Introduction. ‘Communication’ as an academic discipline in Australia is characterised by a definitional porosity. This is due, in part, to Communication’s institutional history in Australian universities, as well as the product of disciplinary uncertainty: what, exactly, does Communication comprise? This paper explores these questions through quantitative data derived from a survey of university staff who teach first-year introduction to Communication courses.

Aims. The aims of this project are two-fold. Firstly, the study surveys university teachers of communication what they taught and assessed in their courses, namely, how they conceptualised Communication as a discipline. Secondly, the survey asked which modes of Communication formed the basis for the curriculum of their courses, broadly grouped as Written, Spoken, and Visual.

Methods. The project was conducted in two stages. Firstly, course or unit outlines for first-level, Introduction to Communication subjects (as part of Bachelor of Communication degrees or cognate equivalents) were surveyed for their content and assessment patterns. Secondly, unit co-ordinators for these units were contacted by email to invite them to complete a survey. The survey asked the co-ordinators about their unit content, delivery methods, assessment practices, and which modes of communication their units covered. These results were then tabulated and analysed.

Results. The results indicated a diverse conceptualisation of Communication as a discipline. The dominant mode in content and assessment was Written communication, which is congruent with logocentric conceptualisations of Communication, especially so given the discipline’s institutional history as a provider of academic English. Spoken communication was the next-most common

Discussion. Communication as a pedagogical artefact in Australian universities exhibits some consistent characteristics, but the diverse range of conceptualisations and modes present in these data suggests that the historic slipperiness in defining the field persists. Further research will be conducted to collect qualitative data through in-depth interviews with those unit co-ordinators who indicated their willingness to participate.