

Guide for Creating an Effective Assignment

Here are some things to consider and questions to ask yourself when planning an Assignment.

Assignment description: A brief overview (one or two sentences) about the Assignment

- Why are you giving the students this assignment?
- Which learning outcome(s) is it designed to measure?
- Who is the (perhaps hypothetical) audience for the assignment: academicians, people working in a particular setting, or the general public?
- What assistance can you provide while they are working on the assignment? (Are you willing to critique drafts, for example?)
- How will you score or grade the assignment? The best way to communicate this is to give students a copy of the rubric that you will use to evaluate completed assignments.

Learning outcome(s): (that the Assignment is designed to measure):

Before continuing to plan the assignment, carefully consider what the students need to do to show that they have achieved the learning outcomes, and whether the time that it will take for the students to complete the assignment successfully is reasonable considering the workload of the course (and of the other courses in the current semester).

Assignment title:

What is the title of the Assignment? (Instead of using a title of 'Research Essay' or 'Final Project,' the title of the Assignment should convey, in some way, the expectations of the assignment. Is this an argumentative essay, a research project on Social Media Trends or Slavery, a sociological analysis or a Business Plan?)

Assignment goals

What do you expect the students to learn by completing the Assignment? Double check: do these goals relate clearly to one or more of the learning outcomes of the course?

Design decisions

- What should be included in the completed assignment?
- How should students format the completed assignment?
- How much time do you expect them to spend on this assignment?
- How much will it count toward their final subject grade?
- What readings, reference materials, and technologies are they expected to use?
- Can they collaborate with others? If so, to what extent?

Skills required to successfully complete the assignment

This is especially important if you are requiring that the student use a technology tool or media for the assignment. If you are planning an assignment that requires the students to use technologies that they may not be familiar with, how will you prepare for the extra work that entails both from the students' perspectives and yours? How will you guide students through the process? What supports will you put in place to ensure that the students have the skills so that they are able to successfully complete the tasks?

Resources for the assignment

- Will you give the students a list of resources that they can use to complete the assignment?
- If research is involved, what level of credibility or professional standards will you require?
- Will you accept materials from the open web or only the online library?
- How many sources do they need?
- How are you supporting student learning about how to avoid plagiarism?

Grading criteria

- What are your grading criteria?
- Have you created a checklist or rubric that indicates the expectations of the grading levels? Have you decided what an A, B, C, D and F "looks like"?
- Is there an exemplar that you can show the students?

Resources:

Suskie, L. (2009). Chapter 10: Creating an Effective Assignment. In *Assessing Student Learning: A common sense guide* (2nd ed.) (pp. 155-164). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Texas A&M University Writing Center. (2011). Developing Assignments. Retrieved from <http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/for-faculty/teaching-writing/assignments/developing-assignments/>

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