

CHECKLIST: DESIGNING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

PLANNING: PURPOSE

- What do I want the students to do? Why? Is it interesting and appropriate? Is it worth doing?
- What skills does this assignment ask students to try out, to practice or to develop? (Summarizing, defining, synthesizing, persuading, supporting positions, etc.) How does this assignment fit into my objectives for the course?
- How does the assignment relate to what comes before and after it in the course?
- Does this assignment assess what the students know or what they can do?
- What form will this assignment take? (essay, memo, research report, letter, executive summary, review, class journal, notes, argument)
- Does this task relate students' work in the course to other contexts (the real world, other academic settings) or only to my class or the textbook?
- Does the assignment rely on material presented in class or does it require specialized knowledge or research beyond the class materials?

PLANNING: AUDIENCE

- For whom are the students writing? How many audiences must students address?
- Have I made the audience(s) clear in the assignment itself?
- If I am the audience, do students know what they can assume about my knowledge and expectations?
- Are there reasons and ways to expand the audience beyond the teacher?
- Do students have enough information about the task to assume a role with respect to the audience?
- Do they understand the tone and form they should use and why?

TEACHING: STRATEGIC ISSUES

- When will students do the assignment? How much time in and out of class will students need?
- How do I want the students to do the assignment? Are they working together or alone?
- What information-gathering skills does this assignment ask students to develop or practice? (textbook reading, library research, interviewing, reflection, synthesis of class material, synthesis with outside resources)
- Have I given students enough information about how to gather and use sources?
- What form should their writing take? Have I provided examples/models?
- What is the process of writing I'm recommending/requiring? Will students have the opportunity to write drafts and get feedback from me or others?
- To what extent will I guide the students' work?
- What deadlines (or penalties) do I want to set for final papers or various stages of the assignment?
- Have I spent time in class presenting and explaining the assignment? What kinds of discussions/exercises can help students understand, begin, and complete the writing?

EVALUATING:

- What will I do with this assignment once I get students' writing?
- How many times will I read this assignment? Will I encourage/evaluate revision?
- What constitutes a successful response to this assignment? What's are the main characteristics I'm hoping to find? Have I developed criteria for evaluation that are consistent with purpose and audience?
- Can I provide examples/models? Have I tried the assignment myself?
- Have I discussed my evaluation criteria with students before they begin writing? As they are writing? Do they have these criteria in writing?

SOURCE: <http://www.fsb.muohio.edu/programs/howe-writing-initiative/assign>