

**OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY**  
**ORAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY**

**Definition of Competency:**

The [mission](#) of Old Dominion University states that “Every Old Dominion undergraduate student follows a general education program that is designed to develop the intellectual skills of critical thinking and problem solving and to encompass the breadth of understanding needed for personal growth and achievement and for responsible citizenship.” Students are required to develop proficiency in oral communication as part of the first goal of General Education – “develop and demonstrate effective uses of language.”

All undergraduate students, who are completing baccalaureate degree programs at Old Dominion University, are required to demonstrate oral communication skills either in a designated course in their major or through successful completion of Public Speaking (COMM 101R).

Based on the National Communication Association’s (NCA) national standard on oral communication competency, oral communication is defined as the art of expressing and exchanging ideas in speech. It involves the ability to compose, critically analyze, and deliver information through verbal, vocal, and visual interactions.

**Standards for Competency:**

The specific competencies, as outlined by the NCA, that define good oral communication are:

1. **Content.** The speech topic is appropriate for the specific purpose of the speech context and the audience. The development of the topic represents the speaker’s unique and original approach in researching the subject. Content expansion is accomplished through the inclusion of facts, statistics, examples, experiences, and professional perspectives, as appropriate for the speech type. The speech goal and main points are clearly differentiated and supported by credible research.
2. **Organization.** The speech offers an introduction that attracts the audience’s attention and orients the listeners to the goal of the speech. A clearly stated thesis statement provides an overview of the main points. The body of the speech offers well differentiated and developed main points presented in an appropriate order. The speech concludes with a summary of major points and an appropriate final impression making strategy.
3. **Wording.** The speech integrates effective wording and imagery to define, elaborate upon, and emphasize key elements of the speech. Transitions are included to guide the audience through the speech. An audience centered approach reveals language adapted to the listeners.
4. **Delivery.** The speaker uses effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills in the spontaneous/extemporaneous delivery of the speech. S/he connects with the audience through good eye contact, posture, body movements and gestures, and enthusiasm, and appears at ease. The speaker uses visual aids appropriately. S/he speaks clearly and articulately and varies his/her voice for emphasis. S/he completes the speech in the time allotted.

5. **Outline.** The speaker develops a complete sentence outline that appropriately develops the speech in a logical format for the speech type.

Overall competency in oral communication is demonstrated by an average score of at least 73 (C) on the four speeches delivered in the class. Each competency area is scored on a scale of 5 (exceeds the standard) to 1 (fails to meet the standard). The specific competencies are weighted as follows: content = 5; organization = 5; wording = 4; delivery = 4; and outline = 2.

#### Description of Methodology Used to Gather Evidence of Competency:

COMM 101R, Public Speaking, is a three-credit course offered to fulfill a general education requirement of developing oral communication skills. As part of the course, students are required to give four speeches to the class. The speeches are graded in all class sections using a standard rubric that was developed to meet NCA standards by measuring the five areas outlined above. Each instructor participated in a training session on using the rubric prior to grading the speeches. After the speeches were graded and courses completed, students who passed the course and their four speeches were assessed using the score sheets completed by their instructors.

	Number	Percent
N, % pass	546	99%
N, % unacceptable	6	1%
Total	552	100%

#### Summary: (75 words) (Provide brief analysis of results)

Students who passed Public Speaking (COMM 101) and completed all four required speeches were evaluated in five areas using a standard rubric for oral communication. This constitutes the population of students who have successfully met Old Dominion University's general education requirement of oral communication. Others are required to repeat the course until they achieve a passing course in order to graduate. Thus, the results are representative of the University's undergraduate students. The results demonstrate a substantial level of proficiency in oral communication, with 99% (n=546) of students receiving an average of 73 (C) or higher on all four speeches. These results suggest that the vast majority of Old Dominion University students are competent in oral communication after passing their public speaking course. These results will be used to guide the review of the general education curriculum with respect to meeting the University's mission regarding students' proficient development of oral communication skills. Additionally, feedback will be given to the COMM 101 faculty for assistance in improving the course.

