



Communication Across the Curriculum

CxC

FACULTY DRIVEN, STUDENT FOCUSED

Evaluating the Impact of Working in an Online Environment on the Communication Consultant Experience

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Communication Across the Curriculum

Philosophy: Belief that all students should have multiple opportunities to develop as communicators and writers

Communication Consultants: Students serve as resources for students and faculty by providing one-on-one and small group consultations on writing and speaking assignments and serving as in-class assistance and support

Working Environment

- **Fall 2019:** Primarily face-to-face interactions in physical spaces
 - One-on-one and small group consultations with students
 - In-class interactions with students
 - Meetings and conversations with faculty
- **Fall 2020:** Primarily remote interactions in virtual spaces
 - One-on-one and small group consultations with students
 - In-class interactions with students
 - Meetings and conversations with faculty



Research Purpose

Investigate the impact of working in an online environment on the communication consultant experience



Research Questions

1. What do consultants report as barriers for working in a primarily online environment due to a global pandemic?
2. In what ways are consultants' confidence levels affected by a shift to an online environment during a global pandemic?



Consultant Survey

- **Fall 2019 and Fall 2020**
 - Online survey with Likert scale and open-ended questions related to confidence levels
 - Additional select all that apply list was added Fall 2020 about barriers related to the online environment
- **Fall 2019**
 - n=41
 - Response rate: 76%
- **Fall 2020**
 - n=40
 - Response rate: 75%

Research Methods

- Identified and categorized barriers identified in the Fall 2020 consultant survey
- Compared quantitative data on confidence levels from Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 consultant surveys
- Coded and compared answers to the open-ended questions from the Fall 2019 and 2020 surveys to identify different factors that impacted confidence levels

Barriers

13 or more of 40 consultants self-reported encountering the following barriers working in a primarily online environment

Distractions in a personal work space	23
Unreliable internet connection	21
Mental health	21
Lack of motivation	21
Lack of engagement from peers	20
Time management	19
Last minute changes to your and your peers' schedules due to urgent and unforeseen circumstances	18
Technical issues (unforeseen hardware failures or software bugs)	14
Family commitments or obligations	13

Barriers

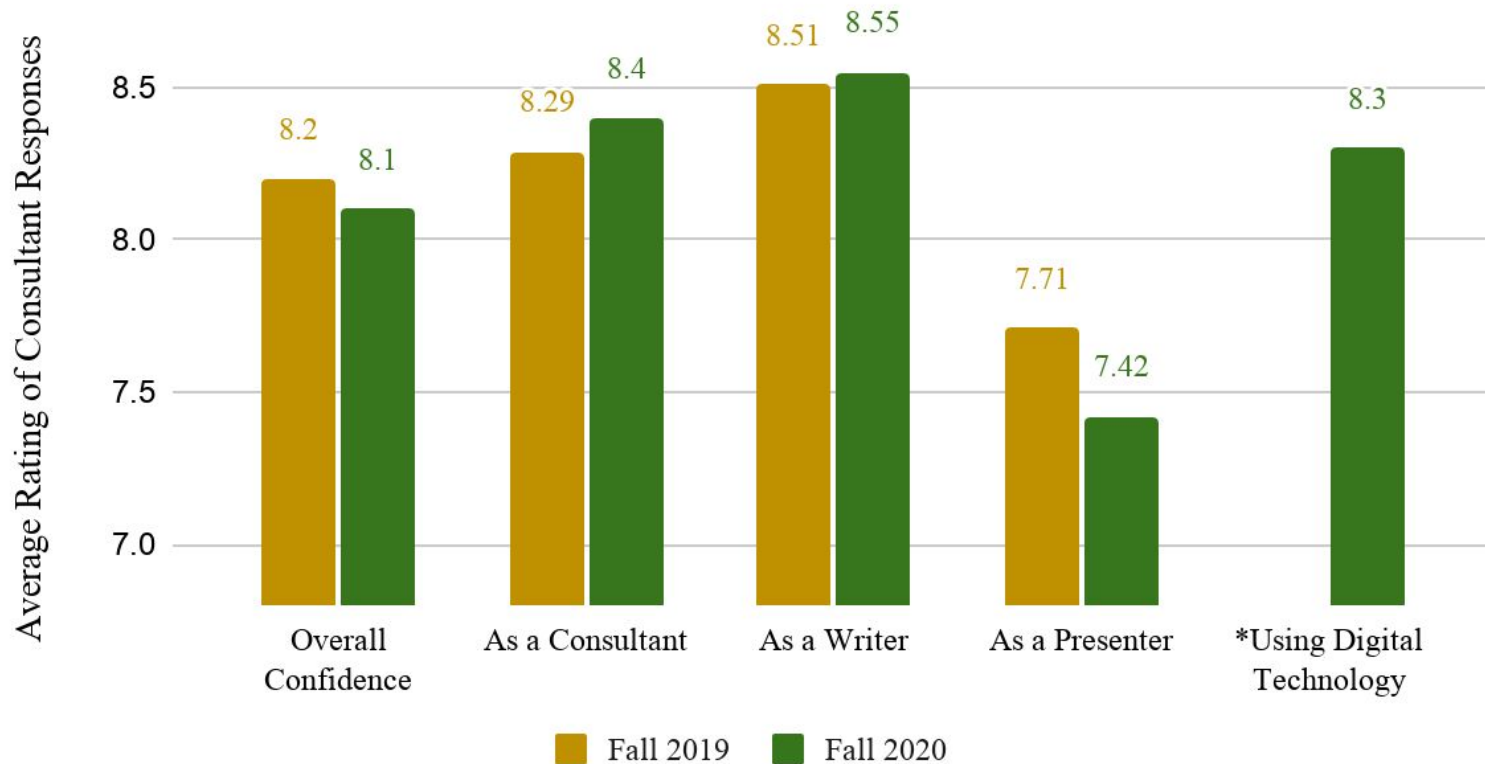
10 or fewer of 40 consultants self-reported encountering the following barriers working primarily in an online environment

Inconsistent communication with peers	9
Limited access to campus resources	8
Distractions in a shared work space	8
Limited experience with online platforms	6
Loss of income or increased financial pressures	6
Physical health	5
Inconsistent communication with faculty	3
Access to internet	2
Limited access to a computer or other technology	2
Different time zones	2
None of the above	2



Barriers and Confidence Levels

Confidence Level Changes Between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020



**Confidence in usage of digital technology was not present in the Fall 2019 survey*

Barriers and Confidence Levels

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Explaining Role as a Consultant	31	32
Establishing Boundaries	26	22
Balancing Obligations	21	18
Providing Oral Feedback	37	27
Providing Written Feedback	33	26
Explaining Assignments	27	30
Referring Students to Campus Resources	29	28
Giving Faculty Feedback on Student Problems	28	33
Giving Faculty Feedback on Assignments	24	27
Refusing Faculty Requests	19	18
One-on-one Consultations	36	32
Small Group Consultations	19	16



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FA19 and FA20 Confidence Levels

Briefly describe how working as a communication consultant has influenced or affected your overall confidence level.

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Increased in public speaking/ presenting	10	4
Increased in communication/conversation skills	12	3
Increased in writing	8	1
Increased in virtual platforms or tools	0	4
Increased in flexibility or adaptability	0	4
Stayed consistent/no change	0	3
Decreased due to challenges associated with online learning	0	2



FA19 and FA20 Confidence Levels

Briefly describe anything that has negatively impacted or affected your confidence level as a communication consultant.

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
None/no decrease	10	8
Technology Issues (hardware/software/internet)	0	4
Lack of personal connection/feeling disconnected	1	4
Blame from peers	3	0
Professor/faculty interactions	5	1

FA19 and FA20 Confidence Levels

What would help make you more confident in your role as a communication consultant?

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
More practice/training	11	8
Nothing/not needed/unsure	7	7
More interaction with other consultants	3	2
In-person interactions	0	5
More comfort or confidence in an online environment	0	3
Designated physical space	2	0

Discussion

- Barriers in Fall 2020 primarily resulted from the move to an online working environment due to the global pandemic
- Consultants and faculty worked together more closely to facilitate the online student learning experience
- Overall confidence levels remained high between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020

Conclusion

Recommendations

1. Presenting in a virtual environment training
2. Faculty and consultant communication training
3. In-person and virtual learning and environments
pros and cons