

Creating Blended Assignment Instructions

Background

Students in blended learning courses can sometimes become confused by the nuances involved in completing coursework that blends face-to-face and online modalities. As a result, instructors can likely never be too explicit in communicating instructions for coursework in a blended course. Whether assignments are introduced in the face-to-face or online portions of the course, many instructors find it helpful to provide students with written instructions for each assignment. Some instructors choose to post such instructions in the online portion of the course while in a face-to-face session they direct students to this authoritative source. (This has the added benefit of saving printing costs!)

O'Reilly and Kelly (2008) recommend eight elements to include in written assignment instructions distributed to students online:

- Assignment title (exactly the same as title used in syllabus and other course documents)
- Learning objective(s) to which the assignment relates
- Assignment due date (if receiving electronic submissions, include time/time zone also)
- Submission details (electronic submissions only? required file format? via email? via assignment upload?)
- Scoring criteria/rubric
- Level of group participation (individual assignments, group or team projects, and entire class projects).
- Mechanical details (number of words/pages, preferred style guide for citations, number/type of citations, etc.)
- Any supporting resources necessary for assignment completion

In addition, many students find it useful to see one or more completed examples of the assignment. An anonymized exemplary submission from a past student may be used, or for high point value assignments, an instructor-created example may be justified. (Again, to save paper, such examples may be distributed online.)

Process

Following are suggested steps for creating your blended assignment instructions:

1. *From a student perspective*, review the assignments you've used in the face-to-face version of the blended learning course you are preparing. Are any of the above elements missing? What questions would students have if you were not present to elaborate on the instructions?
2. Decide if there are any assignments you will not be using in the blended version of your course.
3. Update your assignment instructions as appropriate.
4. Decide whether you will distribute the assignment instructions in class (paper) or online. If online, in what file format will you distribute the assignment instructions (e.g., html, pdf, rtf, or proprietary word processing)

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format)? Note: If using a format other than html, remember to include in your syllabus a notation about required software (e.g., Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat Reader, etc.).

5. If applicable, convert the assignment instructions to the appropriate file format. (You may wish to view the WebAIM instructions for converting Word documents to either [accessible HTML](#) or [accessible PDF](#).)
6. If applicable, decide where in the online portion of your course you will post the assignment instructions. How will students access there files? (In next week's activities we will consider the creation of online modules/assignment listings. This may be an option for you.)

References

O'Reilly, D. and Kelly, K. (2008). Assessment and evaluation. In Commonwealth of Learning (Ed.) Education for a Digital World: Advice, Guidelines, and Effective Practice from Around the Globe. Retrieved July 2, 2011 from http://www.colfinder.org/materials/Education_for_a_Digital_World/Education_for_a_Digital_World_part2.pdf

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