About Authoring CPR Assignments
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Broad goals for writing assignments

- Students learn to write: Writing Across the Curriculum
  The burden of teaching students to write does not rest only on the shoulders of the English faculty. Writing is a medium of communication, not content itself; it should be addressed in every course, rather than compartmentalized as a separate discipline.

- Students write to learn: Writing in the Disciplines
  Each discipline has vocabulary and a writing style that requires practice to master. This practice must necessarily take place in the courses addressing the discipline’s content.

Applied ideas from the Writing Across the Curriculum movement

Include instructions specifically addressing the writing, like
  o Begin your essay with a topic sentence that accurately describes its content.
  o Write your essay in a word processor to check your spelling, as well as to save a back-up copy of your work.
  o Write a paragraph beginning with a topic sentence stating your claim, and with at least two sentences describing each piece of supporting evidence.

Direct students about appropriate use of quotations and citations, and about what constitutes plagiarism.

Applied ideas from the Writing in the Disciplines movement

Give examples of good writing in the appropriate style.
  o Include short specific reading assignments directing students’ attention to the style and structure, like “read the second paragraph on page…, and notice how the author communicates…”
  o Have students write paragraphs mimicking well written passages.

Put words in the students’ mouths.
  o Direct students to understand the definitions of and use discipline specific vocabulary. (For example, “Explain… making use of the words …, … and …”).
  o Require students to explain the meanings of words before using them in their writing.

Parts of a CPR assignment

Students completing a CPR assignment do the following:

1. Text Phase: Write an essay, following a writing prompt.
2. Calibrations: Read 3 sample essays. Evaluate the sample essays by answering given questions, and assigning a rating from 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent). Compare their responses to these questions and their ratings to “correct” responses.
3. Peer Reviews: Read 3 student essays. Evaluate the student essays by answering given questions, and assigning a rating.
4. Self Review: Read his or her own essay. Evaluate the essay by answering given questions and assigning a rating.

When you author a CPR assignment, you must create:

1. Instructions about what to write
2. Three sample essays (high, medium, and low quality)
3. Questions to evaluate essays
4. Answers to the questions for the three calibration essays

Students’ grades on a CPR assignment are divided into these four categories.

1. Text rating: the grade assigned to the student by his or her peers.
2. Calibrations: credit for answering enough of the evaluation questions correctly. Students have two tries to succeed on each of the three sample essays.
3. Peer reviews: credit for assigning a rating to a peer’s essay that lies within a reasonable number of points of the average rating that the other students who graded that essay assigned.
4. Self review: credit for assigning a rating to his or her own essay that lies within a reasonable number of points of the average rating that the student’s peers awarded the essay.

When you set up a CPR assignment you must choose

1. What percent of the grade you will award to each of the four categories? 20-30-30-20
2. When students evaluate the calibration essays, on how many questions must their answers match those given in the assignment? 7/10 Within how many points of the rating given in the assignment should the rating that the student assigns to a calibration essay be for full credit? 3
3. When students evaluate their peers’ essays, within how many points of the average rating assigned by other students reading the same peer’s essay should the rating that the student assigns to a peer’s essay be for full credit? 3
4. When students evaluate their own essay, within how many points of the average rating assigned by other students reading the same peer’s essay should the rating that the student assigns to his or her own essay be for full credit? for full credit? 3 for full, 4 for half
What you must create when authoring a CPR assignment

1. Goals
2. Writing prompt: what the students will do and write about
3. Evaluation questions (Yes/No, A/B/C, None/1 or 2/Many)
4. Calibration answer keys
5. Calibration essays

About the goals for the assignment

I start by collecting my broad goals for the assignment, using active language. I return to my goals frequently as I prepare my assignment. Some of my general goals include the following.
Students will
- Use academic language
- Read
- Reflect on what they have read
- Summarize/describe/determine/decide/apply

About the writing prompt and evaluation questions

Rule of thumb: if you are going to ask if the student has done something, tell them specifically to do it. Make your writing prompt ask students to perform tasks that they have the ability to assess. Note that you can ask students to perform tasks that you do not ask them to assess, but students become grumpy if they are assessed on tasks that they have not been explicitly asked to do.

To what degree can your students determine the validity or quality of another students’ writing?
- Do they know what “correct” is?
  Could you ask them, “Is the explanation correct and clear?” and expect consistent responses from most students?
  My students could not do this.

- Could they determine correctness if you tell them what it is?
  Could you ask them, “Does the author explain that...”
  I often include a sentence like, “Using this exact language in their explanations is unnecessary if the meaning is the same.” I find students tend to be very literal when following evaluation guidance.

  You can allow some flexibility in their answers by saying something like, “the author was asked to explain that... an example of a good explanation is ... Mark (A) if the explanation was present and easy to understand. Mark (B) if the explanation was present but at least partially unclear. Mark (C) if the explanation did not make sense or was omitted.”

  When evaluating, my students are reluctant to criticize each other’s work. They find it difficult to choose 0 when given the choice of 0 points or 1 point. However, when given the choice between 0, 1 and 2 points, they are willing to select 1.
• Could they count?
  Could you ask them, “The author was asked to provide two pieces of supporting evidence. Mark (A) if they provided two pieces of supporting evidence. Mark (B) if they provided only one piece of supporting evidence, and mark (C) if no supporting evidence was provided.

• Can they be held accountable for their responses?
  You can require students to write something in a box labeled, “Feedback,” when they review their peer’s essays. For example, you could ask them, “Does the essay include a topic sentence that accurately describes its content? If you answer, Yes, copy and paste the author’s topic sentence into the Feedback box. If you answer No, suggest a topic sentence to the author that might describe the content of the essay.”

• Can the students assign a rating from 1-10 that accurately describes the overall quality of the work?
  Almost certainly not. I tell the students in each review question what to do with the rating. For example, I might write “If you selected “No,” deduct two points from the rating.”

Ideas for the Writing Prompt (that students are able to assess)
• Direct students’ attention to the ideas you want them to address.
  o For example: “Read the second paragraph on page 4. Begin your essay with a brief explanation of the author’s main ideas in that paragraph. In your introduction, include reference to the article and the author’s name.”
    ▪ Question: The author was asked to summarize the second paragraph on page 4. Briefly, this paragraph says... Mark (A) if the author’s explanation was clear. Mark (B) if the author’s explanation was present but somewhat unclear. Mark (C) if the author’s explanation was hard to understand or missing entirely.
    ▪ Question: Did the author include a reference to the article and the author’s name?
  o For example: “Read the article, …, by P. Fessor. Fessor gives arguments for …, but acknowledges that there is ambiguity by giving arguments against …. In your essay, Explain the issue, and cite at least two pieces of evidence that Fessor provides in support of the argument, and at least one piece of evidence that Fessor provides contradicting the argument.
    ▪ Question: How many pieces of evidence from the article did the author provide in support of the argument (the writing prompt required at least two)? (A) none, (B) one, (C) two or more.
    ▪ Question: The article’s main evidence in support of the argument was …. Did the author include this in the explanation? Yes/No (Same for the contradicting evidence.)
    ▪ Question: Does the author explain that the issue in question is….? Mark (A) if the explanation is correct and clear. Mark (B) if the explanation is present but could be clearer. Mark (C) if the explanation is missing or difficult to understand.
In the previous example, you could direct students to use quotations appropriately. For example: For each piece of supporting evidence you cite, include a direct quote from Fessor’s article that clarifies your explanation.

- Question: Does the author include a direct quote from Fessor for each piece of supporting evidence?
- Question: Does the quote the author provided clarify the explanation? Mark (A) if the quote was well chosen to make the author’s point. Mark (B) if there is a quote, but it does not make the explanation clearer. Mark (C) if the quote is irrelevant or missing.

- Allow students to reflect on their own experiences.

**CPR assignments are easier to write when the students basically write the same essay. If you wish students to write about their own experiences, so their answers will be necessarily different, I suggest inflicting structure on their explanations of their experiences, and address that structure in your review questions, rather than the content itself.**

- For example: Explain what (happy vocabulary word) means, and give an example of a (happy vocabulary word) that you experienced since you’ve been at CSULB.
  - Question: Did the author explain that (happy vocabulary word) means...?
  - Question: The author was asked to provide an example of a (happy vocabulary word) that he or she experienced since arriving at CSULB. Mark (A) if the experience cited is a good example of a (happy vocabulary word). Mark (B) if more explanation is needed to determine that the experience cited is a (happy vocabulary word). Mark (C) if no experience is cited, or if the anecdote is irrelevant.

- For example: Critique the argument given by P. Fessor in the article. Begin by explaining the point Fessor is arguing. Then provide at least two pieces of evidence that refute Fessor’s position. Conclude by acknowledging that Fessor has a point, highlighting at least one piece of evidence in support of Fessor’s argument.
  - Question: Did the author explain that Fessor asserts...?
  - Questions: Did the author include ... in his or her argument against Fessor’s position? Same for evidence contrary to Fessor’s argument.

**About calibration essays**

I am reluctant to have students read and reinforce incorrect ideas. I take advantage of the fact students read 7 version of this essay to drill them in ideas I wish them to understand (like definitions of vocabulary, or techniques in problem solving). When I write the low quality calibration essay, I make it fail on some of the review questions by omitting the information in question, or otherwise failing to follow directions, rather than actually giving false information.

Create the calibration essays in the following order:
1. Write the high quality calibration exemplary, with a rating of 10. At this point, you may find some of your instructions and questions need revision.
2. Choose the answer key and the ratings for the medium and low calibration essays.
3. Write the medium and low quality calibration essays. At this point, you may find again that you need to hone your instructions and your questions; don’t forget to modify your high quality calibration essay as needed.

**Summing up: what to do to create a CPR assignment**

1. Goals
2. Resources, writing prompt and questions (construct them together)
3. High quality calibration essay
4. Calibration answer key
5. Calibration essays