



## Use the Transparent Assignment Template

When students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and why they are being asked to complete it, as well as how it is contributing to their success in your course and their future goals, they experience increased motivation (Winkelmes, 2013). One way of ensuring that your course assignments include these motivational elements is by using the transparent assignment template designed by Mary-Ann Winkelmes in 2013.

The use of the transparent assignment template has also been shown to reduce equity gaps as increased transparency builds students' academic confidence, sense of belonging, and mastery of the skills that employers value most (Winkelmes et al., 2016). In addition to the benefits provided to students, faculty have shared that using the transparent assignment template reduced the amount of time spent grading as well as the number of questions and emails from students trying to complete assignments.

The transparent assignment template increases transparency for students by clearly communicating the assignment's purpose, a clear description of the task, and the criteria that will be used for grading. The table below (adapted from TILT Higher Ed, n.d.) provides descriptions of each of the elements of transparent assignment design. For examples of transparent assignments, please visit: [TILT Higher Ed](#).

<b>Purpose</b>	Describe why students are completing this assignment and what knowledge and skills they will gain from the task. Explain how this knowledge and skill set will benefit them in their future courses, lives, and careers.
<b>Task</b>	Provide a detailed description of what students must do to complete the assignment and how to do it. If your assignment has multiple tasks that must be done in order, it can be helpful to list these as steps.  It may also be helpful to provide information on what resources students might need to complete the tasks. You may include links to specific resources your students might find useful or that you expect your students to reference or use.
<b>Criteria</b>	Explain to students in detail what it will look like to successfully complete this assignment. This can be accomplished by providing annotated examples of completed assignments and a checklist or rubric that describes the grading expectations in clear language that students will understand.

### Preparing Students to Use a Transparent Assignment

You can help ensure that your students understand the purpose and requirements of your transparent assignment by providing a live or video explanation of the assignment followed by an opportunity for students to ask questions or get clarification. Show the actual assignment in the video as you share it with your students. Use clear, jargon-free language to explain:

- How the assignment will help students meet course outcomes and/or build their skills in the discipline
- How the knowledge and skills learned may be helpful in future coursework or in meeting their career and/or personal goals
- The specific steps the assignment requires and how to complete those steps, including useful resources
- How you will evaluate the assignment, including examples of assignments that meet the criteria
- How students can use the checklist or rubric to double-check their work before submitting it



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- Where and when to submit the assignment and in what format

To further ensure that students have understood the expectations and process for the assignment, provide one or more of the following opportunities:

- Provide a discussion forum in the online course environment immediately following the video for students to ask questions, get clarification, or let you know that they understand
- Hold virtual or face-to-face student hours to go over the assignment and answer questions, making sure to record the meeting for students who were unable to attend

## Resources

For more resources and examples for TILT assignments, please see the following.

TILT Higher Ed. (n.d.). *TILT Higher Ed examples and resources*. <https://tilthighered.com/tiltexamplesandresources>

Washington State University. (n.d.). *Transparent assessment design*. Office of Assessment for Curricular Effectiveness. <https://ace.wsu.edu/assignment-design/transparent-assignment-design/>

## Sources

Winkelmes, M.-A. (2013). Transparency in learning and teaching. *NEA Higher Education Advocate*, 30(1), 6–9.

Winkelmes, M.-A., Bernacki, M., Butler, J., Zochowski, M., Golanics, J., & Harriss Weavil, K. (2016). A teaching intervention that increases underserved college students' success. *Peer Review*, 18(1/2), 31–36.