1. **LEARNING OUTCOME**

Students will become aware of the career-readiness competency Oral/Written Communication and connect this competency and the skills associated with it to the assignment topic.

2. **OBJECTIVE**

The following exercises are designed to help you identify your oral/written communication skills and put them into practice. As you move through them, reflect on what you believe are your most significant strengths and weaknesses when it comes to oral/written communication.

3. **ORAL/WRITTEN COMMUNICATION DEFINED**

Based upon an analysis of multiple frameworks, effective communication is thought to encompass several dimensions. Markle, Brenneman, Jackson, Burrus, and Robbins (2013) define effective communication this way: “Effectively communicate multiple types of messages; communicate across multiple forms; and effectively deliver messages to varying audiences” (Sparks, Song, Brantley, & Liu, 2014, p. 4).

Viewed this way, we can see that good communication involves three elements:

1. Genre (type of information)
2. Medium (method of communication)
3. Recipient (receiver of information)
4. EXERCISE ONE

I. Familiarize Yourself with the Following Information About Effective Communication

Effective Communication Involves Attention to:

- **Context and purpose**: Of course, writing and spoken speech must take into account the specific purpose of the communication. However, it is also important that communicators tailor their words to the context - formal or informal, for example.

- **Audience**: To some extent, audience awareness is linked to context and purpose. In communicating effectively, we must consider our specific audience. What do they already know? Are they experts in the field or novices? Are they acquainted with a particular jargon? If not, how will we adjust our wording?

- **Development and organization**: Effective communication is well developed and clearly organized. This may require a preliminary draft or two. It is often helpful to develop an outline of the major points to be covered.

- **Sources**: Effective writing often involves the use of existing sources. Part of using sources effectively is the ability to identify and assess the merits and credibility of different resources. In addition, effective communicators can identify the elements of a resource that need to be included.

- **Modes**: Increasingly, effective communication involves familiarity with multiple modes of information expression and delivery. For instance, employees in many fields are often asked to give presentations that involve written and oral speech coupled with a presentation of numerical data, graphs, or charts.

Effective Communication is Tied to All Career-Readiness Competencies.

One of the skills which employers value most in prospective employees is the ability to communicate clearly. Indeed, “written communication” is identified as a “generic skill” in the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes project (Sparks, Song, Brantley, & Liu, 2014). Being able to articulate one’s ideas clearly, whether in spoken or written speech, is fundamentally important as it is tied to virtually all of the other career competencies. Most notably, effective communication is tied to critical thinking and problem solving as well as team work and collaboration.

Effective Communication and Problem Solving

Communication can take a “knowledge-telling” approach or a “knowledge-transforming” approach (Sparks, Song, Brantley, & Liu, 2014, p. 12). Engaging in a knowledge-telling approach is more mechanical and less contextual. A writer, or speaker, simply views her or his information as needing to be conveyed. The communicator is a deliverer of ideas, but is not assuming the role of persuader. In other words, he or she is not trying to transform but only to inform. Knowledge-telling involves less cognitive “prep time,” as the communicator does not need to spend much time planning and organizing, or assessing the context or audience.

Knowledge-transforming communication, on the other hand, is linked to problem-solving. Transformative communication is typically more deliberate and more effortful. The transformative speaker is not simply the “messenger.” She is providing context and depth, in addition to the basics of the information. Transformative communication must attend more carefully to context, audience, and – of course – purpose.
5. EXERCISE TWO

I. Role Playing: Choose a Topic and Argue the Opposing Viewpoint

**Develop Your Own Voice**

Although we are often comfortable expressing (and defending) our viewpoint on a particular issue to others, we may not have a strong grasp of the opposing viewpoint.

For this exercise, the instructor will provide you with a list of topics, social problems, or current issues, and will ask each student to state in simple terms (yes or no; agree or disagree) his or her position on the issue. For example, issues might include:

- Climate change is real and will have significant negative consequences.
- Gender inequality is a thing of the past.
- Animals have feelings.
- The death penalty is never justified.
- President Trump is an effective leader.
- The Green New Deal is a bad idea.
- Legalization of drugs would minimize a number of social ills.

Give the argument of the side of the issue to which you do not agree. In other words, take the opposing side of the issue and argue that position. Your instructor may ask you to do this in pairs, small groups, or as a class. You will most likely need to jot down some ideas before presenting. Make a list of the most significant arguments (on the opposing side).

**II. Reflect on the Effectiveness of Your Argument. Were you Convincing?**

**Consider the Following Questions:**

Ask students in the audience to provide feedback – either orally or in writing – to the presenter.

1. Was your argument effective? Why/why not?
2. What was the most challenging aspect of this exercise?
3. How does this task relate not only to the career-readiness competency oral/written communication, but also to other career-readiness competencies such as global/intercultural fluency and critical thinking/problem solving?