

Criteria for Speaking-Emphasis Courses

Speaking-Emphasis designated courses at West Chester University must meet the following criteria.

1. Speaking Emphasis courses must be designed to develop students' oral communication skills in ways that are deemed important and desirable within a specific academic discipline or more generally across disciplines. The oral skills developed within such Speaking Emphasis classes:
 - a. can assume a variety of forms ranging from speaker-audience interactions (i.e. public speaking), to dyadic interactions (i.e. one-on-one interactions), to group interactions, to even mediated interactions (oral interactions that take place across a technological medium);
 - b. can be more generalizable communication skills (i.e. skills that can be generalized across a broad range of communication contexts such as developing students' abilities to construct a cogent oral argument) or can be more focused within a specific academic discipline (e.g. a Speaking Emphasis course within the Nursing major might focus on developing students' abilities to establish rapport with patients through one-on-one interactions);
 - c. must be clearly articulated on the Course Syllabus.
2. Speaking Emphasis courses must have at least three assignments that are clearly designed to assess and forward the development of the oral communication skills identified on the Course Syllabus. A 400-level Speaking Emphasis course could have fewer assignments if they are substantial in nature. These assignments should give students multiple opportunities to improve upon these oral communication skills (as opposed to separate assignments focused on separate skills). Oral-communication-related course assignments must identify which particular oral communication skills the assignment is designed to develop. Speaking Emphasis courses must also have a rubric for each oral-communication-related assignment that explains how students are to be assessed on their oral skills, and such rubrics must be shared with students prior to the completion of any such assignments.
3. Speaking Emphasis course syllabi should make clear the percentage of the final grade that is derived from oral-communication-related assignments.
4. Assignments for Speaking Emphasis courses should not solely involve asynchronous forms of mediated communication (e.g., recorded videos); instead they should also include face-to-face and/or synchronous forms of mediated communication (e.g., a live presentation, a Skype interview, or a group conference call).
5. Speaking Emphasis courses must include explicit mechanisms for coaching students on the oral communication skills identified on the Course Syllabus. Such coaching can take many forms—from conferences where the teacher reviews videos of students' oral performances to a feedback grading sheet that contains comments on students' oral performances.
6. Speaking Emphasis courses must provide students with opportunities to demonstrate *improvement* in the oral communication skills identified on the Course Syllabus. More specifically, students must have an opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency with those oral

communication skills, must receive coaching/feedback on those skills, and then must have an additional opportunity (or ideally opportunities) to demonstrate improvement on those skills.

7. Since Speaking Emphasis courses involve oral assignments (that consume considerable class time) and individualized communication coaching (that consumes considerable instructor time), Speaking Emphasis courses should be limited to a class size of no more than 25 students.

8. Speaking Emphasis course syllabi should include at least one oral-communication-related assignment that is recorded and identified as a suitable candidate to add to students' ePortfolio.

9. Speaking Emphasis course syllabi must include a clear statement that the course is an approved Speaking Emphasis course and will focus on developing students' oral communication skills.