

Suggestions for developing COM courses

The COM approval form requires you to describe the ways that you will “achieve” student outcomes and “assess” them. This document provides assistance in the language you might use for each of those parts of the approval form.

“Achieving” course outcomes

For communication activities, “achieving” the outcome generally depends on instruction, readings, activities, and assignments that can help students to develop their skill and knowledge of the outcome. For the approval form, you may want to provide descriptions that include

- Instruction in
- Discussion of ...
- Readings about ...
- Evaluation of sample ...
- Practice activity with
- _____ writing assignment
- _____ speaking assignment
- _____ multimedia assignment

“Assessing” course outcomes

Assessment applies to the methods that you use to explore, measure, and provide feedback to students about how well they’re meeting outcomes. For the approval form, you may consider such assessments as the following:

- Rubric-based assessment of final text/presentation
- Direct assessment of...
 - practice exercise
 - discussion contributions
 - references list
 - initial research question
- Peer review
- Feedback on class trends
- Indirect assessment: student self-evaluation

Even more help: Specific ideas for “achieving” course outcomes

Both of the following lists provide even more specific ideas about how you can achieve course outcomes. The first list focuses on instruction, readings, discussion topics, and other activities, while the second focuses on the types of assignments that will give students practice with communication tasks.

What types of specific activities and instruction can help “achieve” COM outcomes?

- Exploration of sample texts and presentations, with discussion of strengths and weaknesses.
- Analysis of communication contexts, including purpose and audience.
- Instruction, practice and feedback on structural elements of communication including thesis statements, topic sentences or main ideas in written and oral messages.
- Instruction, practice and feedback on patterns of organization, reasoning, and logic in written and oral messages.
- Instruction, practice, and feedback on stylistic and design elements of writing and speaking.
- Discussion of the differences between written and oral rhetorical strategies, and the various strengths and weaknesses of written, oral and digital communication channels.
- Instruction in developing research questions, theses, and purposes for oral and written communication.

- Instruction, practice, and feedback on locating and evaluating sources, synthesizing research material, and citing research.
- Instruction and practice using the appropriate style manual for the discipline.
- Instruction, practice and feedback on delivering presentations in a natural, confident and conversational manner.
- Instruction in non-verbal and vocal elements of oral communication.
- Practice interacting with others in a constructive manner.
- Instruction, practice and feedback about developing and incorporating visuals into documents and oral presentations.
- Practice with collaborative writing and presentation software, such as Google Docs, Dropbox, Skype, PowerPoint, Prezi, and Microsoft Word.
- Instruction in strategies for overcoming anxiety in oral communication settings.
- Instruction and feedback on common errors with conventions of written communication.

What types of specific assignments can help you “achieve” course outcomes?

- Argumentative essays, written for skilled readers with limited knowledge of the content
- Writing for popular audiences, such newspaper articles, advertising copy, blog entries, a letter to the editor
- Resumes and cover letters and job application materials
- Business writing, including letters, memos and e-mails
- Web-page design
- Oral and written proposals
- Written reports: progress reports, lab reports, recommendation reports, etc.
- Book reviews addressed to scholars in the field
- Academic literature reviews or research papers directed to the field
- Employment interviews
- Informational interviews
- Informative presentations, including explaining how to do something, or explaining a complex topic
- Persuasive presentations with the goal of agreement or action on the part of the audience
- Debates or roundtable discussions
- Group presentations
- Sales presentations
- Training presentations, manuals and technical documentation
- Project plans and presentations
- Multimedia presentations
- Conference paper presentations
- Research works in progress presentations
- Poster presentations
- Electronic portfolios
- Informal “Writing to Learn” activities: discussion threads, reflective writing, “muddy point” papers, brainstorming and concept mapping, journals, freewrites, reading responses, exploratory writing