



Designing successful research assignments: strategies for success

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Think, pair, share

What is one research assignment you've assigned that you felt worked well and why?

Think, pair, share

What is one research assignment that has been challenging or ineffective for you students? Identify some possible pitfalls that the students may have encountered.

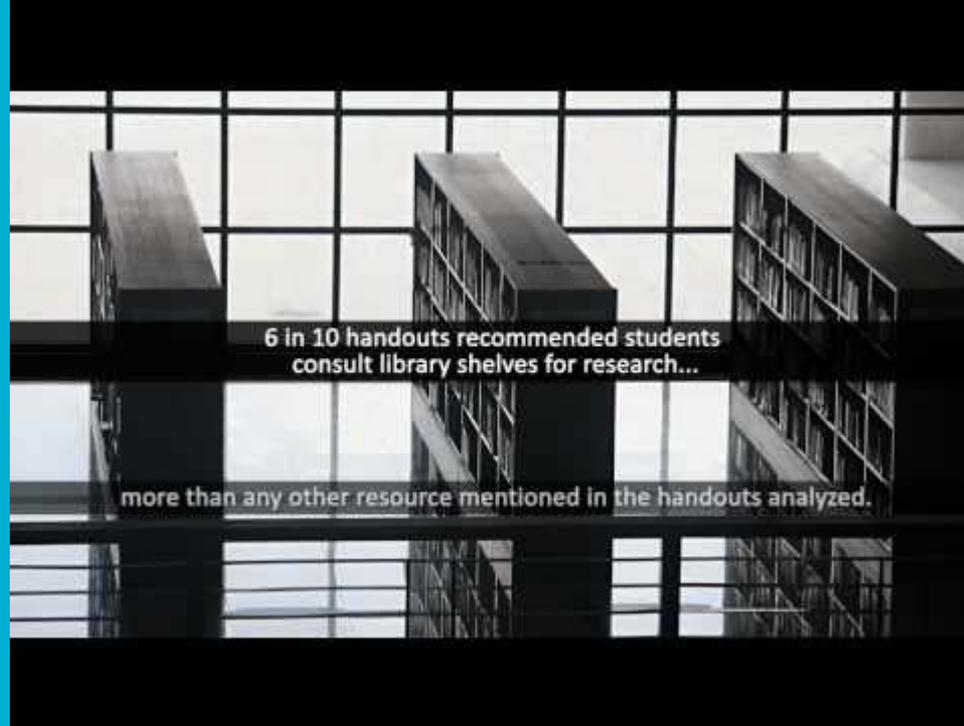
Tips

- Address Learning Goals Related to the Research Process
- Be Clear about Your Expectations and Criteria for Assessment
- Scaffolding your Assignment Brings Focus to the Research Process
- Devote Class Time to Discussion of the Assignment in Progress
- Test Your Assignment
- Collaborate with Your Librarians
- Practice Inclusive Classroom Principles in Your Assignment Design

Address Learning Goals Related to the Process

**Be clear about your expectations & criteria
for the assignment**

Project Information Literacy: Handout Study



6 in 10 handouts recommended students
consult library shelves for research...

more than any other resource mentioned in the handouts analyzed.

Start at the source

Thinking critically about source requirements

Activity:

Think of a research assignment you use. On each point note write a source you require. On the back write why you require this source.

Small group discussion

What are the benefits of providing specific source requirements? What are some of the drawbacks?

Be sure to define your terms

Make sure your students know what you mean when you specify categories like:

“Academic”

“Scholarly”

“Peer-reviewed”

“Credible”

Format

“Electronic”

“Online”

“Monograph”

Place Based “Library resource”

Scaffolding Your Assignment Brings Focus to the Research Process

- When possible, scaffold the research component into the process in order to ensure adequate attention is given to the research process. (i.e., annotated bibliography assignment due before a research paper), source analysis exercise, etc.
- Consider embedding a research log into the assignment

**A few more things to consider in
assignment design...**

Devote class time to discussion of the assignment in progress

- Visit the library with your class
- Subject liaisons are happy to collaborate with you to provide a research session that will make the research process even more effective for your midshipmen

Test your assignment

Collaborate with your librarians

Contact your [subject specialist](#) to see how we can help!

Why?

- Collections experts
- Subject matter experts in information literacy

Equitable assignments

Further consideration

Transparency

Clearly communicating about norms, expectations, evaluation criteria

- Explicitly communicate the purpose, task, and grading criteria for each assignment.
- Dedicate time in class for students to discuss and ask questions about assignments.
- Explain the learning objectives of the activities you use class time for (e.g., solving problems, mini lectures describing equipment/software, providing feedback to a peers' work).
- Communicate (on a syllabus and/or in person with your class) your goal of creating an equitable and inclusive learning environment.

Equitable assignments

Further consideration

Sense of Belonging

Cultivating students' sense of connection to the class, discipline + scholarly and professional communities

- Communicate high expectations and your belief that all students can succeed at research.
- Allow for productive risk and failure. Make it known that struggle and challenge are important parts of the research process, not signs of student deficiency.
- Share stories about your own challenges mastering difficult material and research.
- Help students connect their prior knowledge to new learning (e.g., before introducing a new topic ask students individually to reflect on what they already know about the topic).
- Create assignments that invite students to draw upon their unique experience and perspective**

Adapted from Pinder-Grover, Tershia. ["Engineering Inclusive Classrooms \(Part 2\) Guiding Principles and Strategies"](https://docs.asee.org/public/Webinars/InclusiveClassroomsHandout_P2.pdf). Center for Research and Teaching in Engineering, University of Michigan. https://docs.asee.org/public/Webinars/InclusiveClassroomsHandout_P2.pdf

Equitable assignments

Further consideration

Affirmation of Difference

Recognizing that students bring diverse identities, strengths, and needs to the learning environment

- ❑ **Assess students' prior knowledge about your field and topics to align instruction with their needs.**
- ❑ Invite students to identify examples that illustrate course concepts.
- ❑ Create opportunities for students to explain their different approaches to the work of the course (solving problems, choosing paper topics, etc.).
- ❑ Ask students for concrete observations about content (e.g., simply describe a figure, graph or diagram) before moving to analytical questions. This can provide everyone a common starting point, highlight students' different perspectives/approaches, and model analytical processes you want to teach.
- ❑ **Create multimodal research assignments rather than relying on one mode of engagement.**

A few helpful resources

[Research Assignment Design: A Guide for Faculty](#)

[PROJECT CORA](#)

[ACRL INFORMATION LITERACY IN THE DISCIPLINES](#)

Presentation Sources

“Designing Assignments” University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries. <https://www.library.wisc.edu/services/teaching-learning-services/designing-library-research-assignments/>. Accessed 15 May 2019.

Pinder-Grover, Tershia. [“Engineering Inclusive Classrooms \(Part 2\) Guiding Principles and Strategies”](#). Center for Research and Teaching in Engineering, University of Michigan.

“Project Information Literacy: Handout Study.” YouTube, uploaded by Project InfoLit, 12 July 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=126&v=gEsyQnM5P4o

Thank you!

Questions?

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