

2. Transparent Assignment Template for Faculty

Transparent Assignment Template

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This template can be used as a guide for developing, explaining, and discussing class activities and out-of-class assignments. Making these aspects of each course activity or assignment explicitly clear to students has demonstrably enhanced students' learning in a national study.¹

Assignment Name

Due date:

Purpose: Define the learning objectives, in language and terms that help students recognize how this assignment will benefit their learning. Ideally, indicate how these are connected with institutional learning outcomes, and how the specific knowledge and skills involved in this assignment will be important in students' lives beyond the contexts of this assignment, this course, and this college.

Skills: The purpose of this assignment is to help you practice the following skills that are essential to your success in this course / in school / in this field / in professional life beyond school:

Terms from Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives may help you explain these skills in language students will understand. Listed from cognitively simple to most complex, these skills are:

- understanding basic disciplinary knowledge and methods/tools
- applying basic disciplinary knowledge/tools to problem-solving in a similar but unfamiliar context
- analyzing
- synthesizing
- judging/evaluating and selecting best solutions
- creating/inventing a new interpretation, product, theory

Knowledge: This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline:

- 1.
- 2.

Task: Define what activities the student should do/perform. "Question cues" from this chart might be helpful: <http://www.asainstitute.org/conference2013/handouts/20-Bloom-Question-Cues-Chart.pdf>. List any steps or guidelines, or a recommended sequence for the students' efforts. Specify any extraneous mistakes to be avoided.

Criteria for Success:

Define the characteristics of the finished product. Provide multiple, annotated examples of what these characteristics look like in practice, to encourage students' creativity and reduce their incentive to copy any one example too closely. With students, collaboratively analyze examples of work before the students begin working. Explain how excellent work differs from adequate work. It is often useful to provide or compile with students a checklist of characteristics of successful work. This enables students to evaluate the quality of their own efforts while they are working, and to judge the success of their completed work. Students can also use the checklist to provide feedback on peers' coursework. Indicate whether this task/product will be graded and/or how it factors into the student's overall grade for the course. Later, asking students to reflect and comment on their completed, graded work allows them to focus on changes to their learning strategies that might improve their future work.

¹ Winkelmes, Mary-Ann. "Transparency in Teaching: Faculty Share Data and Improve Students' Learning." *Liberal Education* 99,2 (Spring 2013); Winkelmes et al., "A Teaching Intervention that Increases Underserved College Students' Success." *Peer Review* (Winter/Spring 2016).

3. DRAFT Checklist for Designing a Transparent Assignment

PURPOSE: Thank you for helping to test this DRAFT checklist. Please send your suggestions and feedback to mary-ann.winkelmes@unlv.edu

Skills

- Does your purpose statement specify content knowledge that students will gain from doing this assignment?
- Does your purpose statement link that particular knowledge to the larger context of:
 - recent topics of class sessions?
 - this part of the course?
 - the whole course?
 - the major?
 - the discipline?
 - your institution's main learning outcomes?
- Does your purpose statement indicate the relevance and/or usefulness of this knowledge to the students' lives:
 - beyond the course? beyond the major? beyond college?

Knowledge

- Does your purpose statement specify a skill or skill set that students will practice while doing the assignment?
- Does your purpose statement link that particular skill/skill set to examples/contexts where this skill was important in the context of:
 - recent class sessions?
 - this part of the course?
 - the whole course?
 - the major?
 - the discipline?
 - your institution's main learning outcomes?
- Does your statement indicate the relevance and/or usefulness of this knowledge to the students' lives:
 - beyond the course? beyond the major? beyond college
- Would this assignment benefit from segmenting it into several assignments, each one focused on a discrete set of skills that should be mastered to insure students' successful completion of the next assignment in the sequence?

TASK:

- Does your description of the task:
 - Identify the very first thing students should do when they begin working on the assignment?
 - The very next thing they should do?
 - The next, etc.
- Does your description of the task help students to avoid wasting their time on unnecessary steps, unproductive time expenditure?
- Does your description help students to focus their time efficiently on producing the highest quality work possible in the time given?
- Would students benefit from some practice exercises (in the form of a pre-task) in class to prepare them to perform the task outside of class on the graded assignment?

CRITERIA:

- Can students use the criteria while they are working on the assignment to determine whether they are completing the assignment efficiently and effectively?
- Do the criteria take the form of a checklist students can use to evaluate the quality of their efforts while they are working on the assignment?
- Does the checklist specify characteristics of high quality work for this assignment?
- Can you help students apply the checklist to evaluating some sample work in class, so they understand how each criterion would look in practice?
- With your guidance, can the students collaboratively annotate several examples of work to indicate where/how the work satisfies the criteria? (These annotated examples may then be shared as a reference for students to use while they work on their own assignments.)
- Would a rubric ([AAC&U VALUE examples](#)) be helpful to students for this assignment?
- Does the rubric provide an amount of information that helps students at this phase in their learning?
- Does the rubric provide an overwhelming or counterproductive amount of information for students at this phase in their learning?
- Did you provide examples of good work, annotated to identify exactly where and how this work satisfies your criteria?
- Can you provide students with examples in class so they and you can test out your criteria checklist or rubric to be sure students know how to apply the criteria to multiple examples of work, and eventually their own work?