

# Argument and Inquiry: Using Papers from First-Year Seminars in Assessing Communication

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# Argument and Inquiry Seminars

- Designated Writing Rich
- Explicitly introduces students to a liberal arts approach to learning
- Develops the critical and creative skills
- Is discussion-based
- Fosters students' intellectual independence
- Develops habits of critical thinking
- Clarifies how scholars ask questions
- Teaches students how to find and evaluate information in reading and research
- Instructs students in using information effectively and ethically in constructing arguments.
- Strengthens students' habits of cooperation with peers
- Students and instructor must attend the A&I convocation

# Institutional-Level Student Learning Outcomes

# Outcome 5: Communicate and Argue Effectively

- Sophomore writing portfolio data (direct, local measure)
- QuIRK writing portfolio assessment data (direct, local measure)
- Application by faculty and staff of Outcome 5 rubric to work collected from first-year seminars (direct, local measure)
- Application by faculty comps advisers of Outcome 5 rubric to comps work (direct, local measure)
- Application by comps students of Outcome 5 rubric to their own comps work (indirect, local measure)
- Collegiate Learning Assessment (direct, national measure)
- Student survey data (indirect, national measures)

### Communicate and argue effectively

	1	2	3	4
Audience and purpose (includes awareness of disciplinary expectations)	Demonstrates little or no attention to audience and purpose.	Demonstrates some awareness of audience and purpose and to the task(s) at hand.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of audience and purpose and a clear focus on the task(s) at hand.	Demonstrates a thoughtful understanding of audience and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.
Sources and evidence	Fails to use sources or evidence in support of thesis.	Attempts to use credible, relevant sources to support ideas relevant to the discipline and genre of the writing, but is limited in recognizing the difference between facts, opinions, and value judgments.	Uses adequate credible sources or evidence to support ideas, and generally distinguishes between facts, opinions and value judgments.	Examines sources and evidence and selects relevant, appropriate, and credible sources or evidence, and clearly distinguishes between facts, opinions and value judgments.
Organization– eg a specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, effective transitions	Lacks organizing structures.	Organizing structures are mostly present, but at times fail to provide coherence to the work.	Consistently and competently employs organizing structures to provide coherence to the work.	Skillfully and creatively uses organizing structures to enhance the power of the work.
Control of syntax and mechanics (written communication)	Writing seriously marred by error; writing interferes with writer's ability to communicate; citation and documentation not included or confusing.	Some distracting noise in spelling and punctuation or occasional grammar mistakes. Some fragments, awkward constructions etc.; cites sources but may not fully document.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers; has a few errors; cites and documents sources.	Uses language that enhances meaning to readers; is error-free; follows conventions for citation and documentation.
Visual elements (written and oral presentation)	Use of visual elements or their absence impedes understanding of the content of the work.	While chosen visual elements are appropriate to the task, they are not integrated fully into the work.	Integrated, well-chosen visual elements support the purpose of the work.	Choice and presentation of visual elements provides strong support to purpose of the work or makes the material particularly interesting.
Oral delivery	Delivery techniques (i.e. posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) detract from the effectiveness of the presentation and/or presenter may not appear knowledgeable about his or her subject. Language choices are unclear and minimally support presentation's effectiveness.	Delivery techniques (i.e. posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) do not interfere with the effectiveness of the presentation but may not enhance it either; the speaker may appear tentative. Language choices are commonplace and partially support presentation's effectiveness.	Delivery techniques (i.e. posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation understandable and the speaker appears credible. Language choices are thoughtful and generally support presentation's effectiveness.	Delivery techniques (i.e. posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation compelling, and the speaker appears knowledgeable and in control. Language choices are imaginative, memorable and compelling and they enhance the presentation's effectiveness.

# Exercise

- 4 Students randomly selected from each seminar
- Faculty member teaching seminar applies rubric to two assignments
- Assignments submitted during weeks 2-4 and then during weeks 7-9

# Responses

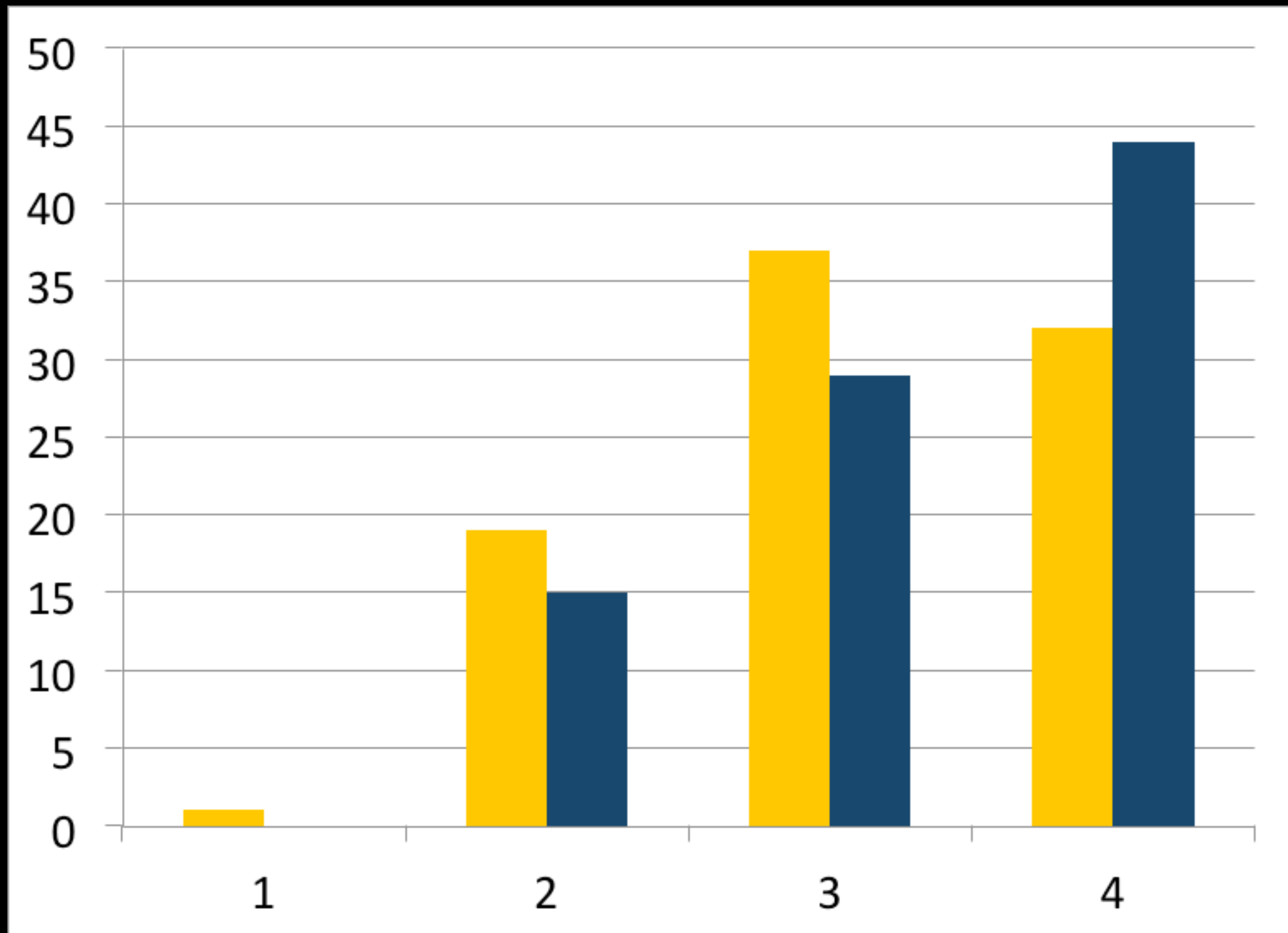
- 89 assignments assessed from weeks 2-4
- 88 assignments assessed from weeks 7-9
- 72 students had assignments assessed at both points
- Total of 105 student had papers evaluated or 75% of the student sample

# Results

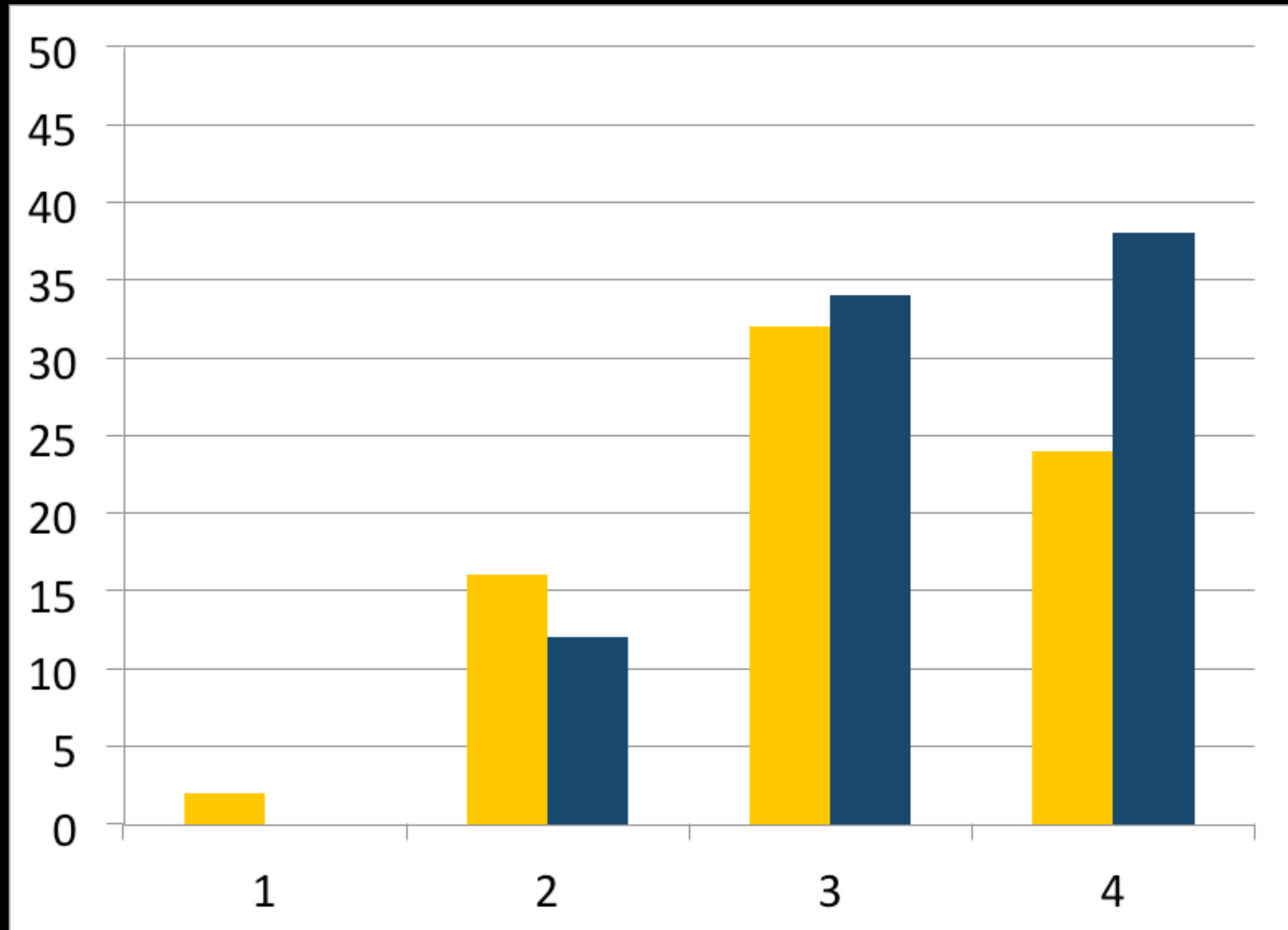
Dimension	Early in Term	Late in Term
Audience and Purpose	3.12	3.33
Sources and Evidence	3.05	3.31
Organization	2.71	2.94
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	2.8	2.99
Visual Elements	1.88	3.04
Oral Delivery	2.65	2.94



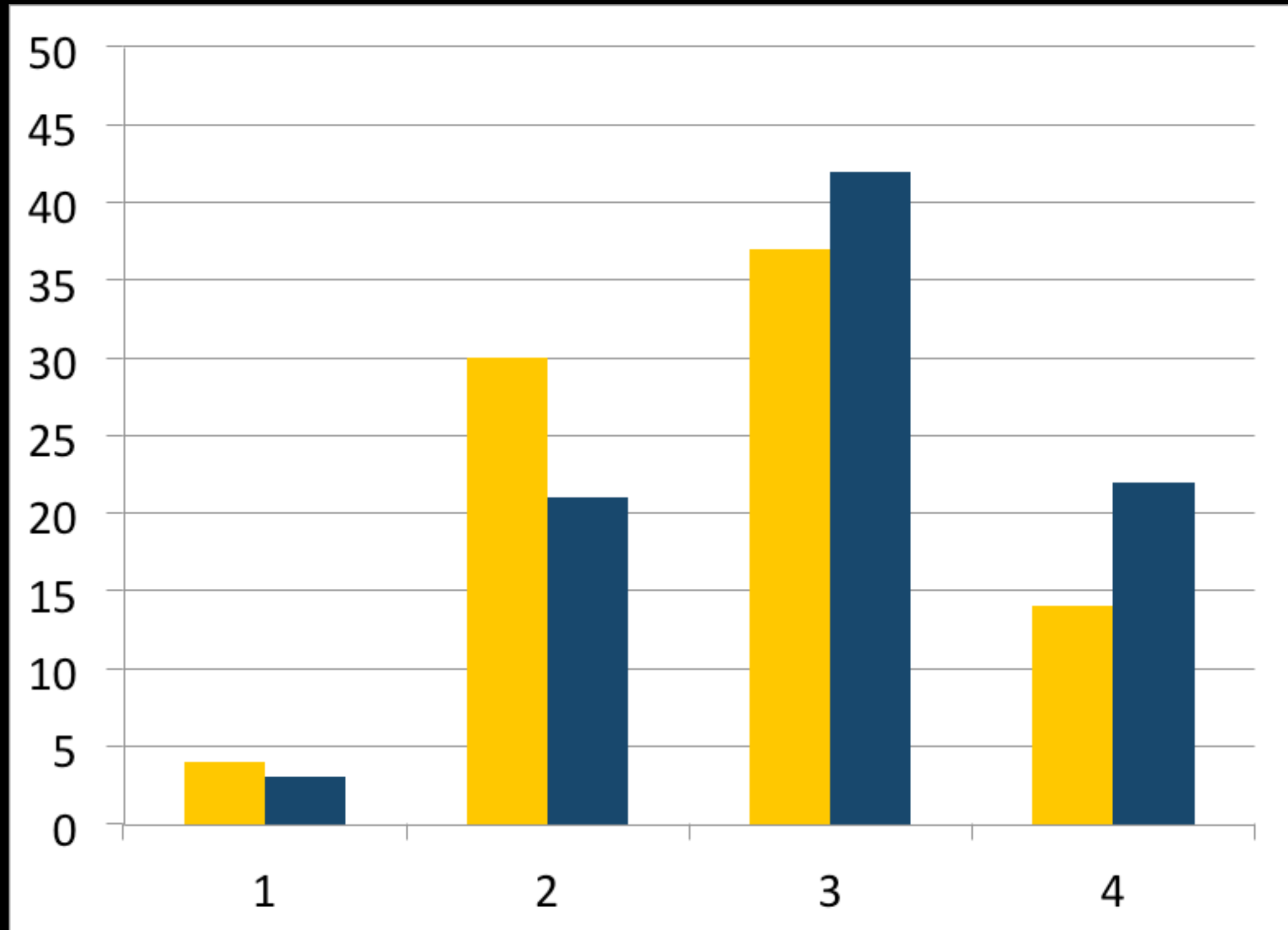
# Audience and Purpose



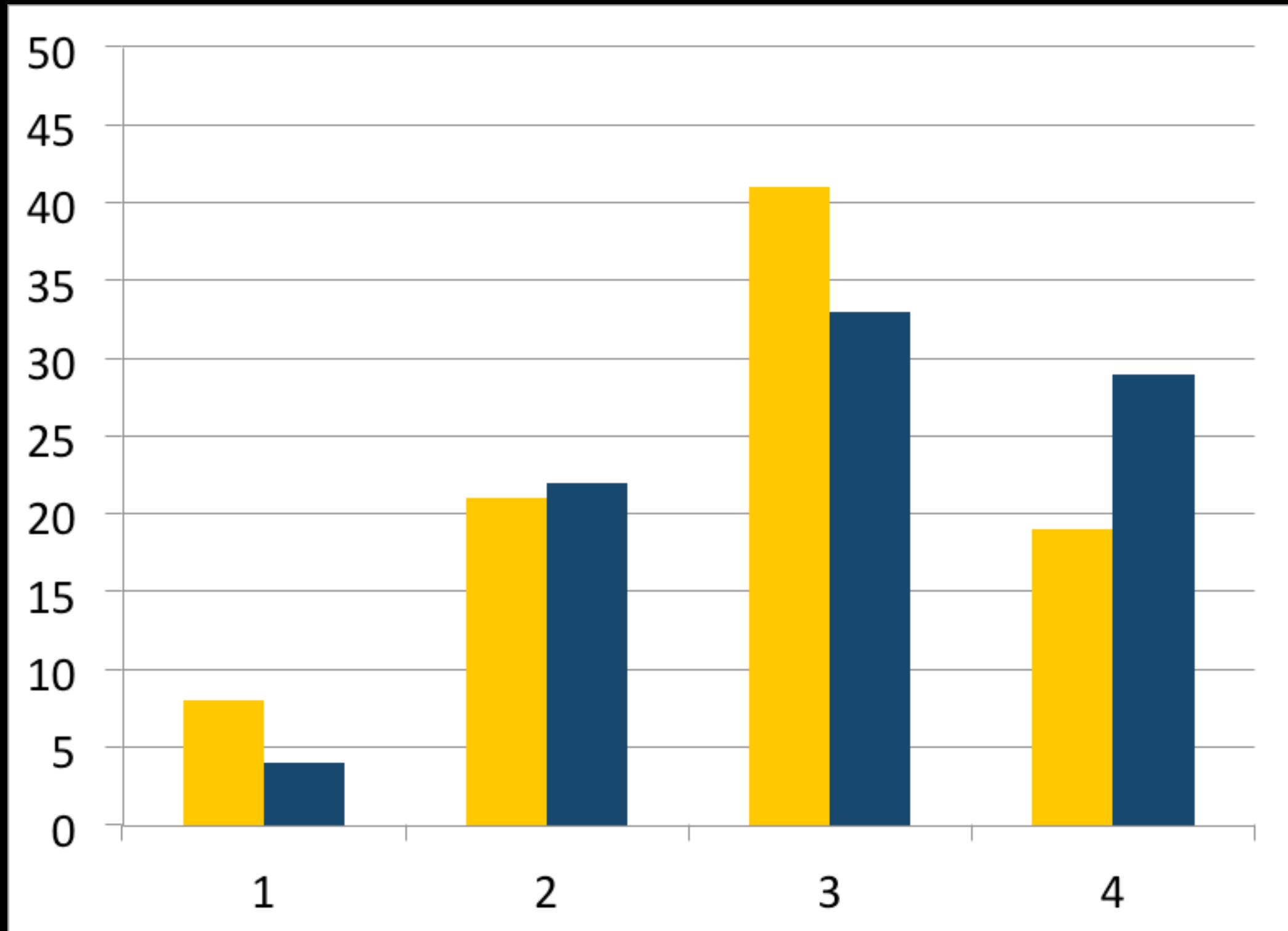
# Sources and Evidence



# Organization



# Syntax and Mechanics



# Reflections on Exercise

- A&I seminars are “writing rich” courses so there was an ample supply of papers
- Only 20% of assignments rated for visual elements
- Only 27% of assignments rated for oral delivery

# Relevant URLs

## Assessment Resources:

[https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/faculty\\_resources/assessment/](https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/faculty_resources/assessment/)

## A&I Seminar Descriptions:

<http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/aiseminars/>