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This assignment guide is a tool educators can use to critically examine and improve their assignment guidelines for the purpose of helping student produce better work. There is no expectation that assignments explicitly address all questions posed in the guide. Rather, each guide poses questions to help educators make decisions about what kinds of prompts to include -- or not to include -- in their assignment guidelines.

As you review the assignment guidelines, respond to the questions below (generated from the written communication integrated rubric) and revise your assignment prompts if appropriate and helpful to students. Depending on course level and prerequisites, it may be reasonable to expect students to know how to respond without explicit prompting. Consider providing students with a work sample that illustrates excellent performance. Abbreviations: WC = written communication, CT = critical thinking, IL = information literacy.

Issue/problem (CT)
- Does the prompt define for students what is at issue, or should students define their own issue? If the latter, how explicitly does the prompt define for students the limitations on the appropriate range of issues?
- How explicitly does the prompt define the urgency/need for response?
- How explicitly and narrowly does the prompt ask students to define what is at issue in the task?
- What information does the prompt offer in terms of the audience's background knowledge?

Supporting materials (IL)
- What kind(s) of sources are called for explicitly in the prompt (e.g. peer-reviewed literature only; are newspapers, magazines, blogs, and other forms of popular media acceptable; etc.)?
- What guidance does the prompt offer in terms of quantity and diversity of sources?
- How does the prompt engage students in establishing or questioning the credibility of cited experts and other evidence?

Use of support (IL)
- What does the prompt explicitly ask students to do with that information (e.g. analyze, synthesize)?
- What does the prompt explicitly define as the purpose of the information (e.g. provide background information, support multiple perspectives, etc.)?

Position (CT)
- What role does the prompt suggest students should take in composing their responses (are they to be experts, mediators, friends, students, parents)?
- What does the prompt suggest in terms of the range of perspectives students should consider?
- How does the assignment ask students to identify their own and others' assumptions? What different categories of assumptions are students asked to consider (e.g. empirical, value, normative)?
- What information are students given about the context in which they are composing? How does the prompt engage students in examining the assumptions relevant to that context?

Genre and disciplinary conventions (WC)
- What information does the prompt offer in terms of the audience for whom students are writing?
- What relationship does the prompt suggest writers establish with their audience (peer to peer, expert to novice, supportive, confrontational)?
- What information does the prompt offer in terms of the purpose for which students are composing?
- What guidance does the prompt offer in terms of level of formality and specialized vocabulary for the writing?
- What guidance does the prompt offer in terms of disciplinary and/or genre conventions and expectations?

Conclusions and outcomes (CT)
- How are students prompted to consider potential implications or consequences (intended or unintended) of their conclusions?
- What audiences are students prompted to consider in assessing the implications of their conclusions?

Academic integrity (IL)
- What guidance does the prompt offer in terms of ethical access and use of information? (e.g., personal data, clinical trials, animal trials)
- What guidance does the prompt offer in terms of reference and citation style?
- What guidance does the prompt offer regarding the balance of paraphrase, quotation, and summary?

Grammar and mechanics (WC)
- What guidance does the prompt offer in terms of expectations regarding grammatical correctness?