Research Assignments: Questions to Consider

The Assignment

☐ Is it clear what the goals of the assignment are?
  - What will students learn as a result of completing this assignment?
  - What are the information literacy student learning outcomes?
  - What are the writing or presentation outcomes?
  - What are the discipline-specific outcomes?
  - Are these goals clear to students?

☐ What resources will students need to be able to successfully complete this assignment?
  - Does the library have these resources? Are they freely and easily available elsewhere?
  - Is there a link to the library (or other needed resources)?
  - Is there a link to any related student services (peer tutoring, technology help desk, etc.)?

☐ Does this assignment provide space for metacognition?
  - Does this model a process students can repeat in the future? Is that clear to students?
  - Is there space for students to reflect on what they are doing, which strategies are working and which aren’t?

☐ When is the assignment due?
  - Does this provide enough time for students to be successful?
  - Does it provide time for you to give feedback to students, and for students to revise and/or integrate that feedback into their next piece of work?

☐ Is it clear what the criteria for success are?
  - Do you have grading criteria or a rubric to help you score student work?
  - Is there a grading rubric available for students, or is grading criteria outlined in the assignment?

☐ Are you able to provide a model of successful student work for this assignment?
  - Might you ask past students if you can use their work as a sample, or can you create your own?
  - How will students access the sample(s)? Hand out in class, provide in Moodle, etc.?

The Curriculum

☐ How does this assignment connect with the rest of course content?
  - Is it clear to students how these information literacy skills connect to continued study and/or real life?

☐ What will students need to learn to successfully complete this assignment?
  - What do they already know? Can you assume, or do you need to find out?
  - Which information literacy skills do you need to teach, in addition to your course content?
  - What can a librarian help teach?

☐ How will you teach information literacy skills?
  - What needs to be done during class time (for face-to-face classes)?
  - What can be done outside of class, as homework?
  - What supports does the library already have available (i.e. Moodle plug-ins, videos, handouts, etc.)?
  - If you want a librarian to teach, where does that fit in the course schedule?

☐ Is there room in your curriculum to do this well?
  - If not, what needs to change? Course content, the research assignment, or both?
Research Assignments: Check Yourself!

_____ My recommended sources are available at my college library (online or in-person).

_____ My recommended sources are appropriate for the students’ level (reading ability, knowledge of subject matter, and research skills should be considered).

_____ My recommended resources are the most up-to-date at my college library.

_____ The research terminology I use is clear and does not create ambiguity (e.g. handouts state that students cannot use the Internet yet students must locate articles in the library’s online subscription databases).

_____ Restrictions are not overly limiting (too many restrictions at once such as publication date, word counts, material type can make research nearly impossible for students).

_____ I am reasonable about the use of print sources versus online sources (sometimes, the most recent information is no longer available in print. For example, many government publications are now only available electronically).

_____ I permit my students to make changes to their topics based on the reality of their research experience.

_____ I provide enough technical “how to” instructions for researching, using, creating and evaluating digital sources such as blogs, Wikipedia, or streaming videos.

_____ I have confirmed that published research does exist to support my research assignment (or have collaborated with the librarian for assistance in this area).

_____ I do not have my students all research the exact same topic to ensure that the library collections offer enough resources.

_____ I have provided deadlines that allow students sufficient time for initial exploration, full-blown research, creation of drafts, and final production.

_____ I have provided exemplary models for the research projects so students understand instructor expectations.

Need more help, or want to run things by a librarian? We’d love to hear from you!
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