SCHEV Assessment Report
Oral Communication &
Creative/Critical Thinking
2021-22

Background

SCHEV's policy on Student Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education (June 8, 2017) mandates that (applicable) institutions assess student achievement in at least six competency areas. Four core competencies must be assessed by all institutions:

1. Civic Engagement

2. Critical Thinking

3. Quantitative Reasoning

4. Written Communication

Two additional competencies that reflect ongoing institutional priorities for student learning and development shall be selected by individual institutions. For VMI, these are:

5. Oral Communication

6. Scientific Reasoning

Data Collection & Reporting Schedule

Competency	Year
Critical Thinking	2021-2022 (Repeats 2024-2025)
Oral Communication	2021-2022 (Repeats 2024-2025)
Written Communication	2022-2023 (Repeats 2025-2026)
Scientific Reasoning	2022-2023 (Repeats 2025-2026)
Civic Engagement	2023-2024 (Repeats 2026-2027)
Quantitative Reasoning	2023-2024 (Repeats 2026-2027)

VMI Core Curriculum

The VMI Core Curriculum is a common and mutually reinforcing set of courses and experiences designed to cultivate the essential characteristics of the citizen-soldier—a person of character who is able to anticipate, respond, and lead in a complex and changing world.

The VMI Core Curriculum (CC) is thus organized into four components:

    A. Key Competencies (e.g., quantitative reasoning)

    B. Foundations of Citizenship and Leadership

    C. Perspectives on Civilization and Human Achievement

    D. Integrative Experiences

All six SCHEV competencies, with the exception of Civic Engagement, are assessed within VMI's core curriculum courses.

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Oral Communication

Oral Communication

What is Oral Communication?

Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

In a Core Curriculum course, Fundamentals in Public Speaking (ERH 103), cadets receive formal instruction in oral communication by preparing and delivering different types of speeches. They have opportunities to build on this knowledge throughout their careers by presenting their academic work to a variety of local and public audiences.

By emphasizing training and practice in oral communication, VMI seeks to equip cadets for both academic success and participation in the full range of rhetorical occasions they will encounter in their lives as citizens and professionals.

Oral Communication
Student Learning Outcomes

After completing Fundamentals of Public Speaking (ERH 103), cadets will be able to

- Analyze the audience, occasion, and purpose of a rhetorical situation in order to formulate a response to an idea or problem.
- Generate ideas through both discovery and consultation of a variety of sources.
- Develop ideas fully, offering compelling support and evidence for assertions or conclusions.
- Organize ideas coherently, integrating sources effectively and documenting them appropriately.
- Edit writing for clarity, precision, and stylistic effectiveness.
- Proofread writing to ensure grammatical and mechanical correctness.
- Speak in language that is grammatically correct and appropriate for the particular audience.
- Speak at an appropriate pace and at sufficient volume, sustain eye contact, and use body language effectively to communicate points.
- Employ visual aids that are designed and timed to reinforce points.

Results

- The required argument /persuasion speeches in Fundamentals of Public Speaking (ERH 103) are recorded in all sections taught.

- A random sample (30%) of these speeches are rated independently by two faculty members who have been trained in holistic assessment.

- Using a standard 5-point scale on a holistic scoring rubric, a rating of 3 reflects the standard by which a student demonstrates competency in oral communication.

- The target proficiency rate for this assessment is 65%.

- In the 2021-22 assessment, 91% of cadets demonstrated proficiency in oral communication.

Discussion & Future Actions

- The results in the 2021-22 assessment rating of oral communication was well above the target (91% actual vs 65% target).

- Each year assessment results are shared and discussed with instructors. The ensuing conversations generate topics for developmental workshops offered to those who teach the course.

- As well, effective speeches are drawn from the 2021-22 rated sample and added to the archive of speeches so they can be used as examples in classes.

Actions:

Given the proficiency scores were so far above target, we have moved the target from 65% to 85%. We believe this change will convey our (continually) high expectations for cadet performance and help to foster a greater sense of challenge for both faculty and cadets.

Critical & Creative Thinking

Critical Thinking

What is Critical Thinking?

• Critical Thinking is the ability to subject one's own and others' ideas, arguments, assumptions, and evidence to careful and logical scrutiny to make an informed judgment, draw a sound conclusion, or solve a problem.

• Cadets gain foundational knowledge within their major in preparation for a culminating academic experience, the Capstone. Through either a one or two-semester course sequence, cadets select a topic of scholarly interest and explore a question that drives their original inquiry beyond the boundaries of textbook knowledge in their discipline.

• VMI prepares cadets to join a dynamic workforce with a readiness to carefully analyze the validity and utility of information as they contribute to addressing global challenges.

CCT Student Learning Outcomes

After completing their major capstone projects, cadets will be able:

- Identify main ideas and/or themes.
- Make comparative judgments and draw conclusions from evidence gathered.
- Determine the validity/credibility and implications of an assumption/hypothesis.
- Demonstrate creative problem-solving skills.

SLOs Measurement

- Student learning outcomes are measured through a common assessment of critical thinking in written papers drawn from each capstone course.

- Sixty-five percent of capstone papers (approximately 150) are sampled for scoring. Papers are assessed in two rating sessions by faculty raters from each department. All papers are assessed from courses producing smaller numbers of papers (15 or fewer). A random sample of 20-25 papers is selected from courses producing a larger number of papers (over 35).

- The critical thinking component of capstone papers is assessed with a rubric adapted from the American Association of Colleges and Universities in 2019, a rating of 3 (proficient) on a scale of 0 (no criteria met) to 4 (mastering) reflects the standard by which a student demonstrates competency in Critical thinking.

- Preliminarily, we have targets of 70% proficient; no more than 5% failing to meet criteria, and 10% mastering.

Discussion & Future Actions

- In the 2020-21 assessment, nearly 60% of papers demonstrated proficiency in identifying main themes, 48% were proficient in making comparative judgments and drawing conclusions from evidence gathered, 33% were proficient in determining validity and implications of an assumption, and 25% were proficient in creative problem-solving.

- The results from the 2020-21 assessment of Critical thinking were below the proposed preliminary proficiency target established upon adopting a new rubric in 2019.

Actions

- The assessment rating process includes an intensive rubric calibration training session for faculty raters, which enables high inter-rater agreement and confidence in our ability to assess critical thinking similarly for each department (94% agreement). An ongoing challenge is how to interpret assessment results using common rubric to assess critical thinking from 14 academic disciplines and different paper formats.

- Committee members are reaching out to departments and conducting test surveys with a subset of faculty raters, course instructors, and student focus groups to review assessment procedures, critical thinking pedagogies, and student views of critical thinking pedagogies and skills gained from capstone courses.