

Checklist for Designing a Transparent Assignment

PURPOSE:

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:
 - 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 skill 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 multiple examples of what the criteria look like in real-world practice, to encourage students' creativity and reduce their incentive to copy any one example too closely?
- Did you discuss with students in class, allowing them to evaluate the real-world work examples, to be sure students know how to apply the criteria to multiple examples of work, and eventually their own work?