

College of Business General Learning Outcomes Spring 2009 Results

Direct assessment of the College of Business general learning outcomes was conducted in March-April 2009. A total of 440 students from randomly-selected 400-level courses across the curriculum participated in the assessment. Video recordings of group presentations (78 students) were used to assess oral and visual communication abilities, and 42 students participated in a teamwork assessment exercise; all other assessment data were collected electronically. Students who participated in electronic assessments were randomly assigned to one of five assessments: a written essay on diversity in the workforce, used to assess both diversity and written communication; a written essay on an ethical dilemma in business, used to assess both ethical understanding and written communication; a series of multiple choice questions based on financial spreadsheets to assess problem solving and critical thinking skills; a series of multiple choice questions to assess understanding of legal and global issues in business; or a spreadsheet exercise to assess use of technology. Two of these assessment units also included an email exercise to assess electronic communication ability. A synopsis of the results is given below.

General Knowledge Assessment

In order to assess students' general knowledge across the disciplines, business students' responses to questions embedded in exams from all of the core or key foundational courses in the business curriculum were collected and examined throughout spring semester 2009; this was the first time these data were collected. Instructors were told to select questions that examined knowledge and understanding related to the key concepts or principles in his or her discipline. Table 1 displays the results of these assessments, which shows that business students' mastery of key concepts across the functional areas of business ranges from 72.9% to 90.5%.

Table 1.

Course	# Questions	# Respondents	Overall Correct Response Rate
Accounting 284	16	140	85.0%
Accounting 285	13	299	77.2%
Finance 301	9	192	76.0%
LSCM 360	13	439	90.5%
Management 370	11	220	79.3%
MIS 330	14	458	86.4%
Marketing 340	16	193	78.1%
OSCM 320	20	240	72.9%

Outcome: The ability to recognize ethical, legal, and global implications in business decision making.

Ethical Implications

In Spring 2008, ethics was measured using a multiple choice task which assessed students' perceptions of their ethical behavior. In response to one of the recommendations from the Spring 2008 report, a direct measure of ethics was utilized in the Spring 2009 assessment in place of the indirect measure used in 2008. Specifically, students were asked to respond to an ethical dilemma in a business by composing a short essay answering three questions:

- What are the moral conflicts the manager faces?
- What choices should he/she make?
- Why did you make those choices?

Fifty-four students completed the essay. The ethics content in the essays was evaluated and scored using the Ethics Rubric (Appendix 1).

Students were scored on three factors related to ethics, each worth 1 (unsatisfactory), 2 (satisfactory), or 3 (excellent) points, for a total of 9 possible points for the very best essays. Table 2 illustrates how the students scored on each of the three factors. Table 3 details how the students scored overall, showing that the majority of students were judged to have demonstrated either satisfactory or excellent understanding of ethical issues. The overall mean score was 5.8.

Table 2.

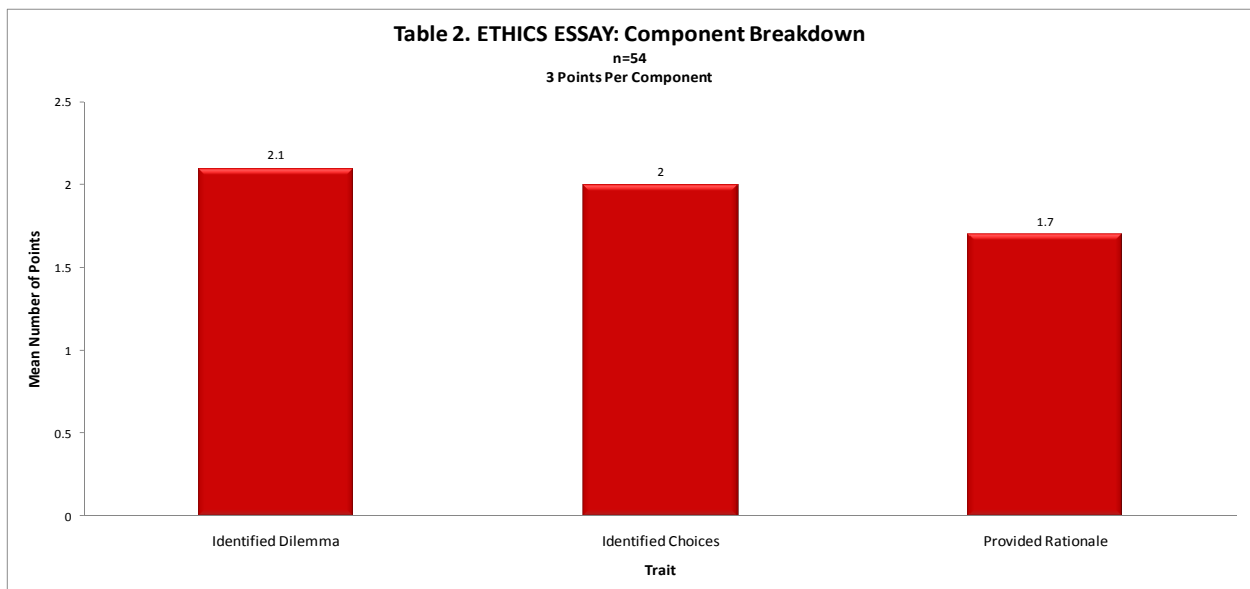
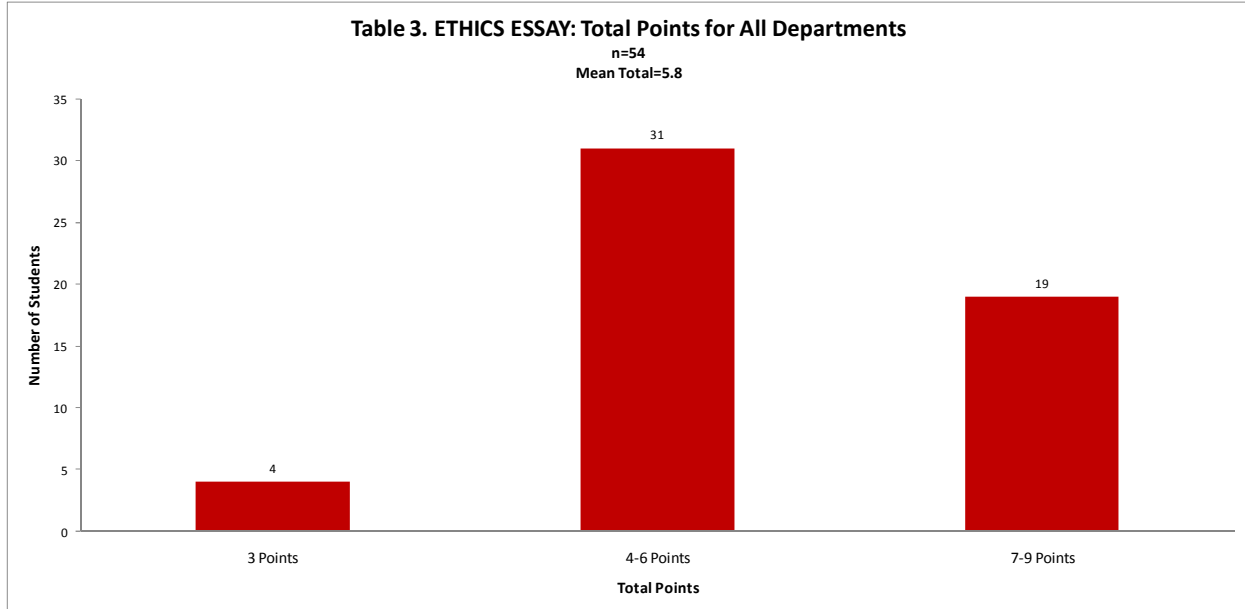


Table 3.



Legal Implications

Students were asked a series of questions with multiple choice options regarding legal business issues. Four of the six questions were retained from last year's assessment; two new questions were added. The sample size for these questions was n=70. Scores improved in Spring 2009, with the majority of students answering five out of six questions correctly (83%) relative to Spring 2008 results when four out of six questions were answered correctly (67%).

Global Implications

Students were asked a series of questions with multiple choice options regarding global business issues. Three of the six questions were retained from last year's assessment; three new questions were added (only four questions were asked in the 2008 assessment). The sample size for these questions was n=70. Scores declined in Spring 2009, with the majority of students answering four out of six questions correctly (67%), relative to Spring 2008 results when three out of four questions were answered correctly (75%).

Outcome: The ability to work in collaborative environments.

In 2008, the teamwork outcome was assessed indirectly by asking students to respond to eight questions regarding their perceptions of past experiences in teams. In 2009, teamwork was measured directly. One course was chosen for this assessment to trial the measure (n=43). Students in the course were arbitrarily put into teams of 3-4 students. Each team was given an exercise that required them to

complete a task. As they completed the task, four observers evaluated the teams' performance on leadership, collaborative effort, task completion, and objective accomplishment using the rubric in Appendix 2. The mean score was 2.48 (3=excellent), indicating that students do fairly well with respect to teamwork.

Outcome: The ability to communicate effectively (writing, oral, visual, and electronic).

Written Communication

Students' ability to communicate via writing was assessed by having students write short essays either related to ethics or to diversity. The writing elements of the essays were evaluated with a rubric (see Appendix 3), which was simplified from the rubric used in Spring 2008 evaluations. The simplified rubric evaluated context, substance, organization, and delivery elements, assigning a score ranging from 1 to 3, where 1=developing, 2=fair, and 3=satisfactory. A total of 132 essays were evaluated, with a mean score of 1.65. In order to compare this result with last year's assessment, the evaluators re-scored Spring 2008 essays with the simplified rubric (n=39), finding a mean score of 2.33. The scores clearly indicate a need to improve students' writing abilities. However, it is also possible that students are not providing their best written work in the assessment process, which would negatively impact the scores.

Oral and Visual Communication

Ten team presentations from two different undergraduate courses were analyzed for demonstration of oral and visual communications skills. The presentations were evaluated using an oral communication rubric, where 1=unsatisfactory and 3=excellent; the rubric is provided in Appendix 4. The mean score was 1.47 compared to a mean score of 1.92 last year. This is a troubling result, but there were different evaluators for this year's presentations relative to last year's, which might be impacting the results. A different rubric was utilized to assess visual communication (Appendix 5); scores ranged from 1=basic to 6=exemplary. The mean score was 2.8, in the developing stage. Visual communication was not evaluated with a separate rubric last year, so comparison is not possible.

Electronic Communication

Students' ability to communicate electronically was evaluated via an email exercise. The messages were evaluated with the rubric (Appendix 6), which evaluated context, substance, organization, style, and delivery on a scale of 1=developing and 3=satisfactory. A sample of 131 email messages was evaluated, with a mean score of 1.81. This was the first time this assessment was conducted.

Outcome: The ability to use quantitative and analytical methods to address unstructured business problems.

For this outcome, students were provided with financial statements and asked 10 multiple choice questions examining their ability to not only interpret the data but to think strategically about the

situation; this assessment was expanded from the previous year's five questions. The sample size for this assessment was n=72, although responses for individual questions ranged from 66 to 72. The majority of students answered seven out of ten questions correctly (70%) In comparison, four of five questions were answered correctly in the previous year (80%).

Outcome: The ability to use business technologies in creating value.

Students' ability to use a common technology used in business was assessed by having students complete a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet exercise. Students (n=63) were given data in an Excel spreadsheet, which they had to manipulate to answer three questions. The first question required the data to be sorted. Fifty-nine percent of the students answered this question correctly. The second question required students to sort and to understand advanced functions, which they clearly struggled with. Thirty-nine percent of the students correctly identified two elements required to be answer, but only 16% correctly identified the three necessary elements. The third question required additional understanding of advanced functions and intricacies of Excel—again, students struggled with this, with just 37% correctly answering the question.

Outcome: The ability to recognize the benefits and challenges of diversity.

Similar to last year's assessment of diversity, students were asked to respond to a workforce situation involving managing diversity by composing a short essay that would identify implications of the diversity issue and identify a recommendation. Fifty-seven students completed the essay. The essays were scored on three factors related to ethics, each worth 1 (unsatisfactory), 2 (satisfactory), or 3 (excellent) points, for a total of 9 possible points for the very best essays. Table 4 illustrates how the students scored on each of the three factors. Table 5 details how the students scored overall, showing that the majority of students were judged to have demonstrated either satisfactory or excellent understanding of ethical issues. The overall mean score was 5.8. Last year's assessment did not calculate a mean score. However, 92% of Spring 2008 essays scored in the satisfactory to excellent range compared to 95% this year. Thus, the majority of students demonstrate either acceptable or very good understanding of diversity issues in the workplace.

Table 4.

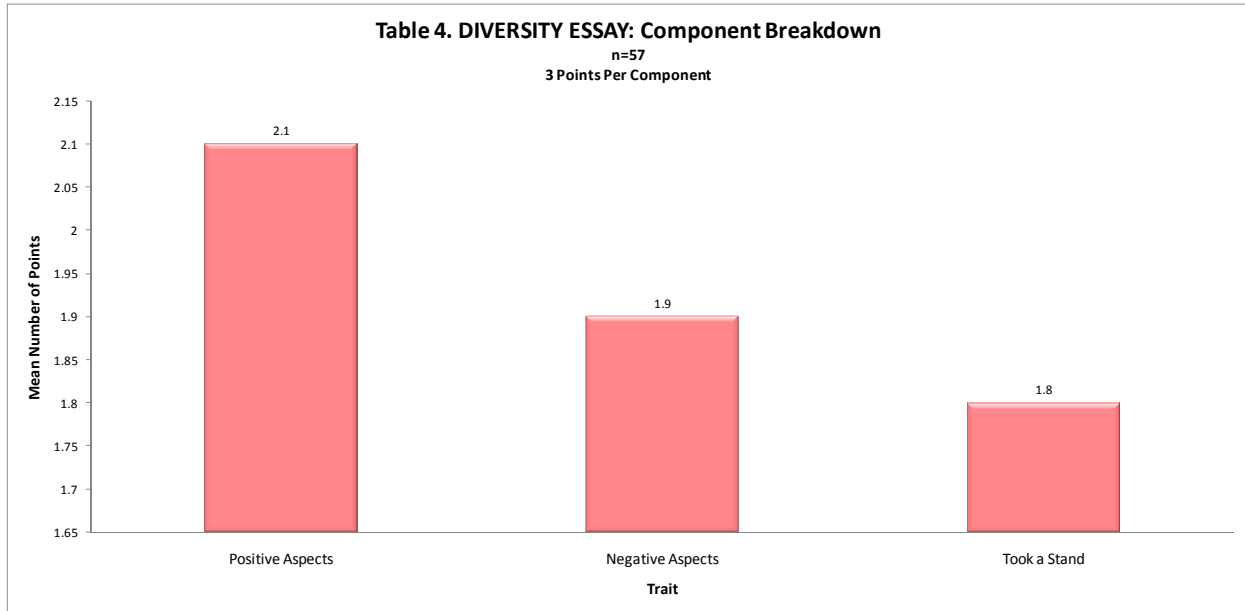
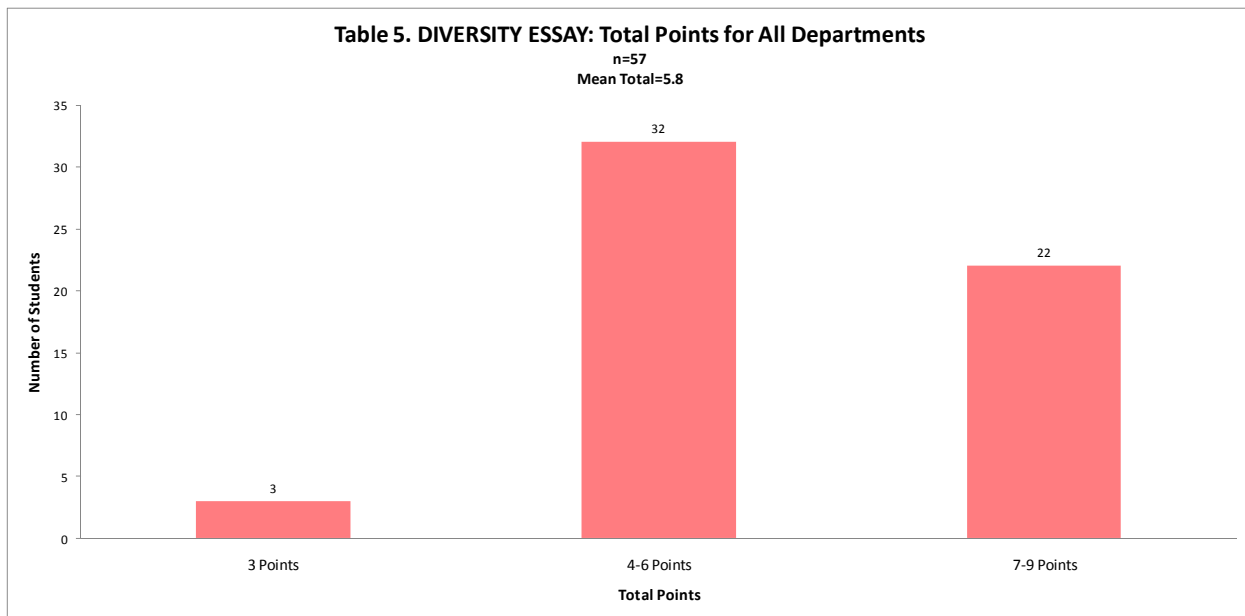


Table 5.



Conclusion

This report documents the second year of direct assessment of student outcomes in the College of Business. Based on recommendations from the Spring 2008 report, several changes to the assessment process were implemented this year, including:

- Implementing direct measures for ethics, collaborative teamwork, and business technology.
- Revisions to legal, global, and problem solving assessment tools.
- Increasing sample sizes.
- Improving the electronic process for data collection: ability to breakdown data by majors, and programming changes to ensure that students are randomly assigned to assessments.
- Continued refinement of assessment rubrics.

These changes strengthened the assessment program. Nonetheless, an examination of the results suggests issues with the assessment process that should be considered before the next assessment:

- The ability to meaningfully compare results from one assessment period to the next is impacted by the consistency with which assessment tools/rubrics are used. In particular, consistency in evaluating written, oral, visual, and electronic communication abilities needs to be a priority, especially with the personnel who do the evaluation. Currently, consultants in the college's communication center do these evaluations, but there is no guarantee that consultants will be here for more than one or two years. In what ways can we ensure consistent use and interpretation of evaluation rubrics? It is also difficult to reliably compare 2009 results with 2008 results for those assessments where the instrument was changed.
- There is a sense that not all students take the assessment process seriously, based on observations by the lab monitors during the electronic assessments and on some of the results. In particular, this may be affecting written essays electronic communication and the effort put into the spreadsheet exercise. Are there better ways to evaluate written communications, e.g., by collecting samples of writing assignments?

In addition, the results suggest several issues with respect to the ability of the measures to accurately capture students' abilities related to the outcomes. For example, are six to ten questions sufficient to evaluate students' understanding of legal and global issues or to demonstrate their ability to address unstructured business problems? Evaluating students' ability to address unstructured business problems might benefit from a case-based approach, but how can that be efficiently and effectively delivered? Moreover, even if some of the data collection processes are flawed, the results suggest several weaknesses in students' abilities that need to be addressed, notably communication and business technology skills.

Several curricular changes will be implemented in FY10 to address some of these concerns. All incoming business students will be required to take a series of modules (BusAd 101, 201, and 301) that will introduce the topics of diversity and ethics in business during the freshmen year. Students will also be required to take Introduction to Business (BusAd 250), which will introduce students to every business discipline, but will teach the material from an integrated approach. Critically important given the outcomes results, BusAd 250 will incorporate spreadsheet exercises to help students learn the importance of spreadsheets to decision making in all areas of business as well as how to use spreadsheets. The College's Communication Center will be relocated to a central location in the building to gain visibility among the students. Faculty members have increasingly incorporated communication assignments into their courses, and we will encourage these efforts to continue.

When these data are shared at the beginning of Fall semester 2009, the assessment instruments and rubrics will also be shared and faculty encouraged to design/evaluate relevant material in their courses consistent with the learning outcomes.

Appendix 1. Ethics Rubric

TRAIT	Excellent (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
Identifies Ethical Dilemma(s)	Describes the dilemma in great detail based on a plethora of pertinent facts. Ascertains exactly what must be addressed.	Identifies the dilemma, including many pertinent facts, and ascertains what must be decided.	Has a vague idea of what the dilemma is; is uncertain about what must be decided.
Identifies Choices that Address the Ethical Conflict	Describes in detail actions the manager should take that address the ethical dilemma(s). Identifies exactly who should be involved in taking actions.	Describes actions the manager should take that address the ethical dilemma(s). Identifies who should be involved in taking actions.	Is unsure what the manager should do to address the dilemma(s).
Provides Rationale for Choices	Explains in detail the rationale for making choices and clearly links decision to moral reasoning.	Identifies the rationale for making choices and vaguely links decision to levels to moral reasoning.	Is unclear about rationale and/or provides no rationale at all.

Appendix 2. Collaborative Teamwork Rubric

	Excellent (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
Leadership contribution	Member(s) take leading role (even risk-taking) in keeping group on track, initiating discussion, setting agenda/procedures, keeping momentum, reinforcing others, allotting time, and reaching closure.	Member(s) make at least one contribution to keeping group on track, initiating discussion, setting agenda/procedures, keeping momentum, reinforcing others, allotting time, and reaching closure.	Member(s) make no contribution to group work; disruptive behavior, interference with group efficiency.
Collaborative effort	Creative group work; respectful acknowledgement of others' contributions; optimal group dynamics; innovative management style.	Standard usage/style of group work. Workable, but monotonous collaborative style; generally supportive behavior.	Nonparticipation by some; disruptive, abusive, or inept team dynamics.
Task completion	Full use of time; seamless turn-taking.	Workable use of time; planned turn-taking.	Disregard for time, task not completed.
Objective(s) accomplishment	Calculated group purpose that strategically drives group activities, enabling group to fully meet its objectives.	Workable group purpose, and objectives are met, but group is inconsistently strategic in reaching objectives.	Group purpose unclear; objectives not met.

Appendix 3. Written Communication Rubric.

Written Components	Satisfactory (3)	Fair (2)	Developing (1)
Context Purpose Position Audience			
Substance Relevance Fairness			
Organization Focus			
Delivery Consistency			

Appendix 4. Oral Communication Rubric.

Criteria	Excellent (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)	Comments
<p style="text-align: center;">Accessibility</p> <p>Do the speakers use appropriate figure/ground choices for their PPT slides?</p> <p>Do the speakers use appropriate typographical choices for their PPT slides?</p> <p>Do the speakers use sufficient volume in their delivery?</p> <p>Do the speakers avoid using filler words?</p> <p>Does the presentation flow smoothly, with seamless transitions between slides and speakers, and with even delivery speed?</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">Comprehensibility</p> <p>Do the speakers avoid distracting gestures (hands, stance, etc.)?</p> <p>Are the speakers' arguments based on sound reasoning and ample evidence?</p> <p>Do the speakers make strategic use of slides (give points "breathing room," resist overwhelming the audience with information and data)?</p> <p>Do the speakers use outside media strategically, including pictures, videos, etc.? Do outside media enhance presentation and reinforce key messages?</p> <p>Do the speakers respond effectively to audience questions? Do speakers extend answers to the entire audience?</p> <p>Are the PPT slides carefully edited? Is information presented in parallel style?</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">Usability</p> <p>Do the writers use the Context-Content-Close (CCC) method to guide audience members through the presentation (do the speakers introduce themselves, the presentation agenda, and offer an appropriate close and summary)?</p> <p>Do the speakers build credibility by establishing credentials and what's in it for the audience? Does the team exhibit enthusiasm for the topic?</p> <p>Does the team build ethos by maintaining eye contact with the audience, focusing attention on their team's speaker, and using one voice in delivery (we vs. you, you vs. they, etc.)?</p> <p>Do the speakers use claims effectively in their slides?</p>				

Appendix 5. Visual Communication Rubric.

VISUAL COMPOSING (PowerPoint)	Exemplary 6	Mature 5	Competent 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Basic 1 (0 = N/A)
	responds <i>creatively</i> , requiring little or no revision	responds <i>fully</i> , requiring only minor revision	responds <i>competently</i> , requiring limited revision	responds <i>inappropriately</i> , requiring focused revision	responds <i>incompletely</i> , requiring extensive revision	responds <i>naively</i> , requiring thorough revision
DO THE VISUAL ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIVELY TO THE OVERALL COMMUNICATION?						
CONTEXT PURPOSE POSITION AUDIENCE	integrated visual experience with a clear and complex message, experience, or pattern; personal features that enrich the visual experience without becoming self-indulgent; engaging title, headings, captions	coordinated visual and verbal elements; consistent visual attitude toward the subject matter or the audience; integrative title, headings, and captions	visual strategy that is predictable but effective; mutually supportive visuals and verbal elements; satisfactory visual impression, even if minor distractions; functional, informative title, headings, captions	workable visual strategy but poorly implemented; at least one uncertainty about the visual focus, a major visual or visual-verbal relationships; stock visuals; weak, general, or missing title, headings, or captions	inconsistent visual strategy; evidence of an overall visual focus but poorly or unevenly implemented; misleading or missing title, headings, or captions	no discernible visual strategy; misguided, unfocused, or omitted visuals; mismatch of visual and textual elements; use of a single graphic style for all situations; oversimplified visuals; missing title, heading, captions
SUBSTANCE SCOPE DEPTH RELEVANCE FAIRNESS	subtle, inventive use of visuals to enrich and extend other content; scrupulous attention to visual detail for analysis or sensorial/aesthetic experience; fair visual representation	coordinated and well-developed visual content with many visuals that invite in-depth analysis; clear visual-content relationship; personal visuals distinguishable from borrowed sources	generally purposeful visual content; minimum number of visuals; reasonable, if not rigorous, visual content; sufficient, if predictable, supporting evidence; reliable, somewhat generalized visual representations	trite or oversimplified visual content; some conflict between the visuals and other content; visuals used more for decoration; some visual misrepresentation in at least one major visual source	broad, ambiguous, or distracting visuals for the situation; no overall visual strategy; some quality or coverage issue in at least one major visual; some credibility issues	disjuncture between visuals and other content; absence of visual content; cross-cultural miscues in images and color; confusing visuals; inadequate number and quality of visual sources; inaccuracies in visual references
ORGANIZATION FOCUS STRUCTURE RELATIONSHIP EMPHASIS	unique integration of visual objects for overall effect; visual chunking of information; color, typography, and spatial layout; clear, complex text-graphic directionality	immediate impression of well-organized visual elements; discrete visual objects with clear roles in the overall effect; directional texts and graphics; natural, transparent chunking	major visual elements that are rhetorically and functionally clear, if somewhat conventional; clear chunking, though somewhat mechanical visual strategies; coherent first impression	at least one undefined strategic visual object or chunk; unclear visual foci; some directionality though visual movements may end abruptly or awkwardly	inappropriate or uncertain visual focus; major visual objects unconnected to overall rhetorical scheme; neglected or nonstandard directionality; mis-positioning; mis-sizing	missing visual focus or dominant pattern; visual clutter or hodge-podge of graphic styles; bells-and-whistles approach to design; confused or absent chunking
STYLE CONVENTIONS AESTHETICS VARIETY	visual surprises, historical allusions, irony, or contrasts that maintain interest and deepen the experience; clear visual genre; scrupulously responsible citation of sources in a form appropriate to the situation	visual conventions that are clearly defined, from graphic style to headings, layout, and navigation; clear, functional, accurate citation of sources; visual interest and hierarchy; recognizable visual aesthetic	functional if uninspired visual style; positive initial visual impression, even if inconsistent minor details; heading style appropriate to the visual genre; consistent navigational design; sources noted	major flaw or distraction in the visual strategy; boring, mechanical consistency; failure to document some borrowed sources or serious violations of standard documentary style; some problems in layout, including margins or alignments	random or uncertain visual contrasts; evidence of a visual strategy but poorly implemented; failure to document borrowed sources; layout problems, including margins and alignment around visuals	lack of purposeful patterns and contrasts; cut-and-paste visual approach with little reshaping of visuals to create a consistent graphic style; failure to document borrowed sources; distracting, cluttered layout; excessive clip art
DELIVERY CONSISTENCY ENGAGEMENT ACCESSIBILITY LAYERING	judicious technical decisions about media, color, size, resolution, format, luminance, type, sharpness, accessibility, interactivity	user-friendly, integrated use of media, color, size, resolution, format, luminance, type, sharpness, accessibility, interactivity	clear, consistent visual approach (figure-ground relationships, efficient and accessible design, readable typography); minor inconsistencies	a major, distracting inconsistency (spatial/timing miscues, weak selection of visuals, purposeless decorations)	inconsistent or uncertain visual conventions caused by misuse of space, visual clichés, omission of key media, or access barriers	distracting visual combinations (color, body language, gestures, slide transitions, and backgrounds); weak attention to audience use of visuals

Appendix 6. Electronic Communication Rubric.

E-mail Components	Satisfactory (3)	Fair (2)	Developing (1)
Context Purpose Position Audience			
Substance Relevance Fairness			
Organization Focus Structure Relationship Emphasis			
Style Conventions Aesthetics			
Delivery Consistency Engagement Accessibility Layering			

