

## Guidelines for writing assignments

Successful writing assignments depend on careful and thorough instructions and preparation and on explicit criteria for evaluation. Although your experience with a given assignment will suggest ways of improving a specific assignment in your class, the following guidelines should help you anticipate many potential problems and considerably reduce your grading time.

### I. Purpose

- A. Explain the purpose of the writing assignment.
- B. Make the format of the writing assignment fit the purpose (format: research essay, position paper, brief or abstract, lab report, problem-solving essay, etc.)

### II. The assignment

- A. Provide complete **written** instructions.
- B. Provide **format models** where possible.
- C. Discuss sample strong, average, and weak drafts.

### III. Revision of written drafts

Where appropriate, peer group workshops on rough drafts may improve the overall quality of student writing. For example, have students critique each others' drafts one week before the due date for format, organization, or mechanics. For these workshops, outline specific and limited tasks on a checklist. These workshops also give you an opportunity to make sure that all the students are progressing satisfactorily on the project.

### IV. Evaluation

On a grading sheet, indicate the percentage of the grade devoted to content and the percentage devoted to writing skills (expression, punctuation, spelling, mechanics). The grading sheet should indicate the important content features as well as the writing skills you consider significant.

1. Does the grading criteria section specifically indicate which writing skills the teacher considers important as well as the various aspects of content?
2. What part of the course grade is this assignment?
3. Does the assignment include use of models (strong, average, weak) or samples outlines?