Teaching Writing in the Disciplines: Creating & Managing Effective Writing Assignments

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Overview of Topics

1. What is good writing?
2. How to use good writing principles to guide students to write well.
3. How to grade efficiently.
Group Work

• In groups of four, identify six aspects of good writing, excluding grammar and punctuation.

• Rank the aspects from most important to least.

• Report and compare.
Guiding Students to Write Well

- Allow for the process of writing
- Model good writing
- Use rubrics to teach writing outcomes
Writing as a Process

- Planning
- Drafting
- Revision
- Editing
Writing as a Process

• Planning (aka Pre-Writing)
  - Brainstorming
  - Free-Writing
  - Journaling
  - Vetting of Topics
  - Rough Outlining
Writing as a Process

- Drafting
  - Detailed Outlining
  - Writing Workshops
  - Library Research
  - Primary Data Collection
Writing as a Process

- Revision
  - Peer Reviews
  - Conferencing
Writing as a Process

- Editing
  - Manuscript Form
  - Grammar/Mechanics
  - Polishing for Clarity and Style
  - Time to Think and Gain Perspective
Writing is learned by imitation, not magic

Offer examples of A-quality work of the appropriate genre and length

Annotate models with your own advice
Rubrics

- Use general writing or style rubrics to establish broad levels of expectation
- Use genre-specific rubrics to establish writing outcomes
Grading with Rubrics

- Rubrics make grading seem less arbitrary
- Puts more of the responsibility for the grade on the student
Types of Rubrics

- General and applicable to all types of papers
- Specific and keyed to a particular assignment
- Prioritized checklist
Grading Effectively

- Effective time management
- Effective pen strokes
- Effective feedback
Effective Time Management

- Read the papers through once to get an overall sense of the responses
- Move papers into ranges of grades
- Use a timer
- Allow no more than 15 minutes per paper (for longer assignments)
Effective Pen Strokes

- Focus on global concerns or stylistic problems
- Mark errors on the first page only
- Mark only representative errors
- Place checks in the margins where errors occur
Effective Feedback

- Terminal comments are most important messages.
- Document the strengths and weaknesses
After Action Report

- Explain whether the students responded well to the assignment
- Encourage or discourage specific writing behaviors
- Set goals for future assignments
Effective Use of Technology

- Return error-laden essays for proofreading and correction
- Use style editors or other software packages to scan student writing for error
- Have students peer-edit before final draft is due
L2 Writers and Responding

- Content should be primary focus
- Sentence-level issues should be addressed by patterns of error
- Concentrate on marking those errors that interfere with the writer’s message
- Demonstrate where the student has used a part of speech correctly.
Recommended Books

- Anything published by William Zinsser
- Books on “Style” by Joseph Williams
- *Revising Business Prose* by Richard Lanham
- *Writing in the Sciences: Exploring Conventions of Scientific Discourse*, by Ann Penrose and Steven B. Katz