

Creating Assignment Handouts

Consider including these elements in your assignment handout (adapted from Bean ch. 6 and Harrison & Dinitz):

1. **Assignment name:** If you choose a general name (research paper, paper, essay), try to describe the type of writing more specifically. Also, think about the ways this assignment relates to ways of writing and/or thinking in your field.
2. **Task:** Present a discipline-related problem that prompts a thesis-driven paper. You could give students a problem and have them support a thesis stance of their choice, or ask them to formulate and support their own problem and thesis.
3. **Role or purpose:** Should students inform their audience, analyze or clarify something for them, persuade them, reflect on or explore something? Though you don't need to make it obvious, students should see a connection between the assignment and the course SLOs.
4. **Audience:** Help students visualize an audience, their reader's degree of skepticism, and their position of power (lesser knowledge/equal knowledge, etc.).
5. **Format or genre:** Is the piece an editorial, a proposal, a memo, an academic essay, a report? What types of sources should be used, and how should they be incorporated? What are the length and style requirements? This information helps students transfer their expectations from previous writing assignments. Also, can you provide examples of what you have in mind?
6. **Interactive components:** Include a schedule for completion of drafts, workshops, and Writing Center or writing fellow sessions. Consider also asking students to turn in their drafts along with the final project so you can reward them for following the recommended process.
7. **Evaluation criteria:** How will you grade the work? Rubrics can save you time and offer students criteria for success. See Bean p. 101 for an example.

Introduce the assignment in Class (adapted from Bean ch. 6)

- Discuss the assignment with the students during class, allowing time for questions.
- Distribute examples of strong and weak essays, and talk about how you would grade them.
- Encourage students to seek feedback from you and their peers throughout the process.

The Writing Assignment as a Process (adapted from Bean ch. 15)

- Set aside class time early in the process to clarify expectations and brainstorm. Use guided small-group discussions to stimulate ideas for development.
- Ask to see a thesis question, research proposal, annotated bibliography, or literature review. Previewing students' projects gives you a chance to guide their thinking early on and draw out ideas.
- Have students meet with a writing consultant or writing fellow at least once during the process. Offer extra credit for sessions held early in the process.
- Encourage them to collaborate with each other through productive in-class peer review sessions or out-of-class electronic peer reviews.

References

- Bean, J.C. (2011). *Engaging ideas: A professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom* (2nd ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Harrington, S. & Dinitz, S. (2012, June). *Developing a writing fellows program in a time of shrinking budgets and expanding class sizes*. Presentation given at the International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference, Savannah, GA.

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