

# Assignment Design Template:

## Equity-Minded and Culturally Responsive Assignment Design Guide

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Influenced by:

[NILOA Assignment Library](#)

Ewell's "Assignment Template" (2013)

Equity Minded/Culturally Responsive Design [Equity Review Tool](#) (v1, April 2022)

[Embedding Equity into Assessment praxis](#), Montenegro, E &, Jankowski. (N42 2020)

Bristol Community College AA Program Review Year 2 Resources

[Catalyzing assignment design activity on your campus](#) (Hutchings, P., Jankowski, N. A., & Ewell, P. T. (2014). Catalyzing assignment design activity on your campus: Lessons from NILOA's assignment library initiative. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).

By following this template, educators can design assignments that not only promote academic excellence but also foster an inclusive learning environment where all students, regardless of their background or their educational and personal experiences, can thrive and contribute meaningfully. Overarching questions:

What is the central task/The learning expected?

How should the required task be demonstrated?

To what degree should the response to the learning be?

The Goal: Keep students from going astray by ensuring the assignment "unavoidably elicits a demonstration" (Hutchings, P., Jankowski, N. A., & Ewell, P. T. NILOA, 2014)

### Step #1 (Pre-Assignment Design)

#### Reflection

- Why do assignments matter?
- What makes an assignment effective?
- Preferred method of assignment vs ideal method of assignment-What do students gain/what do they lose?
- "Good Student Work" Sample student work- discuss what they appreciate, value, and find useful about the students' work and what they see as areas of needed improvement or places for growth. (Develop key points)

#### Understanding the Student

- Identifying Cultural Proficiency by acknowledging and understanding the diverse cultural backgrounds of your students.

- Building Equity Analysis by identifying any potential barriers that different student groups might face in completing the assignment.
- Connecting assignment content and students' own experiences and identities.
- Discuss: "What and how are our students learning and in what ways are they engaging in that learning?"

## Step #2 (Pre-Assignment Design)

### Learning Outcomes

If the Outcomes have not been established (Program, Course, GenEd Skills), a first step would be to clearly define the learning outcomes for the assignment being designed. These statements define what students will know or be able to do as a result of curriculum learning experiences specific to GenEd competency/degree programs/certificates/career pathways. ([Learning Assessment Research Consortium-LARC](#)). You may reference [Year One of the Program Review process](#) to learn more about building measurable Learning outcomes. If you are designing a signature assignment for a GenEd competency, please use the current outcomes as outlined in the [Course Catalog](#).

### Tools to Assist - Curriculum Mapping

Consider the Programs Curriculum Map as a tool to assist in assignment design. The programs curriculum map provides an overview of where and how proficiencies are expected, taught, and assessed. If a course indicates "demonstration" (level of learning) of a PLO, then the program faculty should consider developing assignments that demonstrate learning for those particular skills. The programs curriculum map can also be a place to determine where a signature assignment (for a General Education competency) would be most appropriate. "It can be used to identify gaps, places where an assignment needs to be re-examined, revised, or sometimes created de novo, or where scaffolding across assignments or courses is needed." (Hutchings, P., Jankowski, N. A., & Ewell, P. T. (NILOA 2014).

### Tools to Assist – Course Mapping

Consider a Course alignment exercise prior to assist in assignment design. A course alignment establishes the relationship between the course outcomes (or the General education Outcomes designated for a specific course), the spaces created for concept learning, and the existing assignments aligned with the outcome. Outcome → Space for Learning → Assignment to demonstrate learning → Assessment tool. In many cases, one assignment may align with multiple outcomes. The last step would be to identify the assessment tool (Rubric).

The goal: take existing assignments designed to address specific general education skills or course outcomes and modify assignments to be in fuller alignment. OR, start from scratch!

### Step #3 (Assignment Design)

#### Consider Equity Minded & Culturally Responsive Practices in Assignment Design

Consider assignments that align with [EM&CR Practices \(Year Two Program Review\)](#). Embed students' funds of knowledge and experience into the assignment. Consider real-world connections (Relate the assignment to real-world discipline applications relevant to diverse cultures and communities) and incorporate local examples (Include examples from various cultures and communities to make the content relatable). Incorporate social issues and problems to help students render their learning more meaningful while gaining tools to critically navigate the world around them. [Dimensions for Culturally Responsive Learning Design](#) Blogs @Oregon State University, jaramlin, 2012 talks about design using a cultural responsive and universal design practice. They state:

*"For students whose first language is other than English in particular, it is important to be aware that these students may come from different cultures and social groups, and thus, visual representations may have positive or negative consequences to their success in the course. Visuals should be carefully chosen because the variety of images, colors, and symbols may affect the message students receive in the class. When using images from pop culture, it is helpful to add context to give more clarity to the instructional purpose. The visual design also relates to the readability of the content and how it is presented and structured. Asking a colleague or friend to read the instructions and descriptions of assignments can help clarify expectations and requirements for students. Bear in mind that what is clear to one is not always clear to others, especially when using complex sentences and terminology of a discipline."*

Choose wisely!

Recognize the "preference bias" in terms of assignment design. In other words, equitable assessment should work to ensure that learning outcomes, and how we assess those outcomes, are done in ways which do not privilege certain students over others...([Embedding Equity into Assessment praxis, Montenegro. E &, Jankowski. N. 2020](#)).

*"...Allow students to see themselves represented in the materials. Create activities and assignments that help students explore the concepts in connection to their own backgrounds and communities (e.g., linguistic, cultural) and experiences, and that allow students to move from low to high cognitive tasks (e.g., staged projects) ...It involves explicit acknowledgement of the value of the different perspectives and modes of knowledge."* ([Blogs @Oregon State University, jaramlin, 2012](#))

Let's Get Started!

#### A. Connect

- a. A course or GenEd outcome/skill with the rubric's level of learning. Where do you want students to land on the rubric (Introduced, Practiced, demonstrated, distinguished)? 80% (4/5 or 5/6) GenEd skills must be introduced/practiced/demonstrated

- b. Program Level Learning Outcomes. Identify course/courses where students will demonstrate the PLO. Use the program curriculum map to identify course/s that align with PLO demonstration level.
- B. Brainstorm mini assignments for each outcome (given the agreed upon level of learning to be demonstrated for that skill).
- C. Brainstorm how mini assignments connect to form one assignment.
- D. Incorporate the student voice. Do they feel they can demonstrate the outcomes/skills given the assignment? Were there barriers?

Learning Outcome	Rubric Level/Skill	Mini – Assignment	Culturally Responsive	One Assignment	Incorporate Student Voice
Identify and summarize a problem or issue comprehensively, delivering relevant information needed for understanding.	(Demonstrate) Issue/ problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions	Student will provide a 10-minute oral presentation on an existing social problem (impacting the field of study) and relate it to one's own social identities. Students will need to include 1. the stated issue/problem, 2. Describe the social problem in its entirety.	Students will be given an option to record their presentation, provide it in written format with an activity to lead (group discussion) or execute 10-minute live oral presentation	Students will describe a social problem (within their industry) that exists as a result of stereotyping and discrimination of social identities.	Ask student if they believe they can demonstrate their learning given the assignment
Demonstrate how differences in race, gender, religion, ethnicity, social class, disability, sexual orientation, and linguistic background contribute to the pervasive realities of stereotyping and discrimination.	(Demonstrate) Recognizes how differences in race, gender, religion, ethnicity, social class, disability, sexual orientation, and linguistic background contribute to the pervasive realities of stereotyping and discrimination	Student will take the Unconscious Bias Test, watch the Doll test video, Blue eyes/Brown eyes, and Race & Privilege Social Experiment. In a written reflection student will articulate how differences (in social identities) contribute to stereotyping and discrimination. Students will provide an example they have experienced (themselves or as a bystander)	Students will be given a list of different modes of learning. Students will choose the ways in which they articulate their learning.		Ask students if there were existing barriers that challenged their learning  Encourage students to reflect on their learning experiences, including cultural insights gained during the assignment.

#### Step #4 (Assignment Design)

##### Clear and Accessible Instructions

- *Language Clarity:* Ensure assignment instructions are clear, concise, and accessible to all students, regardless of language proficiency.
- *Multimodal Instructions:* Provide instructions in multiple formats (text, audio, video) to accommodate different learning styles.

##### Flexible Assignment Strategies

- *Alternative Formats:* Allow for diverse submission formats such as presentations, videos, or written reports to cater to different strengths and preferences.
- *Differentiated Rubrics:* (If one isn't provided) Use rubrics that consider varied learning styles and abilities, providing specific criteria for assessment.
- *Diverse Reading Materials:* Include readings and resources authored by scholars from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

### Continuous Improvement

- *Feedback Collection:* Gather feedback from students about their experiences with the assignment
- *Iterative Design:* Use feedback to iteratively improve future assignments, ensuring a continuous commitment to equity-minded practices.