

Academic expectations are clearly defined

Transparent instruction involves explaining the *What, Why and How* of course expectations, assignments and assessments. Rather than simply stating expectations, defining these elements in the course allows students to make direct connections between what they are being asked to do and how these tasks connect to the larger learning objectives of the course.

Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT)¹ is a framework that emphasizes focusing on the purpose, task, and criteria in assignment design and assessment. [Transparent assignment design](#) involves articulating the purpose of the assignment or assessment in alignment with the course's larger [learning objectives](#). It is also important to make the details of the task concrete. Additionally, the criteria for success should be made explicit for students to have a clear understanding of how they are being assessed. Below are examples of transparency in course expectations, assignment design and assessment.

Transparency in Course Expectations

Example

Stated Expectation: Students are expected to participate in class.

How can you define this expectation? What does participation look like in your context? Will participation be measured, assessed and graded? If so, how? Why is this expectation important? How does it contribute to students' learning?

Defined Expectation: Students are expected to participate in class. This means contributing to small group discussions by offering comments, suggestions and practicing active listening. While participation will not be graded, students will frequently be asked to report back on their group work and incorporate insights and examples from these discussions in their written work. These reporting and reflective assignments will receive points for completion.

Transparency in Assignment Design

Example

Stated Assignment: Write a research paper or propose a multimodal project on a topic related to course content.

What types of sources do you expect students to use for this paper? Is there a page minimum and/or maximum? Will you collect drafts and give feedback before the final draft is submitted? If not, where might students go for support? What are some examples of multimodal assignments? Can you provide examples of exemplary papers and projects from previous semesters?

¹ Winkelmes, M. A., Boye, A., & Tapp, S. (Eds.). (2023). *Transparent design in higher education teaching and leadership: A guide to implementing the transparency framework institution-wide to improve learning and retention*. Taylor & Francis.

Defined Assignment: For the final assignment, you can choose to write a traditional research paper or propose a multimodal project. You will be asked to submit your topic ideas, at least three sources you will consult, and whether you will do a paper or project by midterm.

Research papers should be 8-10 pages with at least 6 sources. Multimodal projects could be podcasts, video essays, websites or another form. Consult with me about the length/scope of multimodal projects. If you need assistance during the drafting process, visit my drop-in hours and/or make an appointment with the Writing Center. Examples of past papers and projects are provided on the course ICON page.

Transparency in Assessment

Example

Stated Assessment: Papers and projects will be graded on content, clarity and mechanics.

What is the percentage/point value of this assignment? How does it fit into the larger course grade? What does each category of assessment mean? How are the point values distributed across these categories?

Defined Assessment: This assignment is worth 100 total points, which represents 15% of your total grade. Papers and projects will be assessed on content, clarity and mechanics.

<p>What categories will you assess? (Examples: <i>Content, Clarity, Mechanics</i>) How much will each area be worth? Category _____ Point value _____</p>	<p><i>What specific goals do you want students to achieve in this category? How will you define levels of success in achieving these goals?</i></p> <p>Statements outlining expectations and criteria for success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____
<p>Category _____ Point value _____</p>	<p>Statements outlining expectations and criteria for success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____
<p>Category _____ Point value _____</p>	<p>Statements outlining expectations and criteria for success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____

- Start the semester with smaller, low-stakes, formative assessments to get a sense of students’ understanding of course materials.
- Make sure to provide a larger assessment by midterm for students to have a sense of their progress and grade in the course. *This allows students to adjust how they study and make changes and decisions that could affect their final grade.*
- Weighing assessments in the second half of the course more heavily than earlier assessments allows students to learn from earlier assessments and is a better measure of their learning and growth.
- Students should have access to their grades in ICON gradebook so that they are aware of their progress in the course throughout the semester.