



## Resources for Developing Effective Assignments

The *Degree Qualifications Profile* encourages faculty members to employ approaches to assessment that are integral to the teaching and learning process rather than added on. The most natural of such approaches are good course assignments, clearly aligned with *DQP* proficiencies and other outcomes valued by the campus. This document points to resources that can support the development of effective assignments.

An excellent starting point is the NILOA Occasional Paper by Peter Ewell, an author of the *DQP* and a long-standing national authority on assessment:

Ewell, P. (2013, January). [\*The Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile \(DQP\): Implications for assessment\*](#). (Occasional Paper No.16). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).

Building on Ewell's paper is a 2014 NILOA report (Hutchings, Jankowski, and Ewell), [\*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).

The Association of American Colleges & Universities has developed a number of resources on the importance of assignments and on student work as a source of evidence for improvement.

- Our Students' Best Work: A Framework for Accountability Worthy of Our Mission: <https://www.aacu.org/about/statements/2008/assessment>
- The LEAP Campus Toolkit (see especially the section on Quality Collaboratives) <http://leap.aacu.org/toolkit/>
- Peer Review, Fall 2013—issue on the assessment of quantitative reasoning: <http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/pr-fa13>



- [AAC&U News – Signature Assignments Become a Signature Practice at Salt Lake Community College](#)

The Multi-State Collaborative initiative (with leadership from AAC&U and SHEEO) offers resources on designing assignments:

- Webinars - <http://www.sheeo.org/node/754>  
See especially the webinar on assignment design by Susan Albertine, AAC&U, and Jim Gubbins, Salem State University.
- Sampling Protocols and Assignment Design Parameters - <http://www.sheeo.org/node/774>  
See especially the YouTube presentations by Bonnie Orcutt and Becky Shearman on the process of assignment design.

\*\*\*\*\*

University libraries routinely post guides to the development of effective *research* assignments. Because the *DQP* emphasizes active, applied learning, **much of the advice these guides provide can be applied to assignments in general.**

Here are sites emphasizing research assignments:

- Berkeley - <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/assignments.html>
- Pace - <http://www.pace.edu/library/library-services/instructional-services/creating-effective-research-assignments>
- University of Maryland - <http://www.lib.umd.edu/ues/guides/assignment>
- University of Washington - <http://www.lib.washington.edu/help/guides/design.html>
- University of Texas - <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/faculty/creatassignment.html>
- University of Illinois - <http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/instructors/assignments.html>

Some sites go beyond research assignments to focus more broadly on other kinds of assignments, especially those that entail writing. Among the most helpful may be the following:



Lumina  
FOUNDATION

National Institute for  
Learning Outcomes Assessment  
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent



- University of Texas at El Paso - <https://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=65817>
- University of New Hampshire - <http://www.unh.edu/teaching-excellence/resources/Assignments.htm>
- University of Alaska Southeast - <http://www.ketch.alaska.edu/library/services/effective-assignments.html>

A number of campuses and organizations have posted examples of assignments:

- Brandeis University - <http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writing-intensive/sample-assignments.html>
- Washington Center at The Evergreen State College - assignments focused on integrative learning: <http://evergreen.edu/washingtoncenter/intlearning/rcrassignments.html>
- Gustavus Adolphus, Suggestions for Assignments <https://gustavus.edu/library/IMLS/assignmentsuggestions.html>
- Folger Shakespeare Library—"Teaching Modules" includes activities that can serve as assignments <http://www.folger.edu/teaching-modules>

Finally, these books, articles, websites, and presentations may prove helpful:

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., Norman, M. K. (2010). *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bean, J. C. (1996). *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Blumberg, P. (2014) *Assessing and Improving Your Teaching: Strategies and Rubrics for Faculty Growth and Student Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



- Boice, R. (1996). *First-Order Principles for College Teachers: Ten Basic Ways to Improve the Teaching Process*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Diamond, R. M. (2008). *Designing and Assessing Courses and Curricula: A Practical Guide*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Eble, K. E. (1988). *The Craft of Teaching: A Guide to Mastering the Professor's Art*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fink, D. L. (2003). *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Grunert, J. (1997). *The Course Syllabus: A Learning-Centered Approach*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Hanstedt, P. (2012). *General Education Essentials: A Guide for College Faculty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lee, V. S., Ed. (2004). *Teaching and Learning Through Inquiry: A Guidebook for Institutions and Instructors*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publications.
- Melzer, D. (2014). *Assignments Across the Curriculum: A National Study of College Writing*. Boulder, CO: Utah State University Press.
- Meyers, C. & Jones, T. B. (1993). *Promoting Active Learning: Strategies for the College Classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nowacek, R. (2011). *Agents of Integration: Understanding Transfer as a Rhetorical Act*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Parini, J. (2005). *The Art of Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Stanley, C. A. & Porter, M. E. (2002). *Engaging Large Classes: Strategies and Techniques for College Faculty*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Soliday, M. (2011). *Everyday Genres: Writing Assignments across the Disciplines*. CCCC Studies in Writing and Rhetoric. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.



Lumina<sup>™</sup>  
FOUNDATION

National Institute for  
Learning Outcomes Assessment  
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent



Tagg, J. (2003). *The Learning Paradigm College*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company.

Tewksbury, B. (2008). *Achieving Course Goals by Creating Effective Assignments and Activities* (PowerPoint slides). Retrieved from:  
<http://www.sencer.net/Symposia/pdfs/SSI2008/EffectiveAssignmentsPlenary.pdf>

Winkelmes, M. (2008). Building Assignments that Teach. *The Journal of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education*, 19(8),

If you have suggestions or additional resources for making this list more useful, please contact Natasha Jankowski at [njankow2@illinois.edu](mailto:njankow2@illinois.edu).



Lumina<sup>™</sup>  
FOUNDATION

National Institute for  
Learning Outcomes Assessment  
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent