The Power of Assignments

Assessment methods ... have a greater influence on what students learn than any other single factor. This influence may well be of greater importance than the impact of teaching materials.

Diane Boud (1980) Developing Student Autonomy in Learning
Transparent Assignments & Rubric Development

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Associate Provost, Faculty Development
Founding Director, Center for Teaching and Learning
Colby College
Navigating Assignments

What norms or structures support the ways students navigate assignments when on campus? *Put your response in the chat area! Send your comments to all Panelists and Attendees.*
Assignments

Papers

Deadlines

Margins

Tense

Quotations

Analysis

Parts

Data

Revisions

Edit

Articles

Fonts

Citations

Explain

Legend

Draw

Feedback

Compare

Interviews

Situation

Tables

Analyze

Source

Compare

Diagram

Margins

Citations

Research

Highlights

Assignments

Visuals

Drafts

Analyze

Discussion

Compare

Reflect

Revision

Content

Analysis

Join

Error

Citations
Navigating Assignments Remotely

http://lestaylor.net/stop-walking-in-circles/
Why Transparent Assignment Design?

Barriers to Assignment Success

• Preparation
• Motivation
• Time Management
• Access to Resources

AACU Study - Peer Review (2016)

- 1800 students, 35 faculty
  - 425 first-gen
  - 402 non-white
  - 479 low-income
  - 297 multiracial

- Intervention - Transparent Assignment Design
- 2 Assignments
- Results
  - More confidence, sense of belonging, metacognitive awareness of learning
  - Improved academic success
  - Effect greater for first-gen, underrep students
Transparent Assignment Design Template

**Purpose**
- Skills practiced
- Knowledge gained

**Task**
- What students will do
- How to do it (steps to follow, avoid)

**Criteria for success**
- Checklist or rubric in advance so students can self-evaluate
- What excellence looks like (real world examples where students/faculty apply those criteria)
Transparent Assignment Elements

**Purpose**
- Measurable student learning outcomes for assignment are articulated.
- The assignment is authentic, practically useful, and/or relevant to students’ lives beyond college.
- The relevance of the assignment in the context of the course is clearly articulated.
- Learning outcomes are appropriately pitched to the course level, class size, position of the assignment within the course, and the characteristics of the students taking the class.

**Tasks**
- Task is aligned with the purpose
- The type(s) or genre(s) of the assignment is clear and defined.
- The sequence of the assignment seems logical and well-paced and the major steps within that sequence are described.
- Formatting requirements or restrictions, the weight or worth of the assignment, and/or any important due dates or deadlines are specified.
- Tips for successfully completing the task, beyond the assessment criteria are provided.

[https://tilthighered.com/](https://tilthighered.com/)
Criteria/Assessment

• The criteria by which the assignment will be assessed are indicated.
• The criteria specify characteristics that represent high-quality work.
• The assignment criteria are aligned with the assignment’s purpose and task(s).
• There are opportunities to practice and to receive formative feedback, according to the criteria, before final submission.
• The assignment refers students to multiple annotated examples of work that fulfill the criteria.

Additional Learning-Focused Qualities

• The tone of the assignment is positive, respectful, inviting, and directly addresses the student as a competent, engaged learner.
• The assignment is well-organized and easy to navigate.
• The assignment is designed to be inclusive of and accessible to all students.
• The assignment communicates high expectations and projects confidence that students can meet those high expectations through hard work.
• The assignment is engaging.

https://tilthighered.com/
DESIGNING A TRANSPARENT ASSIGNMENT

PURPOSE STATEMENT:

KNOWLEDGE:
- 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?

SKILLS:
- 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:
But I followed the directions...
Why Rubrics, Why Now?

- Clarifies your expectations
- Time saver
  - Feedback
  - Grading
  - Peers
  - Self
  - Instructor

![Rubric Table]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance attribute #1</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance descriptors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Scale Examples]

- advanced, intermediate high, intermediate, novice
- needs improvement, meets expectations, exceeds expectations
- exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable
- distinguished, proficient, intermediate, novice
- accomplished, average, developing, beginning
- mastery, partial mastery, progressing, emerging

Example: content knowledge, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, strength of argumentation, reflectivity, task completion, etc.)
Three Types of Rubrics

1. Holistic
2. Analytic
3. Single-Point
4. Scavenger Hunt

Cult of Pedagogy:
https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/holistic-analytic-single-point-rubrics/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>All food is perfectly cooked, presentation surpasses expectations, and recipient is kept exceptionally comfortable throughout the meal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Food is cooked correctly, the meal is presented in a clean and well-organized manner, and the recipient is kept comfortable throughout the meal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some food is cooked poorly, some aspects of presentation are sloppy or unclean, or the recipient is uncomfortable at times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Most of the food is cooked poorly, the presentation is sloppy or unclean, and the recipient is uncomfortable most of the time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Easy to develop</td>
<td>● Doesn’t provide targeted feedback to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Faster grading</td>
<td>● Often leads to questions from students about their grade (why did you give me a 3?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Better for final projects or exams that don’t require feedback</td>
<td>● Can be emotionally challenging for students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Breakfast in Bed: Analytic Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Gives students targeted feedback</td>
<td>● Takes a lot of time (and iterations) to develop a good one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Clarifies grades for students</td>
<td>● Takes a lot of time (and iterations to develop a good one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Supports peer and self grading of assignments/papers</td>
<td>● Helps instructors prioritize the important parts of assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Helps students produce better work</td>
<td>● Students may not read the entire rubric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Beginning 1</th>
<th>Developing 2</th>
<th>Accomplished 3</th>
<th>Exemplary 4</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most food is colder or warmer than it should be, is under- or over-seasoned, or is under- or overcooked.</td>
<td>Some food is colder or warmer than it should be, is under- or over-seasoned, or is under- or overcooked.</td>
<td>All food is at the correct temperature, adequately seasoned, and cooked to the eater’s preference.</td>
<td>All food is perfectly cooked and seasoned to the eater’s preference. Additional condiments are offered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Breakfast in Bed: Single-Point Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas that Need Work</td>
<td>Standards for This Performance</td>
<td>Evidence of Exceeding Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food:</td>
<td>All food is at the correct temperature, adequately seasoned, and cooked to the eater’s preference.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation:</td>
<td>Food is served on a clean tray, with napkin and silverware. Some decorative additions may be present.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PROS
- Contains far less text
- Takes less time to create
- Allows for students to exceed stated expectations
- Allows for grading flexibility

## CONS
- More writing for the instructor
- Still may lead to questions about grade
### Grading Rubric (100pts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Excellent (100%)</th>
<th>Promising (75%)</th>
<th>Developing (50%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content (40%)</td>
<td>Answer correctly reflects biology and research related to the BBQ.</td>
<td>Answer misrepresents some components of biology and research related to the BBQ.</td>
<td>Answer does not correctly reflect the biology and research related to the BBQ. (e.g., the answer is too simplistic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback and Integration (10%)</td>
<td>Answer integrates content and reflects feedback from IPAs, TPAs, BBQ posts and sources.</td>
<td>Answer integrates content and reflects feedback from IPAs, TPAs, BBQ posts and sources.</td>
<td>Answer does not integrate content and reflects feedback from IPAs, TPAs, BBQ posts and sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources (10%)</td>
<td>All content supported by links to sources – not databases – used to construct the BBQ answer.</td>
<td>Some content not supported by links to sources.</td>
<td>No links to sources or links to databases instead of sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer Format/Logistics (10%)</td>
<td>Aligns with assignment prompt/logistics.</td>
<td>Is missing some components of assignment prompt/logistics.</td>
<td>Does not align with the assignment prompt/logistics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability statement (30%)</td>
<td>Reliability statement clearly indicates reliability of cited sources with details on author, source and scientific peer-review.</td>
<td>Reliability statement misrepresents the reliability of cited sources OR is missing details on author, source and scientific peer-review.</td>
<td>Reliability statement misrepresents the reliability of cited sources AND is missing details on author, source and scientific peer-review.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Lessons Learned
- Align rubric with grades
- Ensure each cell contains actionable advice
- Teach students to use the rubric

#### Resources
- **Rubric Pack** - $4 - from the Cult of Pedagogy
Remote Rubrics
Rubrics and Learning Management Systems

- Most LMSs allow you to build an analytic rubric with a grading feature.
- Instructors can assign a score to each box of the rubric.
- Allow students to see your feedback.
- You can also provide other forms of feedback in addition to “scoring” the rubric.
Other Rubric Tools

- Rubric Makers - there are SOOO many
- Rubric Templates - also pretty easy to find - Cult of Pedagogy is my favorite
- Merlot - merlot.org - online repository of curated learning and support materials
- Colleagues
- CTL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biology 114 Lab Report Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Predictions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal Presentation of Data (4 pts)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual Presentation of Data/Table and Figures (8 pts)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** CTL**

- Clearly label axes with units.
- Scale and font large and easy to interpret.
- Meaning of symbols clearly indicated.
- Symbols facilitate interpretation.
- Detailed and properly located explanatory legends (below/above).
Getting the most out of your rubric

Build in opportunities for students to use the rubric to score sample assignments

Be prepared to make regular updates to your rubrics

It takes some time to get it right - hang in there.
Transparency Matters

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