

Subcommittee on the Communication Requirement

CI-M Description & Criteria for Faculty and Instructors/Departments and Administrators

General Description

- CI-M subjects (Communication Intensive in the Major) teach the specific forms of communication common to the field's professional and academic culture.
- CI-M subjects offer substantial instruction and practice in written and oral presentation, and fulfill the CI-M component for the designated major(s). Each undergraduate degree program is designed so that students take at least two CI-M subjects within their major program, typically in their junior and senior years at the Institute. One CI-M subject must offer substantial instruction and practice in oral presentation. Non-majors who enroll in CI-M subjects will have the same educational experience, but will not receive CI credit for completing these subjects.
- Students may prepare and present oral and visual research reports for different audiences, learn audience analysis and peer review, or go through the experience of proposing, writing, and extensively revising a professional journal article. This work may be done individually or in teams.

Desired Outcomes

- Students develop the ability to create persuasive written, visual, and/or oral communication through a focus on the central genres and discipline-specific language of their major field of study.
- Students apply the conventions within particular disciplines for the proper use of ideas and language of others.
- Students apply principles of effective presentation of data and research (e.g., including how to integrate text, video, equations, or images; how to create tables or figures).
- Students demonstrate in their work how to analyze audience expectations and to adapt to the needs and knowledge level of their audiences.

Mechanical Criteria

Communication Intensive subjects in the major (CI-M) must:

- integrate writing and speaking assignments that relate to the professional discourse in the major field;
- require at least 5,000 words of writing including one mandatory revision, an equivalent amount of oral communication*, or an equivalent combination of the two;
- include substantial instruction and feedback on student work; and
- count communication-intensive activities as $\geq 25\%$ of the final grade.

*Oral communication practices vary by discipline. Appropriate assignments might include: individual presentations, team presentations, poster sessions, chalk talks, impromptu presentations, presentations of papers, technical presentations, multi-media presentations, or teaching a lesson. Presentations may be designed for different audiences (e.g., a professional audience, the class, or the general public). As a rule of thumb, one minute of a formal presentation is considered equivalent to approximately 100-120 words.

This is a minimum requirement. Subjects may include additional assignments (e.g., lab notebooks, posters, progress reports, websites, or posts to the class's discussion forum or blog).

Recommended Practices

- Students receive instruction in specific writing or speaking practices before preparing assignments, and will receive timely and constructive feedback on work in progress to guide them in revision. Students rehearse oral presentations and receive feedback in the form of specific strategies for further development.
- Assignments should be sequenced to move from simpler to more complex cognitive and communication tasks; within this sequence, newer or more challenging elements will be supported with specific instruction and feedback.
- Students are given many opportunities to analyze the genre and language of discipline-specific professional forms of communication.
- Students engage in guided peer review in order to apply and demonstrate this central practice of academic communication. These opportunities may include asking students to complete a rubric or checklist to guide their feedback.
- If collaborative writing or presentations are assigned, students will be guided in how to collaborate effectively. All students will be involved in drafting and delivering the assignment.
- Students receive training in central tasks relevant to the specific genre (e.g., how to do a literature search or how to produce visual images).
- Students learn beneficial practices for working with sources, such as planning the stages of a project, taking accurate notes, keeping track of sources, and documenting and citing sources in a manner appropriate to the relevant field.
- Class discussion will introduce ways in which changing communication and publication practices shape the intellectual and practical work of the field.

Support

For additional information on proposing CI-M subjects or integrating communication instruction, please contact Kathleen MacArthur, Associate Dean for Curriculum and Faculty Support, at 617-253-2783 or kmacarthur@mit.edu.

Further information on designing assignments and integrating communication instruction into your CI-M subject is available on the web at <http://cmsw.mit.edu/education/writing-rhetoric-professional-communication/> or by contacting Suzanne Lane, Director of Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication, at 617-452-5009 or stlane@mit.edu.

Proposing or modifying a CI-M subject

- CI-M subjects are reviewed and designated by the Subcommittee on the Communication Requirement. A list of current CI-M subjects for each major is available online.
- Faculty members wishing to propose new CI-M subjects or substantial revisions to existing ones should contact the Undergraduate Officer in their department and the Office of the Communication Requirement.
- If a department proposes major modifications to a CI-M subject, it should submit a proposal to SOCR to have the subject re-evaluated. Major modifications include changes to the number or type of communication-intensive assignments, the instruction in communication, or the number of units.