Supporting UCSB’s International Students

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: Ideas and Resources

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Designing prompts and supporting materials

- Provide explicit instructions for assignments.  
  Colorado State Writing Studio Guide
  Questions for design and evaluation
- Offer models/examples of well-written assignments done by other students.
- If a specific genre of writing is important to your course, provide an annotated example.  
  (Econometrics sample paper)

Building in Process

- Break up an assignment into stages or steps that can be evaluated during the quarter  
  (e.g., a proposal, a thesis, a draft prior to final paper).
- Encourage students to write a zero draft to generate ideas – a draft only they will see.
- Identify students who may need to improve their writing and let them know what areas  
  are problematic; refer them to appropriate resources (e.g., CLAS, internet resources).
- Identify issues of potential plagiarism; show writers how to paraphrase and cite sources  
  (perhaps in TA sections if part of the course).
- Rubrics included with assignment directives can provide a checklist for students as they  
  draft and revise.
- The same or similar rubrics can be used for evaluating submitted writing assignments.

Responding to Language Issues

- Simply telling students to get help with grammar will not help the student on the next  
  writing assignment.
- Giving feedback on papers: respond to unclear expression as a reader rather than as a  
  grammarian; make a note on what the passage leads you to wonder (e.g., “Do you  
  mean...?” rather than “Unclear” or “awkward”).
- Discuss language issues with students in office hours.
  - As a reader, I can’t clearly see the connections and relationships between these  
    points – some transitions would help here.
  - As a reader, I’m having trouble understanding this section because the time  
    being expressed isn’t always clear. Could you check your verb tenses?
Promoting Academic Honesty

• As mentioned earlier, have students submit parts of larger papers in parts or stages for review rather than “one-shot” paper submissions.
• Require students to submit the preliminary materials (proposal, drafts, working bibliography) with the final paper.
• Limit choice of topics; don’t allow last minute substitutions of topics without discussing reasons/preparation.
• Schedule classroom sessions (TA sections?) on research process; have students bring work-in-progress.
• Try to get an in-class writing sample from students so that you know what their writing looks like without “assistance.” Tell them you will have this writing sample on file.
• Make clear to students the limits of what is appropriate help from tutors, friends, editors, proofreaders, translators. Show examples of appropriate, inappropriate help.
• Provide guidelines or resources about citation conventions.
• Offer class time/TA sections for showing students how to integrate text from source materials, what constitutes appropriate vs. in appropriate paraphrase and how to cite sources appropriately.
• If you suspect plagiarism:
  • Ask the student to discuss with you the process of writing the paper-developing ideas, refining the language.
  • Ask the student to explain key concepts without access to the paper itself.

Resources related to International Students, Writing and Second Language Writers


UNC “Why We Cite” YouTube Video
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkn4SyhjylM