

Title: Understanding student fears of public speaking: needs analysis and pilot study

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Many university students will be asked to complete oral presentations and other public speaking based assessments as part of university studies, yet it is possible that many students have some fears and concerns about public speaking situations. In Australia, little is actually known about student perceptions about public speaking, what their experiences are, or what we can do to support students who might be concerned about public speaking. Therefore the aim of this study was to conduct a brief pilot survey into how current students perceive public speaking, what experiences they have had, and to find out whether additional assistance and training may be beneficial. The initial findings suggest that public speaking anxiety may impact negatively on student engagement with oral communication assessments and that further research is needed to develop better support and training. We suggest that to assist students to transition, achieve, succeed and persist we need to adhere to the notion of constructive alignment which takes account of personal competencies and mitigates psychological distress.