of Assessment during the fall 2010 term. The aggregated data for all courses were then submitted to the Director of Institutional Research for analysis.

Data elements

The data elements collected in the oral communication assessment process included:

- Student ID
- Student last and first name
- Student scores for each of the performance criteria

In addition, the Director of Institutional Research linked the above data elements to the student’s major, student level, and speech courses taken at OIT.

Assessment results for oral communication

The Executive Committee of the Assessment Commission reviewed the overall results of this assessment and made comparisons to the results from the assessments done in general education courses.

Overall results for all programs

As described above, the faculty scored the student presentations on five performance criteria. A broad sample of OIT programs was included in the assessment. There were 359 students involved in this assessment. The percentage of students who met or exceeded faculty expectations for each criterion is shown in Table 1.

Performance Criteria	Meets Faculty Expectations	Exceeds Faculty Expectations	Total for Meets or Exceeds Expectations
Supports thesis adequately with detail and/or research, and documents support correctly and responsibly	43.2%	46.8%	90%
Organizes oral material effectively	45.7%	46.8%	92.5%
Presents appropriately for audience and purpose	42.6%	43.7%	86.3%
Speaks clearly and correctly, using standard English	44.9%	38.7%	83.6%
Uses visual communication effectively	37.1%	49.3%	86.4%

Table 1. Percentage of students who met or exceeded faculty expectations, all programs

The Executive Committee felt that these results were quite acceptable overall. When reviewing the data using various crosstabs, the committee observed that there seems to be no significant predictors of performance (class level, transfer vs. non-transfer, SPE 111 at OIT). Overall results at the program level appear favorable when compared to the general education assessment of oral communication done in Writing 227 winter term 2009 which showed 69.3% in content, 78.4% in organization, 87.5 in style and 77.3% in delivery. The committee discussed that this may indicate student growth from experience giving presentations in program level courses or the possibility of more rigorous evaluation of student performance done by communication faculty. This comparison is difficult to analyze as the evidence is inconclusive.

Results by major

The faculty ratings of graduating seniors were also analyzed by major. Because of small sample sizes for each major, students were clustered into four categories of majors for this analysis—arts & sciences, engineering, health, and management. The percentage of students, by clustered majors, who met or exceeded faculty expectations is shown in Table 2.

Performance Criteria	Arts & Sciences n=72	Engineering n=81	Health n=172	Management n=34
Supports thesis adequately with detail and/or research, and documents support correctly and responsibly	88.9%	86.4%	92.4%	88.2%
Organizes oral material effectively	93.1%	86.4%	94.2%	97.1%
Presents appropriately for audience and purpose	90.3%	81.5%	90.7%	67.6%
Speaks clearly and correctly, using standard English	87.5%	79%	86.6%	70.6%
Uses visual communication effectively	86.1%	80.2%	87.8%	94.1%

Table 2. Percentage of seniors who met or exceeded faculty expectations, by clustered majors

The Executive Committee found these results to be consistent with the overall results in Table 1 and to be acceptable. The committee did, however, make the following suggestions for the next time the communication ISLO is assessed.

- Collect qualitative data (by program or course, not by student). A faculty reflection form or comment box along with the student scores.
- Build in a norming activity by collecting a sample of student presentations on video. The communication department will review and rate as a comparison to the program faculty rating.
- Encourage two faculty raters for each student presentation.
- Encourage faculty participation in rubric training sessions.

Written Communication

Description of assessment

The assessment consisted of upper division writing in program level courses associated with the lifelong learning assessment administered in fall 2010, plus a summary of written communication assessment done in communication general education to date.

In an upper division course in the major, faculty assigned students a lifelong learning essay as a homework assignment (Appendix B) that had been developed by the Assessment Commission and vetted broadly across the institution. The intent for combining these two assessments was to be efficient with student and faculty time, while collecting data for two different ISLOs in one assessment activity.

The OIT Essay Rubric (Appendix C) was provided to both students and faculty along with the assignment. This rubric was developed by the OIT Communication Department faculty and adopted as an official OIT rubric by the Assessment Commission February 2009. A training session was held in November, 2010, led by a member of the Communication Department and using sample essays created in a pilot activity conducted during spring term 2010. This session helped assessment coordinators practice scoring essays using the rubric.

Data scoring

To encourage motivation to perform well on this assignment, the student work was graded and counted in the overall course grade. In addition to grading the assignments, each instructor scored the student essays for assessment purposes, using the OIT Essay Rubric and a score sheet provided by the Assessment Commission. The instructors used a proficiency scale from “1” (limited or no proficiency) to “4” (high proficiency) for each of the four performance criteria on the rubric.

Data collection

Data collection occurred during the fall 2010 term, with a broad sample of OIT programs participating in the assessment. The aggregated data for all courses were then submitted to the Director of Institutional Research for analysis.

Data elements

The data elements collected in the writing assessment process included:

- Student ID
- Student last and first name
- Course Reference Number (CRN)
- Subject, course, and section number (e.g., BIO 102-01)
- Scores for each of the performance criteria on the essay rubric

In addition, the Director of Institutional Research linked the above data elements to the student's major, student level, student admission type, and writing courses taken at OIT.

Assessment results for Written Communication

Overall results for all programs

The Executive Committee of the Assessment Commission reviewed the overall results of this assessment. Results for students demonstrating proficiency or high proficiency for all courses combined are shown in Table 3. There were 250 students involved in this assessment.

Performance Criteria	% Proficient	% Highly Proficient	Total % Proficient or Higher
Clearly conveys purpose and main ideas	58%	33.6%	91.6%
Organizes written material effectively	54%	31/2%	85.2%
Supports main ideas adequately with detail and/or research	52.8%	24%	76.8%
Uses appropriate voice, word choice and sentence structure	59.6%	26.8%	86.4%
Uses standard English	59.6%	22%	81.6%
Documents support correctly and responsibly	34.8%	25.4%	60.2%

Table 3. Overall proficiency levels, all programs

The Executive Committee found the results for purpose and ideas, organization, style, and conventions to be satisfactory. The students did not perform up to expectations in the criteria of support and documentation which are closely related. When reviewing the data using various crosstabs, the committee observed that there seems to be no significant predictors of performance (class level, transfer vs. non-transfer, general education writing courses at OIT).

The committee discussed the fact that this particular writing assignment did not lend itself well to documentation. Some faculty expressed that they felt this was not a true research paper and therefore the need for documentation was marginal. The committee did however conclude that these findings are consistent with what we know about our students based on assessments done in WRI 227 courses as illustrated in Table 4. It is also consistent with what we learned from the critical thinking ISLO assessment done in 2007-08 which revealed "identify and evaluate evidence" as an area of weakness.

Performance Criteria	2008-09 % Proficient or Higher	2009-10 % Proficient or Higher
Integration of Sources	21.4%	58.9%
Quality of Primary Sources	26.2%	62.5%

Table 4. Assessment Results for Effective Source Use, WRI 227

The Executive Committee of the Assessment Commission discussed results of the 2010-11 ISLO writing assessment with Communication Department and library faculty. The group concluded that it is difficult to determine the specific weakness in the area of documentation and further analysis may be required before determining appropriate actions toward improvement in this area.

Results by major

Because of small sample sizes in many programs, students were clustered in four major categories for this analysis, including arts and sciences, engineering, health, and management. The percentage of students performing at proficiency or high proficiency by major is shown in Table 5.

Performance Criteria	Arts & Sciences n=47	Engineering n=60	Health n=114	Management n=29
Clearly conveys purpose and main ideas	85.1%	88.3%	98.2%	82.8%
Organizes written material effectively	78.7%	78.3%	95.6%	69%
Supports main ideas adequately with detail and/or research	53.2%	80%	90.4%	55.2%
Uses appropriate voice, word choice and sentence structure	74.5%	83.3%	92.1%	89.7%
Uses standard English	78.7%	80%	85.1%	75.9%
Documents support correctly and responsibly	45.2%	55%	74.3%	37.9%

Table 5. Proficiency by major (percentage at proficiency or high proficiency)

The Executive Committee found these results to be consistent with the overall results for the institution. The committee did, however, recognize a similar trend to the student performance on the lifelong learning assignment. Health majors performed highest on all six criteria, while management majors scored low on the support and documentation criteria which is directly related to their low scores in the professionally specific categories of the lifelong learning

assessment. This could be due to their struggle with the original assignment, not a direct reflection of their writing ability.

In conclusion, a major component of written and oral communication is support and documentation. For research writing, adequate command of these two criteria is vitally important. OIT students are struggling to learn and demonstrate adequate skills in supporting their ideas and in documenting outside sources whether they are presenting information orally or in written form. The Executive Committee of the Assessment Commission in conjunction with the Communication Department is recommending the following actions:

- The Assessment Commission will conduct a writing audit of all programs, specifically noting where research based writing occurs within programs across campus.
- The Executive Committee of the Assessment Commission in conjunction with the Communication Department Chair will visit with program faculty at department meetings to get feedback on specific deficiencies in their students' ability to document in written work.
- The Communication Department will adopt APA as the official documentation style in all writing classes (WRI 121, WRI 122, WRI 227, WRI 327) while allowing some students to use the documentation style preferred in their major programs.
- The Communication Department will focus on documentation in all writing courses, designing specific lessons to provide instruction in introducing sources, summarizing sources, crediting sources, citing sources, and preparing correct reference pages.
- The library faculty will continue to offer instruction on locating reliable sources as requested by program faculty.
- The Communication Department and library faculty in conjunction with the Assessment Commission will provide workshops and online resources during the 2011-12 academic year to help the campus community teach and assess source documentation in all majors.
- The Communication Department will assess effective source use in general education writing courses winter term 2012 to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions to be implemented fall term 2011.

Assessment Reporting

The Director of Assessment, along with the Executive Committee of the Assessment Commission, will report the results of this assessment to the campus by email to the faculty list serve, by posting the final report on the assessment web site, and by a convocation presentation to the faculty.

Documentation

The Assessment Office will retain the final report and documentation of this assessment indefinitely.

Appendix A

OIT Public Speaking Rubric				
Performance Criteria	No/Limited Proficiency (1)	Some Proficiency (2)	Proficiency (3)	High Proficiency (4)
Content	Few or no attributed sources. Supporting materials lack credibility and/or don't relate to thesis. Limited or no attempt to inform or persuade.	Some attributed sources used. Supporting materials are somewhat credible and/or don't clearly relate to thesis. Attempt to inform or persuade.	Adequate number of credible and appropriately attributed sources used. Supporting materials relate to thesis. Informs or persuades.	A variety of credible and appropriate sources used. Supporting materials relate in an exceptional way to a focused thesis. Informs or persuades.
Organization	Lacks organizational structure. Introduction and/or conclusion missing. No transitions used.	Organizational structure present but unclear with underdeveloped introduction and conclusion. Transitions are awkward.	Appropriate organizational pattern used and easy to follow with developed introduction and satisfying conclusion. Main points are smoothly connected with transitions.	Organizational pattern is compelling and moves audience through speech with ease. Introduction draws in the audience and conclusion is satisfying. Main points are smoothly connected with transitions.
Style	No understanding of audience regarding topic or purpose of speech. Little enthusiasm and passion for topic. No regard for time constraints.	Some understanding of audience regarding topic or purpose of speech. Some enthusiasm and passion for topic. Some regard for time constraints.	Competent understanding of audience regarding topic and purpose. Enthusiasm and passion for topic. Speech given within time constraints.	Thorough understanding of audience regarding topic and purpose. Clear enthusiasm and passion for topic. Speech given within time constraints.
Delivery	No gestures or eye contact. Monotone voice or insufficient volume. Little poise. Reading of notes only. Abundant oral fillers and nonverbal distractions.	Some gestures and eye contact. Ineffective use of language and voice. Little poise. Heavy reliance on notes. Multiple oral fillers and nonverbal distractions.	Adequate use of gestures, eye contact, language, and voice. Poised with minor reliance on notes. Limited oral fillers and nonverbal distractions.	Effective use of gestures, eye contact, vivid language, and voice to add interest to speech. Poised with use of notes for reference only. No oral fillers and nonverbal distractions.
Visuals	No visuals or poorly-designed and documented visuals that distract from speech or do not create interest. Limited reference to visuals or so much reference delivery is hindered.	Visuals present, but simply designed with limited use of documentation. Visuals are referred to but do not create interest. Visuals may interfere with delivery.	Well-designed and documented visuals that clarify speech and create interest. Visuals are referred to and sufficiently discussed, while not interfering with delivery.	Well-designed and documented visuals that clarify speech, create interest, and hold attention of the audience. Visuals are sufficiently discussed and effectively integrated into speech.

Appendix B

Career Planning and Lifelong Learning Assignment

An OIT graduate should be able to continue to develop as a learner and thinker in his or her professional life. This assignment is designed to help you think about your career goals after graduation, your long-term career plans, and the concept of lifelong learning.

For this assignment, please prepare a paper of approximately 1000 words (four full pages), using a double-spaced format. Your paper should address the four broad areas described below. The bulleted items are suggested topics to help you develop your ideas, but you may add your own ideas as well. *Your paper should be written to form a satisfying whole on the subject of your future career and lifelong learning in your profession, rather than as a series of separate answers to the required areas.* In addition to content (topics below), your paper will also be assessed on purpose, organization, support, style, conventions, and use/citation of outside sources. The attached rubrics (2) will be used to evaluate your paper. Please submit two copies of your paper.

Broad topics to be included in your paper:

1. Lifelong learning

- Define and discuss the concept of “lifelong learning” and the need for it.
- As you progress through your career, in what ways do you believe that your learning will continue? How will you make this happen?
- How will you know learning has occurred, or whether more learning is needed?
- Evaluate your current ability to learn independently in your field. Give an example.

2. Professional societies and organizations

- What professional societies or organizations are available in your field or your community and what are the requirements for membership?
- What are the advantages of joining or disadvantages of not joining these organizations?
- How might you be involved/participate beyond basic membership?

3. Credentials and continuing education

- Identify and discuss the different types of credentials (licensure, registration, certification, etc.) or further degrees that are available in your future profession and how to obtain/maintain them.
- Define and discuss appropriate continuing education in your field, either formal or informal, how to obtain it, and the need for it.

4. Short- and long-term career plans.

- Describe your career goals after graduation and your long-term career aspirations.
- What is your plan to meet these career goals and aspirations?

Appendix C

OIT Essay Rubric				
Performance Criteria	Limited Proficiency (1)	Some Proficiency (2)	Proficiency (3)	High Proficiency (4)
Purpose and Ideas	Writing has limited or no focus. Purpose and main ideas are unclear and require inference from reader.	Reader can discern the purpose and main ideas although they may be overly broad or simplistic.	Writing is clear and focused. Reader can easily understand the purpose and main ideas.	Purpose and main ideas are exceptionally focused, clear, and interesting.
Organization	Order and structure are unclear. Introduction and conclusion are underdeveloped or missing.	Order and structure are overly formulaic. Introduction and conclusion may be underdeveloped or too obvious.	Order and structure are clear and easy to follow. Introduction draws in the reader and conclusion brings satisfying closure.	Order and structure are compelling and move the reader through the text easily. Introduction draws in the reader and conclusion brings satisfying closure.
Support	Development is minimal. Some supporting details may be irrelevant or repetitious.	Supporting details are relevant, but are limited or rather general. Support may be based on clichés, stereotypes, or questionable sources or evidence.	The main ideas are well developed by supporting details. When appropriate, use of outside sources provides credible support.	Main ideas are well developed by strong support and rich details. When appropriate, use of outside sources provides strong, credible support.
Style	Voice is inappropriate for topic, purpose, or audience. Wording is incorrect or monotonous, detracting from impact. Sentences tend to be choppy, rambling, and awkward.	Voice is inconsistent for topic, purpose, and audience. Wording is quite ordinary, lacking interest, precision, and variety, and may rely on clichés. Sentences tend to be mechanical rather than fluid with an overuse of simple sentence structures.	Voice is generally appropriate for topic, purpose, and audience. Generally, wording conveys message in an interesting, precise, and natural way. Sentences are carefully crafted with variations in structure.	Voice is appropriate for topic, purpose, and audience. Wording is fresh and specific, with a striking and varied vocabulary. Sentences are highly crafted, with varied structure that makes reading easy and enjoyable.
Conventions	Numerous errors in usage, spelling, punctuation, and/or grammar. Errors sometime impede readability. Substantial editing needed.	Writing contains punctuation, spelling, and/or grammar errors, but they do not impede readability and are not extensive. Moderate need for editing.	Writing demonstrates control of standard writing conventions and uses them effectively to enhance communication. Few errors.	Writing demonstrates strong control of standard writing conventions and uses them well to enhance communication. Very few or no errors.
Documentation	Documentation has major errors or is not present.	Documentation has frequent errors.	Documentation is correct except for a few errors.	Documentation is meticulous.

