

Guidance for assessing and documenting communication effectiveness in the classroom

Communication is a joint responsibility of all members of the NTID community, especially the teaching faculty. “Strategic Decisions 2020,” the NTID strategic plan, notes that: “NTID is a unique educational community that has evolved over its 42-year history and will continue to change. Our students bring diverse languages and communication abilities and preferences to our educational community, and we wholeheartedly welcome them. The key qualities of NTID’s communication environment are diversity and inclusiveness: our goal is to respect this diversity and continue to strive towards inclusiveness” (p. 17).

Teaching effectively at NTID requires proficient communication skills in both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. These guidelines are intended to provide faculty with a structure and a list of resources they can use to develop and demonstrate their proficiency. Documentation of efforts and evidence of progress is instrumental in faculty appraisals and promotion portfolios. Faculty are encouraged not to limit themselves to a specific score or rating (e.g., SLPI rating of Advanced), but to *holistically* evaluate their progress and use these resources to support their self assessment. Communication skill development is required to be an ongoing aspect of every faculty member’s plan of work.

Consequently, faculty are encouraged to develop a communication activities portfolio. This portfolio should include a variety of communication activities and assessments that are most appropriate for faculty to use in establishing their individual baselines and to demonstrate progress and improvement. A template outlining examples of available assessments and communication activities focused primarily, but not exclusively, on American Sign Language can be found at [Communication Assessment Checklist](#). Each assessment tool, current and future, will measure a different aspect of ASL proficiency and will employ a different scale for evaluation. Achieving proficiency and demonstrating progress and improvement is the responsibility of the faculty member. The efficacy of particular courses or resources depends significantly on the investment of effort and persistence on the part of the faculty member.

NTID faculty are expected to take the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SPLI) and achieve the level of ADVANCED in order to become tenured and be considered for promotion in rank. The policies outlining this expectation can be found at <https://www.rit.edu/ntid/president/academic-affairs#college-policies-and-guidelines>. Pre-tenure faculty should refer to the NTID Policy on Tenure and Simultaneous Promotion to the Rank of Associate Professor. Tenured faculty should refer to the NTID Policy on Promotion to the Rank of Associate and Full Professor. Non-tenure-track faculty should refer to the NTID Policy on Promotion to the Ranks of Senior and Principal Lecturer. The full text of this expectation is copied below:

2. Communication

Unlike in the other colleges of RIT, effective communication is an expectation of all NTID faculty at all ranks. For the purposes of this policy, communication refers to communication with people who are deaf and people who are hearing in all modalities combined with sensitivity to deaf cultural issues.

NTID faculty are expected to strive for, achieve, and maintain the ability to communicate in American Sign Language⁴ (ASL) at a level of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, comprehension, and fluency that allows effective participation in communication situations applicable to work and social topics. In consideration of the needs of the academic and social environment of NTID, the target goal, established by the 1991 Communication Task Force, is an ADVANCED level of skill as measured by the Sign Language Proficiency Interview⁵ (SLPI).

A rating of INTERMEDIATE PLUS is acceptable only where the candidate can clearly show strong evidence of progress and sustained effort toward an advanced rating. A candidate who does not have an SLPI rating of ADVANCED should assemble a portfolio, the contents of which cumulatively demonstrate the candidate's ability to communicate effectively in ASL inside and outside the classroom. The portfolio might include such components as SRS/SRATE ratings related to communication skills; written evaluations by proficient users of ASL; evidence of successful participation in sign communication development activities such as ASL classes, individual tutoring, and videotaping of classroom performance; records of involvement with student clubs and other extra-curricular student activities, and evidence of interactions with the deaf community on and off campus. Other forms of evidence may also be included.

NTID faculty are also expected to strive for, achieve, and maintain the ability to use spoken communication strategies and techniques. Spoken communication is considered to be speech, with or without voice, used expressively and/or receptively, alone or to complement a message communicated with signs. Although no skill level is specified, faculty are expected to participate in learning activities whereby they develop a knowledge of specific spoken communication strategies and classroom techniques and their applicability in communication situations. Accordingly, candidates must include documentation of learning activities related to spoken communication.

⁴ According to the Communication Task Force Report, approved by the college faculty in February, 1991, "ASL fluency is defined somewhat broadly to include those who may use an English-like word order and incorporate signing space, directionality, and other features which are characteristics of ASL vocabulary and its principles, and strong sign reception abilities."

At this time, the SLPI is the only assessment with a specific minimum skill level expected for faculty.

Faculty members who already satisfy the required SLPI ADVANCED rating level should focus on either further personal communication skill development activities or engaging in activities designed to support the communication skill development of colleagues. Such activities may include mentoring or tutoring faculty, staff, and students; serving on the SLPI/CSLA (Classroom Sign Language Assessment) team; serving as a resource for faculty wishing to use the Group Communication Observation Tool (GCOT); serving on communication-related committees; or offering workshops. If a faculty member from this group intends to use mentoring activities as part of their own communication plan, they should consult with their department chair when developing their plan of work and must, when writing their self-appraisal, be able to explain how the mentoring helped to develop their own communication skills.

The Office of ASL Teaching and Evaluation (ASLTE) is available as an initial resource for establishing a communication development plan. Faculty also may engage with other organizations and activities outside of RIT as part of their professional development that also supports effective communication growth. A variety of resources and assessments for faculty to consider as they work to improve their communication skills is listed in the chart at [Communication Assessment Checklist](#).

The faculty member is responsible for clarifying and describing their communication skill development plan, in consultation and agreement with their chairperson. Finally, for specific guidance, individual faculty members should attend to feedback provided by their chairperson in the annual review.

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NTID Policy on Tenure and Promotion Communication Expectations Task Force