GAC006 Business, Science, Social Science and Psychology I: Communication Skills

GAC Study and Communication Skills

What this module is, and how it is marked

This site's GAC006-aligned communication practice covers understanding yourself and others, coordinating team work and working with different perspectives. The examples below are fictional. They teach useful actions; they do not replace your centre's assessment brief.

Possible activities include an individual **role play**, a **group role play**, an **in-class test**, a **logbook** and **coursework**. Check which activities your actual course requires, their dates and their criteria. Do not assume a mark allocation or exemption from this handout.

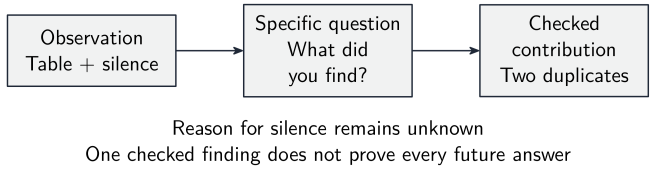
In a role play, give others a clear opening, check their meaning and respond to the task. Review both the action and its result. In a logbook, record a dated event, evidence, what remains uncertain and a next action you can check. Keep entries as the work happens. A later reconstruction should be labelled honestly; it cannot supply evidence that was never recorded.

Understanding self and relationships with others

A **personality trait** describes a relatively lasting tendency in thought, feeling or behaviour. One silent meeting does not establish a trait or its cause.

- **Introversion and extraversion** describe broad tendencies along a range. They include more inward or more outward/social orientations; they do not assign a fixed team role. APA definition.
- **Self-awareness** recognises your own responses, tendencies and limits. Use observations rather than a verdict: "I interrupted twice when we spoke quickly; next time I will note the question and wait for my turn."
- **Values** are things a person considers important. Ask which priorities matter in this task. A disagreement does not by itself establish different values, ability or effort.
- **Empathy** involves trying to understand another perspective. Ask respectfully and allow an answer that differs from your guess. Understanding someone does not require agreeing with every claim.

> **Worked example: an observation and a checked contribution.** In a fictional meeting Chen brings a survey table but says nothing for twenty minutes. Wei assumes he has no useful findings. Wei then asks, "Chen, you checked the totals. What did you find?" Chen identifies two duplicate entries. The group compares the table with the raw list and confirms them.



Known: Chen prepared a table and supplied a checked finding after the question. Unknown: why he was silent. The group agrees notes and a reporting turn for rehearsal. Keep the actual required contribution and agreed support; a personality label neither creates an exemption nor cancels a support need. Check the rehearsal's responses rather than promising they will be correct.

The skills of effective communication

Communication can be reviewed through specific actions and responses. The local brief determines what is assessed.

- **Active listening** means attending to the message and checking your understanding. Ask a relevant question or summarise the point and invite correction. Eye contact alone does not prove understanding and should not be imposed as its only sign.
- **Non-verbal communication** includes gesture, posture, expression and distance. Meaning depends on the person and situation. Do not diagnose an intention from one gesture.
- **Open questions** invite an extended answer, such as "What is blocking the draft?" **Closed questions** restrict the response, such as "Can you send the checked file by 16:00?" Choose according to the information needed, then check the response.
- **Assertiveness** states a need or position clearly while respecting others. A **passive** response may leave the need unstated. An **aggressive** response may attack or threaten the person. Evaluate the actual words and effect; silence alone does not establish resentment or passivity.
- **Feedback** is useful when it identifies specific work and a checkable improvement. "The graph's vertical axis needs a unit" tells the author what to inspect. Confirm that the unit is actually missing before making that claim.

> **Worked example: raise a missing handover.** A checked survey file was due Monday 16:00. It has not arrived, and analysis depends on it. A useful message is: "The checked file was due at 16:00 and the analysis cannot start without it. What is ready, and when can we receive it?" This names an event, an effect and a request. It does not claim the teammate is lazy or that the whole project is ruined. Record the answer, revise the handover if authorised and follow the course process if the deadline remains at risk.

Understanding groups and teams

A team coordinates contributions towards a shared result. Name each task's owner, required input, handover time and quality check. Confirm availability. A named role helps organise the work but does not prove completion.

- **Forming**, **storming**, **norming** and **performing** describe orientation, conflict, shared practices and coordinated work in Tuckman's proposed model. These labels are not a timetable every team must follow. Use observed events to explain the label; do not invent conflict to reach a stage. Original model.
- **Team roles** describe contributions such as generating ideas, recording decisions, checking evidence and coordinating handovers. People can share or change roles. If the final check has no owner, assign it and review its result; do not predict inevitable failure from personality labels.
- **Leadership styles** describe decision arrangements. **Autocratic** concentrates authority in the leader; **democratic** involves members in decisions; **laissez-faire** gives members substantial freedom. None of these definitions alone establishes the best choice. Consider information, permissions, safety, availability and review.
- **Ground rules** specify practical arrangements: meeting times, decision recording, task ownership, internal handovers and how to report a likely delay. Agree them early where possible and revise them when needed. A disagreement does not make later agreement impossible.
- **Conflict** may involve tasks or relationships. Keep the discussion specific, respectful and connected to evidence. Task disagreement can still be unhelpful if it is unsupported or never resolved. Follow the course process for an unresolved problem.

> **Worked example: repair a dependence.** Mei supplies survey questions, Arun collects responses, Chen checks totals and Wei writes findings. Wei cannot start before the checked totals arrive. Agree Chen's handover and Wei's receipt check, with time left for correction. If the file is late, ask what is ready and record a feasible revised plan. A contract alone cannot establish that the totals are correct.

Life skills: culture, and working with difference

Culture includes shared practices, meanings and expectations. Individuals also differ and work conditions matter. Ask about the current task rather than assigning an intention from nationality.

- **Cultural diversity** can bring different experiences and questions. It does not guarantee a better decision or identify a particular member's knowledge.
- A **stereotype** applies a generalised group expectation to an individual. Such an expectation does not establish that person's intention, ability or behaviour.
- **Directness** varies among people and situations. "That could be difficult" may identify an obstacle or express reluctance. Ask what makes it difficult and what can be ready by the deadline.
- **Adapting** means agreeing a workable shared process. Discuss turns, preparation, clarification and decision records, while keeping task and accessibility rules in view.

> **Worked example: review a speaking arrangement.** In a fictional rehearsal two students answer immediately and interrupt the others. The quieter students say they need time to read each question. The group agrees question areas and a pause before each reporting turn. In the next rehearsal all four answer at least one question. The group checks answers against the report and finds one figure still needs correction.

The trial shows more balanced participation, with an accuracy gap still open. It does not establish nationality as the cause of the earlier silence or prove that every future response will be correct. Correct and check the figure, then review another rehearsal. Neither volume nor quietness proves expertise.

Vocabulary card meanings

role play: Acting a part to practise a situation, done alone or with other people. group role play: Acting parts together so a group can practise a situation. logbook: A notebook in which work and reflections are entered as they happen. Introversion and extraversion: Broad tendencies toward a more inward or a more outward focus, which are not explained just by where someone finds energy. Empathy: Understanding and feeling something of what another person feels. Non-verbal communication: Messages carried by face, posture, and gesture rather than by words. Open questions: Questions that cannot be answered with only yes or no. closed questions: Questions that expect a short, fixed answer. Assertiveness: Stating one's needs clearly while still respecting other people. passive: Letting others decide, without stating what one needs. aggressive: Pushing one's own wants in a way that attacks others. Team roles: The different jobs people take inside a working group. Leadership styles: Different ways of guiding a group. Ground rules: Basic agreements a group sets before the work starts. Culture: The shared beliefs and habits of a group of people. Cultural diversity: The presence of more than one set of beliefs and habits in a community. Directness: How plainly a person states a point. Adapting: Changing one's behaviour to suit a new situation.