



Guidelines for Writing Assignments/Papers

Students will learn course content and successful writing skills when assigned to write a paper for a course. As a faculty member, following some best practice tips will result in students writing papers more responsive to the learning and mechanics desired. Having student papers responsive to assignment guidelines may result in papers that are easier to grade. Spending time creating explicit guidelines directly related to the student learning outcomes of the course to be demonstrated in the writing assignment increases student learning and decreases faculty time spent grading and providing feedback. Students need to clearly understand the assignment and be provided with explicit criteria for evaluation such as a rubric.

Six Tips for Creating Writing Assignments (Papers)

Purpose

Explain the purpose of the writing assignment and tell students what learning outcomes are achieved with completion of the writing assignment.

Format

The format of a writing assignment must fit the purpose of the assignment. Consider a variety of formats including research papers, abstracts, position papers, lab report, essay papers, creative writing papers and more. Make sure the students are aware of the audience for the writing assignment.

Guidance

Students need explicit written instructions (assignment guidelines). Whenever possible, provide writing samples (model papers) to clarify assignment expectations. Clear, explicit instructions typically result in writing assignments responsive to your intentions in assigning a paper.

Organization

Make sure due dates and assignment timelines are included on the syllabus as well as assignment guidelines. If the writing assignment is complex (research paper) consider breaking the assignment down into several steps. Offer students a few minutes of class time to discuss the assignment. In an online course, you may devote a discussion board to questions about the assignment.

Revision

Allowing students or peer groups to work together on rough drafts may improve the overall quality of papers received for grading. Students may critique each others' papers before the due date to assess format, organization or other mechanics of the written assignment. Provide students with a rubric or checklist to review their own work and peer work.

Grading/Evaluation

Provide a rubric or other explicit checklist or samples explaining what make a strong, average or weak writing assignment. Carefully consider the portion of the grade assessing content and the percentage that measures writing skills.

Stockton's [Center for Learning Design](#) has staff available to assist any faculty member or program with designing effective assignments for face-to-face, hybrid or fully online courses. If you want assistance from the Center for Learning Design, please email cld@stockton.edu or make an [appointment](#).