**GLCA: Teaching Writing to Multilingual Writers,** *College of Wooster, November 1-3, 2019*

***Assignment Design and Scaffolding,*** *Carla Reyes and Linda Weaver*

**Faculty Resource: Assignment Review**

*This worksheet takes you through a review of an assignment. Choose one assignment from your course and answer the questions for that specific assignment. As you think about these questions, consider the challenges that a multilingual writer might face and how you want to design your assignment to address those challenges. The questions are not intended to suggest a “right” answer. This activity is intended to help you think through possible miscommunications and unintended assumptions about prior knowledge, change what is appropriate to change in the assignment to make the target student writing more achievable for all students, and consider ways to help students work through those challenges and gain the necessary knowledge and skills, even if the assignment sheet itself is not the best medium to address those concerns.*

1. **The Writing Situation – Contextual Variables**
	1. Where does this writing assignment come in the course? (Beginning of semester, first of series of writing assignments, major paper instead of a final exam, etc.)
	2. What does this writing assignment accomplish in the course – how does it connect to course objectives, course content, etc.?
	3. *How* is this writing assignment used in this course? What are the stakes for the students? (Is successful completion of this paper necessary to pass the course?)
	4. How many points is this assignment worth (percentage of grade)?
2. **The Scoring Criteria – Evaluation Variables**
	1. What are your highest values in grading? Think through what you *really* want to see from students. (See the “Faculty Resource: Guided Reflection on Assignment Expectations and Design” file for an activity to help you reflect on your expectations and requirements for your assignment.)
	2. How have you communicated your scoring expectations to students?
	3. Do you use a rubric that clearly expresses the values you identified in 2a?
	4. *When* do students find out your grading expectations? Do you give them the rubric with the assignment, or do they see the rubric for the first time when the graded assignment is returned?
3. **The Rhetorical Specifications – Rhetorical Variables**
	1. What rhetorical patterns/devices are you asking students to use?
	2. How are you asking for that rhetorical pattern?
		1. Are you explicitly naming the pattern?
		2. Are you describing or explaining the pattern?
	3. How much background knowledge must students have to make sense of this expectation?
4. **The Task – Task Variables**
	1. The next page has a chart to help you think through the number and complexity of the tasks that you are asking students to complete. After you complete the chart, consider these questions:
		1. Does the number and complexity of the tasks match . . .
			1. the time students have to complete the assignment?
			2. the space allotted for the assignment? (Can a student really do that well in 2-3 pages)?
			3. the context of the assignment?
		2. As in the questions above, how many of these tasks require some sort of prior knowledge?
		3. Is the number and complexity of the tasks appropriate to the contextual variables, especially percentage of the grade?
	2. In the chart below, list the tasks required of the students to complete this assignment. The following categories are simply guidelines to help you think through the tasks that the students must complete and must understand.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rhetorical Tasks | Cognitive Tasks | Information Gathering | Academic Honesty Tasks | Course Content | Writing Conventions | Other  |
| Are you asking students to describe two things and then compare and contrast, for example? Create and support a claim?  | What kind of thinking are you expecting? Are you asking students to summarize? Analyze? Apply? | Do students need to research/ find sources? Interview someone?  | Do students need to have understanding and/or mastery of paraphrasing, quoting, and citation styles? | Do the students need to define, explain, and/or integrate course concepts? | What writing conventions have you specified in the assignment? (i.e., essay structure, grammar, etc.) |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Task Variables, continued

iv. Is the student expected to display knowledge or to transform knowledge? (Refer back to cognitive tasks like summarize, describe, explain, synthesize, analyze, apply.)

1. **The Subject Matter – Content Variables**
	1. How does this assignment expect students to use course content?
		1. Are the expectations for use of course content explicitly stated?
		2. What do students need to know in order to meet those expectations (research, paraphrase, citation, etc.)
	2. Is there cultural background knowledge required to understand and/or complete this assignment that a multilingual student may be unfamiliar with? Or are there culture components that may interfere with a student’s successful completion of the assignment? (i.e., peer pressure)
2. **The Wording of the Prompt and the Instructions – Linguistic Variables**

Review the wording of the prompt. Consider the following question and revise the assignment as necessary.

* 1. Are there words that can easily be interpreted in several ways?
	2. Are there words/phrases that might be inaccessible to multilingual students because of culture or skill level or because they are idioms or slang?
	3. Is there a list of questions that may be confusing?