

Assignment Self-Assessment

Assignments provide students with opportunities to apply what they are learning in class and impart useful information to instructors on how to improve their teaching practices. Creating effective and meaningful assignments takes careful planning and skill. Students complain about assignments for a variety of reasons such as when they struggle with course material and feel threatened by being graded, when they are not clear about the criteria used to judge their performance, when they do not understand the assignment's sense of purpose and view it as busy work, or when there are too many assignments in the class and they struggle to keep up. Below we provide a checklist informed by best practices in the literature on how to design effective assignments. See where you may improve.

Intentional design

	Yes	No
I start with desired learning outcomes when I design assignments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I design my assignments around the levels of knowledge (i.e., knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation) that I hope my students will achieve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I sequence course assignments so that my students can build skills incrementally.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I verify that my students have the requisite skills and content knowledge to successfully complete assignments, so that they don't become quickly frustrated and lose motivation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I try to design assignments that are personally meaningful, practical, or purposeful to life beyond Harvard so that my students are intrinsically motivated to learn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Communication of intent and purpose

	Yes	No
I clearly signal to students the purpose of assignments and how they are tied to learning objectives so that my students do not view assignments as busy work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I connect assignments to what I am doing in class so that my students see their relevance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I let my students know "the why behind their work" and how they will benefit from assignments, what skills they will learn and why it is important.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Communication of instructions

	Yes	No
I provide clear instructions about what I expect my students to do to accomplish the task (i.e., required length of assignment, intended audience, the level of detail that is required, length of response, style, format...).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I provide examples to clarify points.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I explain what resources my students need to complete the task.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I clarify how long assignments will take and when they are due so that my students can plan accordingly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I encourage my students to ask questions and/or attend office hours so that they can clarify their understanding about what is required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am clear (verbally and in writing) about my policies for collaboration and how it relates to academic integrity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Communication of grading criteria

	Yes	No
I clearly communicate the criteria on how my students' work will be judged.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I provide my students with copies of rubrics and/or sample work that demonstrate different levels of performance when applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am clear about how assignment grades will be weighted or counted towards my students' final grades in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Determining how many assignments for class and balancing workload

	Yes	No
I compare my course's workload with common practices of assigning workload in my department or with similar classes to help gauge how much work I should assign my students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I provide my students with enough time to complete assignments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I try to provide my students with ample opportunity to practice the skills that they are learning in class without assigning so much that they do not have time to keep up with new material or have adequate time to consolidate or process what they have just learned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When determining how long an assignment will take, I consider the background of my students and the complexity of work to ensure my students have enough time to complete it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I try to break down larger assignments into smaller parts (graded smaller assignments) and provide feedback along the way with sequenced due dates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am mindful of the academic calendar when assigning due dates (holidays, midterms, academic workloads in their courses, key campus events).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>