

Assignments in the course will build in complexity

Giving students opportunities to practice and apply what they are learning with low-stakes assignments sets them up for success in larger assignments and assessments. Below is an example of two assignments given in the same course. The first is highly scaffolded, collaborative, and graded for completion. The second assignment builds on skills practiced in the first. This assignment is much more complex and involves independent work, research, application of skills, analysis, and is graded for accuracy.

Early in the semester, after covering relevant mathematical concepts related to business, an instructor assigns the following low-stakes assignment to be completed in class:

Work with your partner in class to draft a business plan for a coffee shop. You will be provided with information on the product cost and expected revenue and profits for this business. Working together with your partner, review this information. Determine what further information you need (*such as seasonal trends in customer traffic, number of units sold, etc.*). With your partner, create a cost equation, revenue equation and profit equation for your coffee shop.

This assignment allows students to practice and apply skills and concepts in an informal context. Working in pairs, this activity provides the opportunity for active learning and collaboration. This example is also scaffolded—the instructor provides the basic information and structure the students need to practice and apply their knowledge.

This type of activity is a great example of one that might be graded for completion rather than accuracy. If there are errors in the students' work, the instructor can provide feedback to help students learn from their mistakes and apply this feedback to future work.

Later in the semester, the instructor assigns a project graded for accuracy.

For this project, you will write a proposal for a local business.

1) Choose a business that you believe would be successful in the university's commercial district. Research the area to see what your competition might be and find information on the economics and demographics of the area. Explain why you chose this particular business and why you believe it has a chance of succeeding in this area/with the current demographics. *This section should be approximately 500 words. Cite your sources.*

2) Provide accurate information (*based on your research*) for the product costs and your expected revenue and profits. Include all expenses you anticipate for this business (cost of rent, utilities, materials, employee compensation, etc.).

3) On a separate page, show your work. Write a cost equation, revenue equation and profit equation. What is your break-even point?

4) Create a visual representation (chart or graph) to accompany your proposal.

This assignment builds on skills practiced earlier in the semester adding multiple steps and more complex elements that involve critical thinking and analytical strategies. Smaller, formative assessments help prepare students for larger, higher stakes assessments.