



Designing Assignments for Deeper Student Engagement Handout

Companion Handout to Online Tutorial

"Assignments send powerful signals to students about what matters. Pat Hutchings, Senior Scholar, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, 2014.

1. Role of assignments

- Practice applying skills, content, and concepts learned
- Assess and provide feedback on student learning

Notes

2. Assignment purpose

Tell students why they are doing this assignment:

- To master content?
- To practice or build skills?
- For experiential learning?
- To lead to better performance on another assignment or assessment?

Example purpose: The philosophy paper is assigned to help you formulate a personal and professional philosophy of leisure that will serve as a guide throughout your career.

Notes

3. Assignment connections

We make assignment connections clear to students to help them:

- See how their work meets learning outcomes
- Improve knowledge and skills for their next assignments
- Build skills for graduation, workplace contribution, and a deeper understanding of important issues
- Demonstrate achievement

Notes

4. Assignment scaffolding

- Break assignment into manageable chunks with feedback as students proceed.
- Promotes progressive mastery and makes the steps in the learning and writing process more visible to students.

Example scaffolding for research essay:

Con	W	W	W	W	W
De A	W	Ad B y	D	E D	F

Notes

Assignment Checklists: Useful steps for launching and rethinking any assignment

"More transparency is beneficial for all students and particularly good for first-generation students, lower division courses, and high DFW courses." Nancy Quam-Wickham, The NILOA Assignment Design Process, spring, 2018 presentation, Cal State East Bay.

Faculty Assignment Planning Considerations for Assignment Design

What is the main purpose of the assignment?

How the assignment will provide a means for students to demonstrate the proficiencies you want them to develop?

What do you expect students to do?

What will students learn how to do or demonstrate that they can do?(skill)

What will students learn about?(content)

How will students understand how to perform to expectations on assignment?

Does the assignment include real-world application helping the work to take on personal and professional meaning?

What are the learning outcomes for students?

How will you prepare students to perform to expectations on the assignment?

Is the assignment respecting and reflecting the different ways students learn, different learning modalities, and different levels of preparation?

Does the assignment include a model assignment for students to see what success looks like

"Carefully crafted prompts are critical parts of the teaching-learning process because, regardless of what we state in a syllabi or say in class, the assime

