Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip

This month's tip: Backward Design for Grading Rubrics

Rationale: Wiggins and McTighe's (2005) three-step backward design process focuses on goal-centered teaching and learning. The process is "backward" in the sense that one considers desired learning outcomes and grading criteria *before* designing learning assignments and activities.

Backward Design Process Steps	Focus of the Step	Example: Horticultural Science (HORT)	Correlation: sample HORT Grading Rubric
Step One: Identify "Big Picture" Goals and Questions	● **What are the fundamental questions with which your learners will grapple?** ● **What should students know and be able to do by the end of the unit or course—that is, what knowledge and skills should students be able to transfer?**	● **An introductory Horticultural Science course might require students to grapple with fundamental questions about potential landscape uses for woody and herbaceous plants.**	A grading rubric—defined as a systematic scoring guide used to evaluate students' writing, presentations, problem sets, and so forth—draws upon these fundamental questions and goals with detailed descriptions of performance standards: **By the end of the course, students should be able to:** ● **identify and accurately recall ~250 woody and herbaceous plants by scientific names** ● **select appropriate plants for specific purposes, given their characteristics and environmental requirements**
Step Two: Identify Paths to Achievement and Evidence of Achievement	● **What goal-centered criteria will you use to evaluate learners' demonstrated knowledge and performance?**		**Sample HORT grading criteria:** ● **Plants' scientific names are identified accurately** ● **Plant choice is environmentally appropriate for northern Minnesota**

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Step Three: Identify Goal-Centered Instructional Strategies and Learning Opportunities	● What assignments and activities provide learners the opportunity to grapple with fundamental questions and goals?	● Students will serve as guest "Garden Guru" newspaper columnists to answer novice gardeners' questions about woody and herbaceous plants. ● Students will participate in plant identification labs	● The Garden Guru's answer to the novice gardener identifies accurately the environmentally-appropriate plants for the "dry" part of a rain garden ● Student demonstrates adequate understanding of scientific nomenclature by identifying woody and herbaceous plants by accurate scientific names.

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Learn more: Attend and participate in the Center for Writing's TWW [Backward Design for Grading Rubrics Workshop](#)

Resources:
- Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Minnesota (n.d.). [Elements of backward design](#) [self-paced tutorial].
- Flash, P. (2013). [Creating grading rubrics for writing assignments](#).
- Sample, M. (2011, May 31). [Planning a class with backward design](#). *Chronicle of Higher Education.*
- Walvoord, B.A. (2004). *Assessment clear and simple*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Questions? Visit us online at http://writing.umn.edu/tww/index.html

Check out this semester's Teaching with Writing events: Log in to your ULearn account: [ulearn.umn.edu.](http://ulearn.umn.edu) Use the search for C4W to view all events hosted by the Center for Writing.

Further support: Contact a member of the WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) team for a phone, email, or face-to-face teaching consultation: http://z.umn.edu/twwconsultation

Our purpose is to provide practical strategies for teaching with writing. Our goal: to offer timely and pragmatic support to faculty members and instructors who teach with writing in undergraduate and graduate courses in all disciplinary areas.

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