

Engineering Graduate Students as Evaluators of Communication Skill

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Over the past 15 years, the communication program within the Department of Mechanical Engineering has utilized graduate students within the department to function as the principal graders for approximately 1100 lab reports produced by the undergraduate population in Fluid Mechanics, Heat Transfer, Vibrations, and Controls laboratories. These graduate students read the draft reports, make appropriate comments and return the reports for final production. The graduate students critique, comment, and grade in both the technical and communication areas while also teaching the above laboratories. The reports are then read again and a grade is assigned. The issues regarding faculty support for the plan, preparation of the graduate students, and orientation for the undergraduates who will be impacted by the plan will be addressed. The ultimate goal involves leading engineering students to the realization that communication is important because it is being evaluated by fellow engineers and that those evaluators will also improve their own skills because of their need to focus on how they communicate. Details of the program and especially the training of the graduate students will be addressed.