

COMP CO710: Assignment 1 Guide

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The Purpose of the Assignment

This assignment has multiple purposes:

1. To evaluate the students' achievement of basic learning outcomes related to HTML and CSS.
2. To build a productive working relationship among teachers and students.
3. To help students connect to the course material and begin to view what they are learning as a tool to tell their stories to the world.
4. To incorporate the principle of **reciprocity** as an important aspect of Indigenous ways of knowing.

Student Understanding

Please highlight the opening paragraph in the handout when you present it. This paragraph is inspired by common practices in schools that operate in ESL communities. When a handout goes home to the parents in a school with lots of ESL learners and parents, it often starts with a phrase like, "this is an important document", to cue them to make sure they understand it properly.

Students at the STEAM academy might not be ESL learners exactly, but those who attended school in Six Nations may not have had much practice reading and writing in English as those schools prioritize education in Indigenous languages. Please highlight the importance of the handout and do your best to help the students understand all the requirements. The STEAM academy has Educational Assistants that should be able to help with this as well.

We have also tried to write the assignment using direct language that avoids long words and complicated syntax where simpler words and syntax will do.

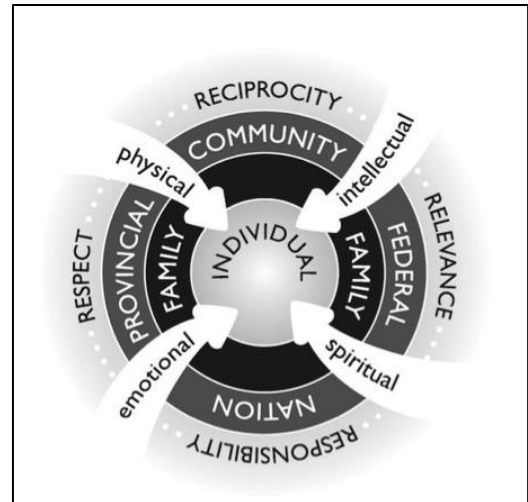
Finally, all students should be encouraged to read the handout carefully and refer to it frequently. You can help encourage that as well, being mindful of written English competency when you do.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is often cited as one of the pillars of an Indigenous framework for teaching and learning. Indigenous communities across the continent differ from one another in many ways, but reciprocity is a common element that is found in many contexts.

Reciprocity can have different meanings in different contexts, but the basic idea is that teaching and learning involves an **exchange of knowledge** – it is not just a one-way transfer from teacher to student. This may not be how we are used to thinking about teaching, but it's not hard to think of ways in which teachers continue to learn from their students as they teach them, even if this exchange is not acknowledged or made explicit.

The students in your class might not know the word “reciprocity” and might not have thought much about their approach to teaching and learning, but chances are they have been exposed culturally to the underlying idea of reciprocity in learning. We hope that by formalizing it in this assignment, by openly encouraging the students to think of themselves as having teaching of their own to offer, we might be able to make the class seem more relevant, accessible, or approachable to all students, Indigenous or otherwise.



<https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfrontlineworkers/chapter/indigenous-ways-of-knowing->

The Reflections

The student and teacher reflections are an important way of formalizing this reciprocity. Think of the final student and teacher reflections as a handshake at the end of the learning process in which each thanks the other for the experience and the knowledge gained, and perhaps offers some insights. You can also think of the student reflections as another source of learning about your teaching practice and your students.

Reflection as a Regular, In-class Practice

Students might find it difficult to know what to say in a reflection or might not feel safe to share too much. For this reason, we encourage both teachers (high school and college) to engage in regular reflections with the students throughout the first unit, long before the final assignment is turned in. These should be short, written reflections on the day or week. They should be finished in class and handed in (on the LMS or by hand if the student prefers to write them out longhand).

In-class Teacher Reflections

When the students are writing, the teachers should also consider writing their own short reflections to share with the students, further reinforcing the principle of **reciprocity**. These teacher reflections can be presented as a model to help the students understand what their reflections might look like, and also as evidence that the teachers themselves are also learning. Try not to make your reflections too sophisticated – keep them at the level you would expect from the students.

Debriefing the In-class Reflections

If possible, debrief should start immediately. As soon as the reflection time is over, invite the students to share some of the things they thought about while reflecting. Don't pressure them. And there is no need to respond to anything they offer, unless the students want you to. Just take it in and thank them for sharing. Then the teachers could share their own thoughts as well.

After class, you could read student reflections and give encouraging written feedback – ask questions that might encourage them to write more or explain their feelings more on the next one. And share your own written reflection publicly on the LMS so that the students can read them as well.

Sample Questions for Student Reflection

- What is the most important thing you learned today/this week?
- What did you do to help others in the classroom today/this week?
- How do you think what you learned today/this week might be useful to you?
- What difficulties did you encounter today/this week?
- What help do you need to make sure you learn as much as possible?
- What help or advice can you offer the teachers or students to advance teaching and learning in the classroom?
- How are you feeling about your learning this week? Are you pleased, hopeful, anxious, unhappy? Why do you think you feel this way?

Sample Questions for Teacher Reflection

- What is the most important thing you learned today/this week?
- What did you do to help your students and colleagues today/this week?
- What difficulties did you encounter this week?
- What help do you need to make sure student learning is as effective as possible?
- What advice can you offer the students to help them learn?
- How are you feeling about your teaching this week? Are you pleased, hopeful, anxious, unhappy? Why do you think you feel this way?

Scaffolding the Assignment

It's a good idea to provide scaffolding and examples for this first assignment. Taking it piece by piece will make it seem more tractable to the students, will encourage them to get started early, and provides opportunities for formative assessment and further demonstrations of **reciprocity**.

Early Introduction

Instead of introducing this assignment at the very end of the unit, consider introducing it as soon as they have some HTML skills. You can go over the whole thing, highlighting that they don't have all the skills yet, but that doesn't mean they can't start with what they have. Then you can explicitly refer back to the assignment handout as new skills are taught to make sure they understand how it relates to the assignment and how it will help them push their portfolio forward.

Introducing the assignment early will give the students something to work on in class throughout the unit, and it will work as a framing device to help them see how each new thing they learn is relevant.

Do the Assignment with Them

Early introduction also gives you time to begin developing your own profile alongside them. If you can do this, it will begin to give them an idea of what the finished product will look like, and it will also further encourage **reciprocity** as you share some details about yourself in the process of making your own portfolio.

Formative Assessment Opportunities

Giving the students time to work on the assignment early will also allow you to look at what they are doing, and give advice and feedback before they hand it in. It will also help identify topics that need to be reviewed and give you a chance to encourage students who are doing well to do some of their own research and reach ahead to add more sophisticated HTML and CSS features.

Sharing the Load

This all might seem like work above and beyond the contract. But remember, it's not just you in the classroom. There's a high school teacher and often an educational assistant in the room that know the students well and can be a source of support. Please do whatever you can to involve the other adults in the room in your planning, your in-class activities, and even the grading if they are willing. Plan to enlist their support for what you're doing and expect to be able to give back by supporting what they are doing in turn.

Reciprocity applies here as well!

Final Word: Trust and Respect

Even if you choose not to take all the advice and suggestions offered here, we encourage you to think of the students first and keep them in the forefront of your mind when planning lessons, grading, and interacting with them in the classroom.

If you have experience teaching on a regular college campus, please keep in mind that these students are different from regular college students.

- Your students are only a few years younger than regular college students, but those years will see a lot of critical social, emotional, and intellectual development. They are not adults yet. This doesn't mean we should lower our expectations, just that we should be understanding, respectful of their development, and try to view any transgressions or problematic behavior through a supportive lens as much as possible.
- Many of your students may also bring with them a mistrust of the education system, stemming from their own schooling and/or from the intergenerational trauma suffered by Indigenous people at the hands of the education system in the past. Intergenerational trauma can mean that many people in their support network are distrustful of the education system or don't view formal education as something that is important or right for their kids. Any mistrust you experience must be treated respectfully, as it is supported by historical evidence and often by a students' own experiences. The best approach is to show by example on a day-to-day basis that at least in *this* classroom, the students are going to be respected and supported and are going to learn useful things.
- Some of your students may speak English well but may not have had much practice reading or writing it, especially if they come from an educational background that prioritized Indigenous language education. Try to keep written instructions short, to the point, and easy to read. And be available on assignments and tests to make sure the students understand what is being asked of

them. If students are having a hard time putting things into words for their portfolio, encourage them to get help from yourself, other adults, or even writing tools and generative AI. It's not an English writing assignment, so however they generate the text is fair game.

Finally, however you conduct yourself in the classroom, always keep in mind that all students learn better when they feel safe and respected, both for who they are and for what they bring to the table.

Thanks for reading this guide! Please feel free to send us any critical feedback on any aspect of the course.