**Checklist to Design a Transparent Assignment**

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This document is designed to help you create transparent assignments. For each section – Purpose, Task, Criteria for Success - there are guiding questions that will help develop assignments that clearly explain the work for even the novice student.

**I. INCLUDE THE PURPOSE.**

Make clear to students **WHY** they are working on the assignment. They are more likely to work hard and less likely to feel that they are doing “busy work”.

**Skills.** Specify a skill or skill set that students will gain from doing this assignment.

* Link the skill set to the larger context of:
  + SLOs for the [university core curriculum, major program, class]
  + Topics of class sessions
  + Formative skill-building building to the cumulative assessment
* Indicate the relevance/usefulness of this skill to the students' lives beyond the [course, major, college]

**Knowledge.** Specify content knowledge that students will practice while doing the assignment.

* Link the knowledge gained from this assignment to:
  + SLOs for the [university core curriculum, major program, class]
  + Recent topics of class sessions
  + or as formative knowledge-building building to the cumulative assessment
* Indicate the relevance/usefulness of this knowledge to the students beyond the [course, major, college]

**II. SPECIFY THE TASK.**

Tasks that we take for granted (e.g., write a review paper) may be completely novel for students. Help students understand **HOW** to do the assignment; they will feel confident in their ability to do the work and are less likely to give up in confusion. This saves them time *and* saves you time: you won’t have to explain your assignment multiple times.

**Task Description**:

* Identify the FIRST thing that a student should do when they begin working
* Guide students to what they should do next
* Warn students about how to avoid wasting time: identify
  + Unnecessary steps
  + Unproductive uses of their time

**Development of Task Skills/Knowledge**. Consider how students might benefit from practice exercises:

* Could they be low-stakes/ungraded?
* Could they be done in class?
* Does there need to be another graded assignment before this one to help students perform well on this task?

**III. ADD CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS.**

Tell students how they will be able to **SUCCEED**. This can be done through a paragraph of explanation or a set of rubrics. Students that understand the criteria that need to be met are more likely to meet them than those that are simply guessing what professors want.

**Clear Criteria**: Write criteria that students can use while they are working on the assignment to determine whether they are completing it efficiently and effectively.

* Create a checklist for students to use to evaluate their work as they work
* Specify characteristics of high-quality work on the checklist
* Consider an in-class/additional activity where students use the checklist to evaluate a sample of work

**Rubrics**: In many cases, a rubric is helpful to students as they can clearly see how the professor is going to use the criteria to grade the assignment

* Use an AAC&U VALUE rubric as a basis, or create your own
* Provide information that helps students at this phase of their learning
* Provide just the amount information that students need; don’t overload the rubric

**Examples of Excellence**. Provide examples of excellent work:

* Annotate the work to identify WHY and HOW the example satisfies the criteria
* Consider going over (or having students go over) an example to help them apply criteria/rubrics their work

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